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The Return of the Prodigal



THE FIRST CHAPTER. Trouble in the Form-room!

"**S** NOW!" murmured Bob Cherry.
The juniors in the Remove Form-room at Greyfriars looked round eagerly towards the high windows.
The snow, long expected, was falling at last.
The flakes dashed against the window panes, and covered the ledges, and the sills, and the branches of the leafless old elms with glimmering white.
In the Form-room a big fire was blazing, but it was chilly. Outside, the keen wind from the sea dashed the snowflakes to and fro in eddies. The juniors were glad to see the

snow. It was a half-holiday that afternoon, but the weather lately had made football next to impossible. And they looked forward joyfully to a snow-fight in the Close.

"Good luck!" said Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove. "We shouldn't be able to play the Fourth this afternoon, anyway. We'll give 'em a snow-fight instead."

"Hear, hear!" said Nugent.

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, appeared unaware of the low buzz of voices in the class. As a rule, the Remove-master's ears were keen; but on this particular morning he seemed to be in an unusual mood. From first lesson the juniors had noticed that their Form-master was preoccupied; and the customary strictness having relaxed, the Removes were naturally slacking a little.

"Something's up with Quelch!" Bob Cherry remarked. "Seems to have something on his little mind. He hasn't given anybody lines yet."

"I say, you fellows," murmured Billy Bunter. "I know all about it—"

"Of course you do," agreed Bob Cherry, with a sniff. "You'll always know all about everything so long as they make keyholes to doors, won't you?"

"Oh, really, Cherry! Quelch had a letter this morning—"

"That's happened before, I believe."

"Yes; but you should have seen his face when he opened the letter," said Bunter, in a mysterious whisper. "He jumped—simply jumped! I happened to be watching him—"

"B-r-r-r!"

"Quite by chance, and he simply jumped. Then he said: 'Bless my soul!'" said Bunter.

"What did he want to bless your soul, for?" asked Bob innocently.

"Oh, really, Cherry; you know what I mean! He said I less his soul, of course. Then he gave me a cuff," said Billy Bunter, in an injured tone. "Suspicious beast, you know! Just as if I was trying to look at the letter! I wasn't, of course."

"I hope it was a hard cuff," said Bob Cherry, unsympathetically.

"You rotter!" said Bunter. "I wasn't trying to see his beastly letter—I'm not an inquisitive chap, and I'd scorn such a thing, too! But as I happened to be standing close to him, I chanced to see a line. It was: 'Will you help me?' Somebody trying to borrow money of him, of course. I don't suppose anything else would make him look worried like this. Look at him now."

The juniors glanced at their Form-master. He was leaning on his high desk, and he was looking at a letter—probably the letter which Bunter had seen that morning, and which had made him ejaculate "Bless my soul!" The Form-master's brow was wrinkled, and he had evidently forgotten that he was in the Form-room at all, in the stress of his thoughts. The chums of the Remove exchanged glances of surprise. They had never seen Mr. Quelch so absent-minded during lessons before.

What!

Taking advantage of the Form-master's extraordinary pre-occupation, Skinner, the humorist of the Remove, had been improving the shining hour by manufacturing a pellet of ink and blotting-paper, which he proceeded to discharge from a small catapult in the direction of Billy Bunter's fat face.

Bunter heard the whiz, and turned his head round, and the missile missed him by a couple of inches, and shot across the Form-room.

The next moment there was a gasp of horror from the juniors.

Mr. Quelch, standing at his desk, was directly in the line of fire.

Phut!

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Great Scott!"

"Oh, begad!"

Mr. Quelch gave a jump, as the ink pellet smote his cheek. He spun round from his desk in the greatest amazement, and put his hand up to his cheek. His fingers came away ink. The pellet dropped at his feet. A dreadful silence fell upon the Remove. Skinner thrust the catapult into his pocket, and sat upright, looking as innocent as he could. Mr. Quelch seemed to gasp for breath for some moments.

"What—what—who—What was that?" he ejaculated.

"Bless my soul, my—my face is ink!" Something struck me. Why—what—? Then Mr. Quelch's amazed glance fell upon the missile at his feet. "What boy threw that at me?" he thundered.

There was dead silence in the Remove. Skinner was quaking at his desk.

Mr. Quelch's brow grew as black as midnight.

"Someone has thrown this at me!" he exclaimed. "Who was it? I command him to stand out before the class instantly!"

The Form-master dabbed at his cheek with his handkerchief, and surveyed the dismayed class with gleaming eyes. No one spoke. All the Remove knew that the culprit was the humorist Skinner, but no one was disposed to give him away.

"Do you hear me?" thundered Mr. Quelch. "If the culprit does not immediately come forward, I will detain the whole class for the afternoon."

Oh!

Expressive glances were cast on Skinner from all sides. It was "up" to him to own up. But Skinner sat tight. He did not want a personal interview with Mr. Quelch just then. Mr. Quelch looked dangerous. He had taken a cane from his desk, and Skinner did not like the look of that cane.

"I say, you fellows," murmured Billy Bunter, "it's up to Skinner, you know. Besides, the beast meant it for me—"

"Shurrup!" whispered Bob Cherry.

But Mr. Quelch had caught the murmur of Billy Bunter's voice, and he rapped out:

"Bunter!"

"Ye-e-es, sir!" stammered Bunter.

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"You were speaking!"

"I, sir? Oh, no, sir! I haven't opened my lips, sir!"

simply said—

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Quelch's freezing glance checked the chuckle of the juniors. There was dead silence again.

"Bunter, you were speaking! Was it you who threw this pellet at me?"

"I, sir? Certainly not, sir! I haven't a catapult, sir!"

Skinner gave the fat junior a furious glance.

"Dry up, fathead!" muttered Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Silence, Wharton! So this pellet was discharged from a catapult!" said Mr. Quelch grimly.

Skinner caught Snoop's eye at the next desk, and passed him the catapult under the desk. Snoop slid it to the floor, and slid it along with his boot close to Bunter, pushing it close against the fat junior's feet. It was done so deftly that even the juniors around him did not observe it.

"A—a—catapult, sir!" stammered Bunter. "Did I mention a catapult, sir?" The glares of the other fellows made Bunter nervous. Bunter did not want to be detained that afternoon; but he realized that the consequences of sneaking might be more severe than detention.

"You did, Bunter! The boy who has a catapult in his possession is the culprit, and I command him to come forward!" said the Remove-master.

No one stirred.

"You may as well own up, Skinny," said Bunter, in a stage whisper.

"Shurrup!"

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"Skinner!" said Mr. Quelch, catching the name. "You have a catapult, Skinner?"

"I, sir? Oh, no, sir!" said Skinner calmly.

"Come here and turn out your pockets!"

Skinner advanced calmly, and turned out his pockets. Certainly there was no catapult to be discovered among their contents. Billy Bunter blinked at the humorist of the Remove in astonishment.

"Must have left it under his desk, you fellows," he murmured—a murmur loud enough for the Form-master to hear.

Mr. Quelch strode among the desks, looking for the catapult. He uttered a sudden exclamation as he caught sight of it, resting against Bunter's boots.

"Bunter!"

"Ye-e-es, sir," gasped Bunter, rising. His boot crunched the catapult as he did so.

"It was you!"

"I, sir! Oh, no, sir! Why, sir— I, sir— Oh, crumbs!"

"Then what is that catapult doing under your feet?" thundered the Form-master.

"M-m-my feet, sir?" stammered Bunter.

"Take it up instantly! Put it in the fire! Hold out your hand!"

"B-b-but, sir—"

"Hold out your hand, Bunter! You may go back to your place, Skinner! Bunter, I shall punish you severely for your impertinence, and also for your contemptible attempt to throw suspicion upon Skinner! Hold out your hand at once!"

Swish!

"Yaroooh! I didn't—I never—I wasn't— You! Ow!"

"The other hand, Bunter!"

Swish!

"Oh, crumbs! My hat! I swear I didn't—I never—"

"Silence! Go to your place!"

Billy Bunter went to his place, groaning deeply. He blinked pathetically at his neighbours.

"I say, you fellows, it was Skinner! You know it was Skinner—"

"Serve you jolly well right for trying to sneak!" said Bob Cherry.

"Ow, ow, ow!"

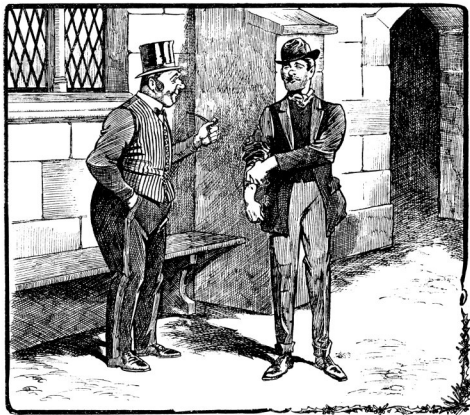
"Silence, Bunter! If you repeat those ridiculous noises, I shall come you again!"

And Bunter's "Ow, ow, ow!" died away into silence. Skinner wore a cheerful smile.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Slippery!

"HALLO, hello, hello! Isn't it ripping?" Morning lessons were over at last, and the Remove swarmed out of their Form-room into the white and glistening Close. The snow had ceased to fall, but the Close was covered as with a white mantle. Walls and window-sills and trees were thick with it. With a whoop the



"Mr. Percy!" gasped Gosling. "Haven't forgotten me, after all?" said the prodigal cheerily. "That's right, Gossy! I've come back." "Come back?" repeated Gosling mechanically. (See Chapter 10.)

juniors rushed out into the snow, and snowballs were soon flying on all sides.

"Here's Coker!" roared Bob Cherry. "Give Coker a few!"

"Hurrah!"

Coker of the Fifth had come out with Potter and Greene, Coker of the Fifth was too lofty a personage to join in snow-balling. But he had no choice in the matter. Snowballs whizzed at him on all sides, and his cap went flying, and snow trickled down his neck.

"You cheeky fags!" bellowed Coker, charging at the juniors.

Harry Wharton & Co. scattered on all sides, still piling in scornfully amid yells of laughter. Potter and Greene beat a hurried retreat into the School House, followed by whizzing missiles. Coker trampled furiously through the snow in pursuit of the juniors, crimson and breathless as the squashy missiles broke on his face and his neck on all sides.

"Good old Coker!" shouted Bob Cherry. "Three shies a penny! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Grooh! I'll—I'll——"

"Go it!"

"Hurrah!"

Coker gave it up at last. He retreated towards the School House, and the Removites followed on his track, still hurling snowballs. Coker strove to walk off with dignity at first; but his retreat soon became a flight, and he rushed into the House to escape the fire of the enemy.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 557.

Next Monday's Number of The "MAGNET" will be the usual price, 1d., and will contain a splendid, long, complete story, entitled:

The heroes of the Remove gave a cheer as Coker disappeared. It was a great triumph to put the lordly Coker to flight. And having vanquished the Fifth, they looked round, like Alexander of old, for new worlds to conquer.

Temple, Dalroy & Co. of the Fourth had been busy making a slide. The Fourth Formers were whizzing along the slide one after another, and with every passage it grew longer, till it extended half across the Close. But there was a yell of indignation from the Fourth as the Removites crowded up.

"Keep off our slide, you cheeky fags!" shouted Temple.

"Oh, rather!" said Dalroy. "We didn't make this slide for fags! Buzz off!"

"How now?" said Bob Cherry cheerfully, and he started on the slide.

Temple made a rush to collar him, and Bob Cherry caught him round the waist, and took him along the slide in a wild rush.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Temple, as he slid away backwards in Bob Cherry's grip. "Largo! You! On! I shall be over in a minute! Yarrah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry obligingly let go, and Temple sat down; but he had so much momentum by that time that he continued sliding in a sitting posture backwards. He rolled over headlong in the piled-up snow at the end of the slide, amid shouts of laughter.

After Bob a long line of Removites came whizzing along

'BILLY BUNTER'S UNCLE!' — By — Frank Richards.

the slide, much to the wrath of the Fourth-Formers, as they saw their property appropriated in this high-handed manner.

"Kick 'em out!" shouted Dabney.
 "Go for 'em!"
 "Snowball the cads!"
 "Back up!"

There was a wild and whirling snow-fight, and the slide was abandoned. The battle was raging at its hottest, when Mr. Quelch, in hat and overcoat and muffler, stepped out of the School House, and came along towards the gates.

The Remove-master was still in the preoccupied mood he had shown all the morning. There was a wrinkle in his brow, and he was evidently deep in thought. But the juniors were too busy to notice him just then.

Mr. Quelch glanced up at the shouts of the combatants, and frowned a little. It was unfortunate that he looked towards the snow-fight at that moment, for he had just reached the slide, which, in his preoccupation, he did not notice. His foot was planted on the smooth, slippery surface, and as it slipped away from under him, he gave a wild jump.

"Good heavens! What——"
 "Look out, sir!" shouted Bob Cherry, catching sight of the Form-master at that moment.

But it was too late for Mr. Quelch to look out. His right foot had run away, and as he strove to recover it, he brought his left foot down on the slide, and that ran away, too.

The unfortunate Form-master nearly pitched over on his face, and only saved himself by throwing his weight backwards, which gave a new impetus to his runaway feet.

In a moment he was whizzing along the slide, his arms waving in the air, his hat on the back of his head, and the ends of his muffler flying in the wind.

"Bless my soul! Help! Oh dear! Oh!"
 "Whiz!"
 He was gathering speed, and his breath was quite taken away. His hat flew off into the snow, and his arms swept the air like the sails of a windmill in his frantic efforts to keep his balance.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Heavo, sir!"
 The snow-fight had suddenly stopped. All eyes were turned upon Mr. Quelch now.

Some of the juniors supposed that the Form-master was enjoying the slide of his own accord, and as Mr. Quelch was not usually regarded as an athlete, they cheered him with great enthusiasm.

"Hurrah!"
 "Stick it, sir!"
 "Tuck in your tuppety!" yelled Tubb of the Third.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "He's not doing it on purpose, you duffers! He didn't see the slide! Oh, crumbs! There'll be a row over this!"
 "The rowfulness will be terrific!" ejaculated Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh. "The esteemed Quelch is coming a terrific cropper!"
 "Oh, scissors!"

Mr. Quelch, with arms and legs at weird angles, whizzed right down the slide, and reached the end of it. There he plunged headlong into the mass of snow, and almost disappeared from view. His legs waved wildly from the snow, and the fellows in the Close shrieked with laughter.

"Rescue!" gasped Wharton. "Get him out, for goodness sake! There will be the deekens to pay for this!"

The juniors rushed to the rescue. A dozen pairs of hands grasped Mr. Quelch, and he was dragged out of the snow, and right-ended, so to speak.

The Form-master was gasping for breath; his hat was gone, and he was smothered with snow from head to foot. His face was purple.

"You—you young rascals!" he splattered. "You—you——"
 "Sorry, sir——"
 "It's—it's a slide, sir!"
 "You see, sir——"

Mr. Quelch shook off the helping hands, and strode away to the School House. He was not in a fit state for going out now. He limped as he went towards the House. Bob Cherry rescued his hat, and ran after him with it. The Remove-master accepted it with a black frown in lieu of thanks. He disappeared into the House, limping.

"My hat!" said Bob, as he rejoined his chums. "My only summer bonnet! There will be a row now!"
 "Wasn't our fault," said Temple. "Why couldn't he look where he was going?"
 "Better ask him!" chuckled Bob.

"We'll leave you your slide now, Temple," said Squiff of THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 257.

the Remove blandly. "You can establish ownership. The owners of that slide will be looked for pretty soon."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "No fear!" said Temple promptly. "I disown it. You fags can have it! Come on, you fellows; let's be off!"

The much-contested slide remained without an owner. Exactly who was responsible for Mr. Quelch's mishap it was not easy to decide, but the juniors had no doubt that the Form-master's wrath would fall heavily upon somebody. Billy Bunter came rolling out of the School House, and he bore down on Harry Wharton & Co.

"You're wanted, Wharton!"
 "What! Who wants me?"
 "Quelch!" grinned Bunter. "He's sitting in his study, nursing his leg. He's got a sprain or something. I hope he's broken his leg!"

"Why, you fat chuk!"
 "Sorry, him right if he has!" sniffed Bunter, rubbing his fat hands, which were still tingling from the caning of the morning. "But there's no such luck. He wants you, Wharton. He's looking awfully savage. I don't envy you. He, he, he!"

"What are you cackling at, you owl?"
 "He, he, he! You're going to get it pretty hard!" chuckled Bunter. "He, he, he! I'm sorry for you, of course—he, he, he! you-ow-ow-oooooh!"

Bunter's fat chukle was suddenly stopped by a snowball, which squashed upon his mouth, and as the Owl of the Remove spluttered and choked, Harry Wharton strode away towards the School House.

"You're not to blame, any more than us. Nobody's to blame really!"

"Only Quelch, for being careless," remarked Nugent. Wharton grunted.
 "Let's all go in together," suggested Squiff.
 "No good. It would only mean a licking all round," said Harry. "Blessed if I know why he's chosen me. But it's all in the day's work."

And with extremely painful anticipations, the captain of the Remove presented himself at Mr. Quelch's study.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter Has No Luck!

MR. QUELCH was seated in his study, his hat and coat lying on the table.

He was certainly looking very cross. That was not surprising after his startling and painful experience. He sat with one leg resting across a stool. Harry Wharton coughed a little as he came in.

"We—we hope you are not hurt, sir," he began, as softly as a cooing dove.

"I am hurt, Wharton."
 "So sorry, sir," said Harry meekly. "We—we didn't know you would step on the slide, sir, or—or, of course, we—we——"

"The slide should not have been made in the Close," said Mr. Quelch, frowning. "It must be broken up immediately, do you hear?"

"Yes, sir," said Harry. "I—I'll go and begin on it at once, sir." He made a strategic movement towards the door.

"Stop, Wharton."
 Harry groaned inwardly. He was not to get off so easily as that, after all. He rubbed his hands involuntarily as he turned back to face his Form-master.

"Yes, sir," he said resignedly.
 Mr. Quelch smiled slightly.

"I did not send for you to punish you, Wharton."
 Wharton brightened up.

"No, sir? Thank you."
 "I was about to go out when I met with that—that accident," said Mr. Quelch. "I have slightly sprained my ankle, and I cannot now go where I intended."

"I am sorry, sir."
 "Unfortunately, it is too late to send a message to the gentleman who is expecting me. I wish, therefore, to send you to Friarville."

Wharton understood at last.
 "I'll go, with pleasure."

"There is a gentleman expecting me to call upon him at the inn in Friarville," said Mr. Quelch slowly. "You will go there, Wharton——" He paused.

"Yes, sir."
 "You will ask to see a—Mr. Brown."
 "Mr. Brown—yes, sir."
 "And you will bring him here."
 "Certainly, sir."
 "Stay a moment. I will write a note for you to take."

said Mr. Quelch. "You will be careful to place this note in the hands of the person I have mentioned, and in no one else's hands. It is very important."

"I will be very careful, sir."

Mr. Quelch drew pen and paper towards him, and wrote a short note. He sealed it in an envelope, and handed it to the captain of the Remove.

"Gire that to Mr.—Mr. Brown," The Form-master seemed to hesitate over the name, for some reason. "He will accompany you to the school immediately. If you are late in for dinner you will be excused. But be very careful indeed that you hand this note only to Mr. Brown, at the Friardale Arms."

"Very well, sir."

"Thank you, Wharton."

The junior quitted the study with the note in his hand, and closed the door behind him. He almost ran into Billy Bunter as he turned to go down the passage. Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles in breathless excitement.

"I say, Wharton—"

"You fat toad!" exclaimed Harry wrathfully. "You have been listening."

"Ahem! You see, I—"

Wharton pushed him aside, and strode on into the Close. There his chums gathered round him with inquiring looks.

"Licked?"

"No," said Harry, laughing. "Quelchy only wants me to take this note to Friardale. He's damaged his ankle, and can't keep an appointment there. Ta-ta!"

"I say, Wharton!" Billy Bunter rolled up, and caught the captain of the Remove by the sleeve in his excitement. "I say, wait a tick! Gimme that letter."

"Give you this letter?" repeated Wharton blankly.

"Yes. I'll take it for you," said Bunter; "a—a little walk will do me good, and—and as you're an old pal, you know, I'm willing to save you trouble."

"Let's see if it's fastened, anyway," urged Bunter.

"It's fastened, and it's going to stay fastened, you spying rotter," said Wharton angrily. "Clear off!"

"I say, you fellows," spluttered Bunter excitedly, "it's a jolly queer, Quelchy going off before dinner like that, and sending a note like this; and he told Wharton to be awfully, awfully careful to give it to nobody but Brown!"

"What the deuce does it matter to you?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Well, you see, if there's anything going on, you know—"

"Blessed if the fat beast doesn't want to spy into Quelchy's letter!" exclaimed Bob indignantly. "Collar him!"

"Hold on! I—I say, you fellows—yow-ow!"

"Roll him over!" shouted Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton walked down to the gates, leaving the Owl of the Remove struggling in the grasp of the Co. Inquisitiveness was almost a disease with Bunter, and he would have had no scruple whatever about reading Mr. Quelch's letter to satisfy his curiosity. The chums of the Remove proceeded to demonstrate their view of the matter. Billy Bunter was rolled over in the snow like a barrel, gasping and spluttering and roaring.

"Yoooh! Leggo! Chuck it! Grooo-hoogh! I'm chook-chook-choking! Oh crumbs! Help! Fire! Murder!"

"Pelt him!" shouted Squiff.

Bunter sat up in the snow, spluttering, and groping for his spectacles. The juniors gathered up snow, and pelted him on all sides. Bunter squirmed to and fro wildly to dodge the missiles; but as fast as he dodged one, another smote him.

"Ow! Yow! Help! Fire! Murder!" roared Bunter.

"Chuck it, you fellows! Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Buff, buff, buff the snowballs squashed on the fat junior. Bunter rolled wildly in the snow, the missiles crashing on him on all sides. But there was a sudden warning from Squiff.

"Cave! The Head!"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow! Help! Yow-ow!"

It was too late for the juniors to scatter. Dr. Locke, the Head of Greyfriars, had come out of the School House, and he came suddenly on the scene.

"Cherry! Field! Bull! Stop this instantly! What are you using Bunter in this manner for?"

"Ahem!"

"H'm!"

Bunter sat up, gouging the snow out of his eyes. He had not seen the Head.

"Stop it, you beasts!" he yelled. "Yow-ow! I was only j-j-joking! I wasn't going to look into Quelchy's letter at all! Groo-hooh!"

"Bunter!" rapped out the Head, in a terrible voice. It wasn't necessary for the ragging to be explained now. Bunter had explained it.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Bunter!"

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NEXT MONDAY, The "Magnet" LIBRARY, ONE PENNY.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter, discovering the Head's presence at last. "Yes, sir! These beasts have been snow-balling me, sir—groo!"

"Get up at once!"

Bunter scrambled to his feet. He wiped his spectacles, and jammed them on his fat little nose, and blinked uneasily at the Head.

"You have been attempting to read a letter of Mr. Quelch's, Bunter!" said the Head, in a terrifying voice.

"Oh, no, sir! I wouldn't do such a thing. I—I didn't even know that Wharton was taking a letter from Mr. Quelch to that Brown chap, sir!"

"What?"

"These beasts were ragging me, sir," said Bunter, blinking at him. "They're rotters, sir. I'm hurt! Ow!"

"I think you deserved it, Bunter. I think you deserve further punishment also. I distinctly heard you say—"

"Oh, no, sir!" murmured Bunter. "That's quite a mistake, sir. It was Bob Cherry, sir."

"What?"

"I—I was simply pointing out to Bob Cherry, sir, that it would be dishonourable to—to read Mr. Quelch's letter, sir," stammered Bunter.

"Why, you fat rotter—" roared Bob.

"Silence, Cherry! You are speaking falsely, Bunter," said the Head.

"Not at all, sir! I—I never do, sir. Some of the fellows dislike me because I'm so truthful, sir," said Bunter, feebly.

"I do not believe a word of what you have said with regard to Cherry—"

"Ahem! Now I come to think of it, sir, it was Bull—"

"I!" yelled Johnny Bull.

"Ahem! No; I mean Nugent—"

"Silence, Bunter! It appears that Mr. Quelch has given Wharton a note to take to someone, and you wished to read it. Your Form-fellows were quite right, Bunter, to show their indignation and contempt for your meanness."

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Bunter.

"You will take two hundred lines, and stay in this afternoon to write them out!" added the Head severely.

"Oh!"

Dr. Locke went on his way, leaving Bunter blinking furiously at the juniors. The chums of the Remove were grinning.

"Oh, crumbs!" groaned Bunter. "Two hundred lines! What a beast! Don't make faces at me, Bob Cherry; I'm not going to shut up! I say the Head's a beast—"

"Do you!" said the voice of Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, close behind the Owl of the Remove. "Then you will take two hundred lines for it, Bunter."

Bunter swung round in dismay.

"I—I say, Wingate, I didn't see you—I—I mean, I didn't say anything of the sort—that is to say, I was only joking—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's enough!" said Wingate. "You'll do those lines before tea-time."

Billy Bunter rolled disconsolately into the House. His luck was out!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

"Mr. Brown!"

HARRY WHARTON came down the old High Street of Friardale, tramping through the snow that was thick in the village street. Roofs and gables in the old village were glistening with snow. Outside the village inn a man wrapped in a heavy overcoat was tramping to and fro, pausing every now and then in his walk to cast a glance towards the lane which led to Greyfriars.

Wharton wondered whether this was the Mr. Brown to whom he was to take the letter.

He was a young man—not more than twenty-six or so—with a clear-cut face, somewhat pallid in complexion. There were lines in his brow and at the corners of his mouth, which seemed out of place in so young a man.

As Wharton came up to the inn he glanced at the schoolboy, and after a moment's pause strode towards him.

"Have you come from Greyfriars School?" he asked.

"Yes," said Harry.

"You have perhaps a message for me, then?"

"I have a letter for someone here," said Wharton. "Will you tell me your name, sir?"

"I am expecting to hear from Mr. Quelch," said the young man. "If he has sent me a letter he would send it to a Mr. Brown. Is that the name you want?"

It was not till long afterwards that it occurred to Wharton that the man had not replied directly to his question.

"That is the name, sir," said Harry. The young man stretched out his hand. "Give me the letter," he said. Wharton drew it from his pocket, and then paused. "Of course, I believe what you say, sir," he said civilly. "But Mr. Quelch was so particular about this letter that I think I'd better ask in the inn before I hand it over to anyone."

The young man smiled. "Quite so; you cannot be too careful," he said cheerfully enough. "Come in with me."

Harry Wharton followed him into the inn. A rubicund old gentleman was smoking his pipe within—the landlord of the Friarale Arms.

"You have a gentleman named Brown staying with you, Mr. Williams?" asked Harry.

The landlord made a gesture with his pipe. "There he is, my lad."

Wharton handed the letter to Mr. Brown without further ado. The young man took it eagerly and opened it. He seemed to forget the junior's presence as he scanned the few lines in the letter with avidity. His face brightened up as he read.

Wharton regarded him curiously. The young man's face was handsome, though it showed the signs of stress, of a hard life—perhaps of deep trouble; of something else, too, that Wharton's boyish eyes could not read. The face was deeply sunburnt, as if the stranger had been used to exposure to hotter sun than that of England.

He looked up suddenly from the letter and caught Wharton's eyes upon his face. The junior coloured a little. Mr. Brown did not appear to notice it.

"Mr. Quelch asks me to accompany you to Greyfriars," he said abruptly.

"Yes," said Harry. "Let us go at once."

"I'm ready."

They quitted the inn together and walked down the village street. Mr. Brown walked with almost feverish haste, and Wharton had to exert himself to keep up with him. As they walked the young man was looking about him with evident interest. Uncle Clegg was standing at the door of the village tuckshop, and he saluted the well-dressed stranger; and Mr. Brown looked at him hard, and paused for a moment.

"Seasonable weather, Mr. Clegg," he remarked.

"You're right, sir," said Uncle Clegg. "We shall have an 'ard Christmas."

Mr. Brown seemed about to speak again, but he closed his lips, and, with a nod to Mr. Clegg, he walked on.

"You know this place, Mr. Brown?" Wharton remarked, as they came out into the lane, where the snow was ground into slush by the carts from the farms.

Mr. Brown started.

"I? I have just arrived here," he said. "What makes you think so?"

"Why, you called old Uncle Clegg by his name," said Harry, in surprise.

Mr. Brown coloured.

"Did I?" he said. "Yes, of—of course! His name is over his shop, isn't it?"

Wharton stared at him. Uncle Clegg's name was not over his shop, as a matter of fact. Mr. Brown must certainly have known the old fellow by sight, to address him by his name; and why he should wish to conceal the fact was a mystery. His words had evidently been intended to give Wharton the impression that he had seen Mr. Clegg's name over the shop-front.

"Well?" said Mr. Brown sharply, catching the junior's surprised stare.

"Uncle Clegg's name isn't over his shop," said Harry drily.

"Oh!" ejaculated Mr. Brown.

He walked on in silence; and Wharton was silent, too. Mr. Brown did not offer any further explanation; and Wharton was not inquisitive, but he could not help wondering. The sunburnt stranger—if he was a stranger—was evidently uncommunicative. He looked about him continually as they went down the lane, but did not speak a single word till the gates of Greyfriars came in sight.

"Here we are, sir," said Harry, breaking the silence at last.

"Yes, yes, I know—I mean, yes!" said Mr. Brown a little incoherently.

"You know Greyfriars, sir?" said Harry a little maliciously. For it was evident that Mr. Brown knew the place, but for some mysterious reason wished it to appear that he did not.

But Mr. Brown was not to be drawn. He appeared to be suddenly deaf, and did not answer the question.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 357.

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They entered the school gates; and Gosling, the porter, touched his cap. Gosling looked very hard at Mr. Brown.

The young man gave him a casual nod, and walked on towards the School House. Gosling stared after him, and spoke to Wharton.

"Master Wharton?"

Harry stopped.

"Yes, Gossy?"

"Who's that?" asked Gosling, with a jerk of his head after Mr. Brown, who was striding along the snow-covered path towards the School House.

"Mr. Brown," said Harry. "A friend of Mr. Quelch's."

"Oh!" said Gosling. "A stranger 'ere—wot!"

"I've never seen him before," said Harry. "You don't know him, Gossy?"

"No," said Gosling thoughtfully. "A friend of Mr. Quelch's, is he? No, Master Wharton, I don't know 'im from Adam, I don't!"

And Gosling went back into his lodge.

Wharton hastened his steps to overtake Mr. Brown. The Close was deserted—the Greyfriars fellows were indoors at dinner. Wharton rejoined the sunburnt stranger as he reached the School House.

"I'll show you to Mr. Quelch's study, sir," said Harry.

Wharton knocked at the Form-master's door.

"Come in!"

"Mr. Brown, sir!" said Harry, opening the door.

Mr. Quelch rose quickly to his feet, limping a little. The young man passed Wharton, striding quickly into the study.

Wharton drew the door shut quickly. He had no desire whatever to surprise any of Mr. Quelch's private affairs—he did not share Billy Bunter's yearning for knowledge of that sort. But as he closed the door he could not help hearing Mr. Quelch's exclamation:

"You have come, then! What does this mean?"

Wharton hurried away down the passage.

He came into the dining-room, and dropped into his place at the Remove table. Wingate of the Sixth was in charge of the table, but he did not make any remark on Wharton's lateness. Mr. Quelch had evidently mentioned the matter to the prefect. Wharton's walk in the keen air had given him a good appetite, and he piled into his dinner with great gusto.

Billy Bunter jerked at his sleeve.

"I say, Wharton—"

"Pass the salt," said Wharton.

"Blow the salt! Here it is. Did you find Brown—what?"

"Pass the pepper."

"Hang the pepper! What was he like?"

"Pass the mustard."

"Look here, Wharton—"

"Pass the bread."

"But I say—"

"Pass the cruet."

Billy Bunter gave it up.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Snow Fight!

"THAT chap's staying here," Bolsover major remarked. A good many of the Remove fellows were interested in Mr. Quelch's young friend, Mr. Brown.

The fact that Mr. Quelch had missed his lunch, talking to his visitor in his study, could not escape general notice.

But it was the fact, Lunch for two had been taken into Mr. Quelch's study long after the Greyfriars fellows had finished their dinner. Billy Bunter, whose inquisitiveness was as keen as ever, questioned Trotter, who took in the lunch. But the page could only tell him that the two gentlemen were "torkin' like anything" when he went in, and—shut up immediately he appeared, and went on "torkin' like anything" immediately he departed, as he knew by the murmur of voices in the study. He added that Mr. Quelch looked quite good-tempered.

And, later, those who were interested in the matter learned that a room was being prepared for Mr. Quelch's young friend; which meant that he was staying the night at Greyfriars.

"He's staying, right enough," said Skinner. "I wonder what that long palaver was about? Quelch doesn't often miss a feed."

"Tain't a chap trying to borrow money, after all," said Billy Bunter thoughtfully. "Trotty says that Quelch is looking good-tempered."

"Hallo! Here he is!" said Bolsover.

Mr. Brown came out of the School House with the Remove-master. They walked across the Close, chatting. Mr. Brown



On Christmas Day of this year, "Peace on earth" is a phrase which will ring harshly in the ears of those at home. Our thoughts must invariably turn from all the revelry and fireside frolic to the brave fellows who, as is the case in our picture, are posted as pickets in a strange land, ever ready to strike a blow on behalf of the splendid Empire whose sons they are.

paused every now and then to look about him. The Remove-master was evidently showing him the school.

Harry Wharton & Co. came upon them in the Close, and raised their caps. Mr. Quelch and his friend had paused by the gate of the Head's garden. Dr. Locke could be seen there, walking up and down the garden-path, from which the snow had been swept.

Mr. Brown looked across the gate at the doctor, and the juniors saw his face change in colour.

"Not now," he said to his companion.

"Come, come!" said Mr. Quelch.

He opened the gate, and led his friend through into the garden. Harry Wharton & Co. walked on.

"Is that the chap?" asked Bob Cherry.

"That's Brown," said Harry, with a nod.

"He didn't want to see the Head; looked as if he thought the old boy would eat him," grinned Bob. "I wonder if he's an old Greyfriars chap, and remembers the cane?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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But the Co. had no time to think about Mr. Brown. The football match that had been arranged for that afternoon had had to be abandoned on account of the snow, and the Upper Fourth had been challenged to a snow-fight to take its place. Temple, Dabney & Co. had entrenched themselves on the footer ground, building a snow fort with great care and industry, and a banner—formed of a footer-shirt fastened to a beathook—floated over the fortress. Temple hailed the chums of the Remove.

"Ready!" he called out.

"Come on!" shouted Dabney, starting the proceedings with a snowball that caught Bob Cherry under the chin and burst there.

"Yaroooh!" roared Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha! Give 'em socks!" shouted Temple.

A volley of snowballs drove the Famous Five back. The Fourth-Formers fired the snow fortifications and yelled derisively.

'BILLY BUNTER'S UNCLE!' --- By ---
Frank Richards.

"Roll up, Remove!" roared Bob Cherry. "All hands on deck!"

The Removites crowded up from all quarters, ready for battle. Harry Wharton marshalled his forces for the attack.

"All here!" he demanded. "One—two missing! We want every man. Where are Bunter and Mauleverer?"

"We'll jolly soon find 'em," said Bob Cherry. "Look in the tuck-shop for Bunter! I'll root Mauly out."

Bob rushed off to the School House in search of Lord Mauleverer. He found the slacker of the Remove reclining in an easy chair before a big fire in his study. Mauleverer looked up a little apprehensively as Bob came in like a whirlwind.

"Bogad! Sit down, old chap!"

"Jump up!"

"Can't!"

"Why not?" demanded Bob.

"Tired."

"I'll give you something to cure all that," said Bob cheerfully; and he took the chair by the back, and rolled his lordship out on the hearthrug.

"Ow! Bogad!"

"Come on!" shouted Bob. "We're waiting to begin the giddy battle."

"Leave me out, old chap," implored Lord Mauleverer.

"It's cold, you know."

"I'll warm you," said Bob.

"Oh crumbs! Bogad! Leggo!"

"Rats!"

Bob took a firm grip on Lord Mauleverer's collar, and propelled him out of the study. His lordship gasped as he was run at top speed down the passage. They came out of the School House with a rush, and Bob did not slacken till they were upon the football ground. Then Lord Mauleverer staggered against a goal-post and gasped.

"Ow! ow! Oh, bogad! My hat!"

"Buck up!" said Bob encouragingly. "Don't you feel warm enough yet? I'll give you a run round the field, if you like."

"Ho, ho, ha!"

"Ow—keep off! I'm warm enough!" gasped Mauleverer.

"Where's Bunter?"

"Here he comes!" chuckled Nugent.

Billy Bunter was coming from the direction of the tuck-shop, in the grasp of Squiff and Johnny Bull and Bol-overs major. He was protesting loudly.

"Yow-ow! I say, you fellows, I'm not in this. I don't like rotten snow-fights! I think it's all rot! Lemme alone! Yaroooh! Leggo!"

"Here he is!" panted Squiff. "What a giddy weight! Drop him!"

Bunter was dropped, with a heavy bump and a roar.

"Ow, you beasts! You've broken my leg! Oh!"

"Jump on him!" said Bob.

Bunter was on his feet in a twinkling.

"You—you beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, line up!" said Harry Wharton. "Get a move on! You take half the fellows and attack on the right, Squiff! The rest of you, follow me! We've got to have 'em out of that fort!"

"I say, Wharton—"

"Shut up! Forward!"

With a yell, the Removites rushed to the attack. Bob Cherry had taken hold of Lord Mauleverer, and the slacker of the Remove had to rush on. Billy Bunter tried to dodge, but Squiff had hold of one fat arm, and Johnny Bull of the other, and Bunter charged forward with them, his fat little legs going like clockwork.

"Ow! ow! ow!" roared Bunter, as a snowball from Dabney squashed on his fat face. "Ow! Leggo, you beasts! I tell you I ain't in this! Yaroooh!"

Bunter was certainly in it—very much in it! His fat figure was a good target, and the snowballs fairly rained on him as the juniors charged the fort.

"Keep 'em out!" roared Temple. "Back up!"

"Hurrah!"

"File in, Remove!"

"Go it, Fourth!"

Temple, Dabney & Co. had prepared whole stocks of ammunition. The Removites charged with their arms full of snowballs, and a hot fire was exchanged as they came charging up to the snow walls. Then they strove to clamber over, but raining snowballs from above bowled them over and drove them back. The truce was, as Hurreo Singh said, terrific. On the left, Harry Wharton & Co. were driven back, and they retreated, gasping, and opened fire from a distance with snowballs. But, on the right, Squiff had plunged headlong over the wall, and was struggling in the midst of the defenders.

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"Rescue!" yelled the Australian junior. "Back up, Remove!"

His followers made a tremendous rush after him, and swarmed over the snow defences. The fight was at its hottest now. The defenders were crowding to deal with Squiff's party, and Harry Wharton & Co. made another rush, and scrambled into the fort.

"Give 'em socks!" roared Wharton.

The invaders helped themselves from the piles of ammunition prepared by Temple & Co., and the Fourth-Formers, taken between two fires, scattered and fled. Temple and Dabney and Fry strove to rally them; but the invaders were inside the fort, and they were not to be denied. There was a terrific struggle at close quarters, and then the Fourth were driven helter-skelter from the snow fort.

"Hurrah!"

"Hip-hip!"

Volleys of their own ammunition followed the fleeing Fourth-Formers, and the Remove remained in triumphant possession of the fort. Billy Bunter crawled into the fort after all the defenders were gone.

"Licked 'em, haven't we?" gasped Bunter. "My hat, what a tussle! Did you see me pitch Temple out on his nose, Wharton, old man?"

"No, I didn't."

"Didn't you see me mopping up Dabney?"

"No."

"Oh, really, Wharton! You saw me, Cherry—"

"I saw you dodging behind the other chaps and keeping out of the scrap, you fat spoofer!" growled Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry! I should have been the first man in if—if I hadn't stopped to tie up my boot-lace! I say, you fellows, we've beaten them to the wide, and we ought to celebrate this, you know. I propose a jolly good feed, and I'm willing to take all the trouble. You hand me over your subscriptions, and I'll do the shopping. Now, all of you pile in and hand over something, you know."

"Right-ho!" said Bob Cherry, grabbing up a handful of snow. "Mine's a snowball."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really! Yaroooh! Grough! Chuck it!"

"I've chucked it!" grinned Bob. "But here's another!"

"And here's another!" chuckled Squiff.

"And here's another!"

"The anotherfulness is terrific!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter fled, under a shower of snowballs, spluttering wildly, and the proposed celebration never came off.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The New Master!

THAT was a surprise for the Remove the following morning.

No one had expected it. Even Billy Bunter, who was generally well posted, had no idea of it.

It took the whole Form by surprise.

That Mr. Brown, the Remove-master's very friend, had stayed the night at Greyfriars, they knew; but they did not expect to see him enter the Form-room with Mr. Quelch in the morning. But he did; and then they supposed that he had come to observe them at lessons. The announcement from Mr. Quelch that followed took them completely by surprise.

Mr. Quelch gave his well-known little cough, which was a sign that he was going to address the class. The Remove were all attention.

"My boys," said Mr. Quelch, "owing to certain circumstances, I shall be leaving before the commencement of the Christmas vacation—in fact, I am quitting Greyfriars to-day. I shall not see you again till next term."

"Bogad!" murmured Lord Mauleverer involuntarily.

The juniors listened in surprise. Who was going to take the Remove after the Form-master had gone? Mr. Quelch quickly enlightened them.

"After I am gone, and until the end of the term, Mr. Brown will take charge of my class," he added.

"Oh!"

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "So he's a giddy schoolmaster, is he? Shouldn't have thought it!"

"You will, of course, treat Mr. Brown exactly as if it were myself," went on Mr. Quelch. "The Head has been pleased to approve of this arrangement, at my request, as I have reasons for wishing to leave before the vacation begins. I trust that you will get on as well with your new master as with me, my boys."

"But you are not going for good, sir?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

Mr. Quelch smiled.

"No, Wharton. This arrangement is merely temporary. I shall return with the new term. I hope to find, then, that Mr. Brown has had no difficulty with my Form."

Skinner winked at Bolsover major. Considering the youth of the new master, there was every prospect that the bonds of discipline would be relaxed. In fact, when once the severe and keen-eyed Remove-master was gone, the more unruly spirits in the Form might look forward to a high old time.

"Mr. Brown will take the class this morning, under my supervision," added Mr. Quelch.

No more was said, and morning lessons began. Mr. Quelch remained in the Form-room, and the juniors who observed him could see that he was a little anxious about the way Mr. Brown acquitted himself. But the new master needed little help from the old master. He took up the work as if he were accustomed to it, and Mr. Quelch's expression at the end of morning lessons showed that he was quite satisfied.

The two masters left the Form-room together, chatting amicably. In the Close the Removites discussed the surprise their Form-master had sprung upon them.

"Seems a decent sort, that Brown chap," said Bob Cherry. "He knows his bizney. Not quite such a dragon as Quelch, either."

"Wait till Quelch's gone!" said Skinner, with a grin. "We shall have an easy time with this chap. Once old Quelch is off the scene, we can begin to pull his leg."

"Yes, rather!" said Bolsover major. "He's too young to take a Form like us. We'd better start by putting him in his place at once."

"We'll start Bunter ventriloquising on him," chuckled Skinner. "As he's a giddy stranger, it's up to us to take him in—has it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Better give him a chance," said Harry Wharton uneasily. "As he's a new master, it won't be any too easy for him at first. Give the chap a chance."

"Oh, rot!"

"Rats!"

"Bow-wow!"

After dinner that day Mr. Quelch left, and Mr. Brown went to the station with him. The new master came back by himself, and most of the juniors were in the Close, and noted him come in. Skinner & Co. exchanged looks. It was time for the campaign to begin.

Whiz!
A snowball came hurtling through the air, and it caught the new master's hat and hurled it from his head. There was a laugh round the Close.

Mr. Brown jumped, and looked round for his hat. "So sorry, sir!" exclaimed Skinner. "I meant that for Bolsover, sir! Quit an accident, sir, I assure you!"

Mr. Brown looked at him very hard.

"Very well; if it was an accident, I excuse you," he said. "Fetch me my hat!"

Skinner docilely fetched the hat, and Mr. Brown replaced it on his head, and, with another very hard look at Skinner, he went on towards the School House.

Whiz!
"Oh!"

Another snowball caught the hat on the other side, and sent it flying. Mr. Brown looked round, and his eyes sparkled.

"Who threw that snowball?" he exclaimed.

"So sorry, sir!" exclaimed Bolsover major. "I meant that for Skinner, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up, you fellows!" said Bolsover major reprovingly. "There's nothing to laugh at. It was an accident, sir—a pure accident."

"Give me my hat!" said Mr. Brown.

"Here you are, sir."

"What is your name?"

"Bolsover, sir—Bolsover major."

"Very well. You will take two hundred lines of Virgil, Bolsover major, and you will bring them to my study by tea-time."

Bolsover major ceased to grieve.

"T-two hundred lines, sir?" he exclaimed.

"Yes."

"I—I say, sir! For an accident, you know—"

"Accidents of that kind must not happen, Bolsover major," said Mr. Brown calmly, and he walked on. Snoop and Stott and Ogilvy dropped snowballs which they had had all ready. The young Form-master was evidently not so soft as he looked, and they did not want two hundred lines each to be taken in by tea-time.

Bolsover major stood dismayed. The expression on his face made the juniors yell.

"The—the rotter!" gasped Bolsover. "Two hundred lines! The beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Better give him a wide berth, old chap," grinned Tom Brown, the New Zealand junior. "He isn't quite so soft as he looks."

"The rotter!" snarled Bolsover. "Two hundred lines!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 257.

Next Monday's Number of "THE MAGNET" will be the usual price, 1d., and will contain a Splendid, Long, Complete Story, entitled:

My hat! Skinner, you silly idiot, you can do half those lines! It was your wheeze!"

"Oh, rot!" said Skinner. "I'm not doing any lines!"

"It was your idea to snowball the beast!" roared Bolsover, greatly incensed. "You'll jolly well do half the lines, or I'll punch your head!"

"Fair play, Skinner!" chuckled Peter Todd. "Make it halves!"

"Rot!" growled Skinner. Bolsover major advanced upon him with his big fists clenched, and Skinner changed his mind all of a sudden. "Oh, all right! I don't mind taking my whack, Bolsover, old chap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And after lessons that day Bolsover and Skinner were very busy doing lines up to tea-time. They did a hundred each, and Bolsover sulkily took them to Mr. Quelch's study, which was now occupied by the new master. Mr. Brown received them gravely, and looked over them.

"One moment, Bolsover!" said Mr. Brown, as the bulky Removite was making for the door.

Bolsover stopped, with a subdued growl.

"I gave you two hundred lines, Bolsover."

"There's two hundred there!" granted Bolsover.

"Exactly, but I presume that you do not write in two different hands," said Mr. Brown calmly. "Which is your handwriting, Bolsover, of the two?"

Bolsover set his teeth. The new master was as keen a beast as the old master evidently. Bolsover major had not expected that.

"I—I—I—" he stammered.

"Take a pen, and write your name," said Mr. Brown.

Bolsover obeyed, quivering with suppressed wrath. Mr. Brown looked at his signature, and compared it with the imposition.

"Very well! You have written half these lines!" he said.

"You will now go and write the other hundred, Bolsover."

"Look here, sir—"

"Don't argue with me, Bolsover, or I shall come you," said Mr. Brown quietly. "You will tell me the name of the other boy who snowballed me, before you go."

"Skinner!" growled Bolsover.

"Skinner what?" rapped out Mr. Brown.

"Skinner, sir."

"That is better. Send Skinner to me."

Bolsover major retired, looking as black as thunder, and a few minutes later Skinner entered the study.

"Write your name there, please," said Mr. Brown, indicating a pen and paper.

Skinner hesitated.

"What for, sir?"

"Because I tell you to do so."

"Oh!"

Skinner wrote his name. Mr. Brown compared it with the imposition.

"You wrote half these lines, Skinner."

"I—I—I—"

"The handwriting is the same."

"I—I—I helped old Bolsover, sir," stammered Skinner.

"We—wo often do, sir—"

"As you are so fond of writing lines, Skinner, you may take another hundred. I shall expect them before bedtime. You may go."

Skinner went.

The humorist of the Remove came into his study looking like a thundercloud. His study-mate, Vernon-Smith, was having his tea there. The Bounder of Greyfriars grinned at Skinner's expression.

"The beast!" growled Skinner. "The horrid cad!"

"What's the trouble now?" yawned the Bounder.

"The beast spotted that I did half Bolsover's impot—and I've got another hundred lines to do," howled Skinner.

"What do you think of the rotter?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothing to cackle at, you silly idiot!"

"He's too sharp for you!" chuckled the Bounder. "Better leave him alone, Skinny. He's too thick for you altogether." Skinner snorted.

"I'll make him sit up, all the same!" he growled. And Skinner sat down disconsolately to do lines.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.
Mysterious Voices!

MR. BROWN took the Resorce the next morning. There was some suppressed excitement in the class.

If Mr. Brown observed it, he gave no sign of having done so. He was an extremely quiet and calm young gentleman, and his manner to the boys was very kind and

pleasant. But the more keen of the Removites had already observed that his kind and quiet manner concealed a firmness and determination quite equal to Mr. Quelch's. The wiser members of the Remove had decided not to pull Mr. Brown's leg in class. They anticipated that the results would be more painful for them than for Mr. Brown.

But Skinner & Co. were not beaten yet. The new master had won the first round, so to speak; but the young rascals had declared their intention of not being "downed" by a young fellow only ten or twelve years older than themselves. In comparison with Mr. Quelch, the new master was a mere "kid," and the Form which had the reputation of being the most unruly at Greyfriars was not to be "downed" by a kid.

Skinner & Co. had laid their plans to give Mr. Brown a high old time that morning, by enlisting the services of Billy Bunter. Bunter might be a champion ass in everything else, but there was no doubt that he was a clever ventriloquist. Bunter boasted that it was a gift—and the other fellows quite believed him, since they were certain that Bunter hadn't the brains to learn anything.

Billy Bunter was only too willing to get into the limelight, as it were; but he had exacted from Skinner & Co. the promise of a tremendous fee as a reward if he succeeded in worrying and bothering the new master to his wits' end. Mr. Quelch was acquainted with Bunter's peculiar gifts, but they would come as a surprise to Mr. Brown.

The whole Form were in a state of suppressed excitement and expectation.

Billy Bunter felt the eyes of the class upon him; but he did not seem in a hurry to begin. There was something in Mr. Brown's quiet glance that made the Owl of the Remove a little uneasy at the thought of tackling him. First and second lessons passed off quietly, and Skinner & Co. were getting impatient.

"File in, you silly ass!" Skinner whispered to the fat junior.

"Hum! I'm just going to begin!" murmured Bunter.

"Skinner! Bunter!" rapped out Mr. Brown.

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"You must not talk in class."

"I—I wasn't talking, sir," said Bunter. "Not a word, sir! I never talk in class, sir."

"Bunter! Don't be untruthful."

"Untruthful, sir! Certainly not. I'm the most truthful chap in the Remove, sir," said Bunter. "I didn't say a word, sir."

"Take fifty lines, Bunter, for untruthfulness," said Mr. Brown sternly.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove did not need any urging from Skinner after that. He was blinking with wrath. He was only too anxious now to commence operations, and make the best air up, as he expressed it. The Remove felt that something was coming now, as they heard Bunter give a little fat cough to clear his throat, and they waited in a state of great expectation.

GRUFF!

Mr. Brown started, and looked under his desk. Then he looked round the Form-room. The juniors sat as still as mice under the eyes of the cat.

"Is there a dog in the room?" asked Mr. Brown. "It is not allowed to bring animals into the Form-room, as you know."

GRUFF!

The growl of the dog seemed to come from among the boys' desks now, and Mr. Brown frowned angrily.

"Whom does that dog belong to?" he demanded.

"What dog, sir?" asked Skinner.

"Did you not hear a dog growl?"

"No, sir."

"Gruff! Bow-wow-wow-wow!"

"Drive that dog out at once!" exclaimed Mr. Brown.

"Certainly, sir."

The juniors all left their places immediately, very glad of that suspension of the lesson. They hunted for the non-existent dog with great glee. In a couple of minutes the Form-room was in an uproar. Mr. Brown looked on with frowning brows. The dog did not appear, and the growl was not heard again.

"Cannot you find him?" exclaimed the new master.

"Can't see him anywhere, sir," said Peter Toad.

"Seems to have disappeared, sir," chuckled Fisher T. Fish.

"I guess that dog has vanquished the ranch, sir."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Kindly resume your places," said Mr. Brown, looking exceedingly annoyed. "I think I understand. Someone here has been imitating the growl of a dog. It was very cleverly done, but the Form-room is not the place for such cleverness."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 357.

If there is any repetition of this nonsense, I shall punish the offender severely. Take your places!"

The Removites unwillingly took their places. Barely had they sat down when a voice proceeded from the direction of the door.

"Open this door, please."

Mr. Brown swung round towards the door and opened it. He looked out into the passage, but the passage was empty. He closed the door again, and came back to his desk with a very perplexed expression on his face.

The Removites grinned joyously.

GRUFF! Bow-wow-wow!

Mr. Brown jumped. The voice of the unseen dog came now from the big cupboard at the end of the Form-room, where the desks and blackboards were kept. Mr. Brown seized a pointer, and strode towards the cupboard, frowning.

He tore the door open, and glared into the cupboard. He dragged the contents aside, and peered into every corner in search of the dog. But there was no dog to be seen.

Mew-ew-mew-aion!

It was a cat this time, close behind the Form-master. He spun round as if he had been electrified.

"What—what—who—?" Mr. Brown gasped. "This—this must be some trick! Yet—yet it seemed to me that I heard a cat close to me—quite close. The next boy who laughs will be caned. This is not a laughing matter. Someone has been introducing animals into the Form-room."

"Open this door at once!"

Mr. Brown spun round towards the door of the Form-room.

"Who is there?" he called out.

"Come and see, fathead!"

"Wha-a-a!"

The new master made a rush across the Form-room to the door, and dragged it wide open. He glared into the passage. The passage was empty.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Every boy in the class will take fifty lines!" rapped out Mr. Brown. "I will keep order here! Someone is playing a trick."

He left the Form-room door wide open this time, and came back towards his desk. He was evidently under the impression that some cheeky junior had called through the door and bolted. But it was very odd, because at that hour all the fellows ought to have been in the class-rooms. Mr. Brown was surprised and puzzled, and he was growing very exasperated.

"Silence!" he rapped out. "You will learn that these pranks will not do. I will punish the offender severely when I discover him."

"Mr. Brown!"

It was a voice from the passage—the voice of Dr. Locke, the revered Head of Greyfriars.

"Yes, sir," ejaculated Mr. Brown.

"Follow me to my study immediately, please."

"Certainly, sir!"

Mr. Brown left his desk.

"I leave you in charge of the Form for a few minutes, Wharton," he said.

"Yes, sir," said Harry demurely.

Mr. Brown quitted the Form-room. The Head was not in the passage. Evidently he had gone—if he had been there at all—and Mr. Brown, with a puzzled brow, hurried away in the direction of Dr. Locke's study.

In the Remove Form-room there was a burst of merriment. Bolsover major slapped Bunter on the back ecstatically.

"Good old Tubby! Ha, ha, ha!"

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

"But, my hat, what will the Head say when Brown gets to his study?" ejaculated Squiff.

And the juniors yelled again.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Not a Success!

MR. BROWN tapped at the door of the Head's study. There was no reply from within.

The new master looked puzzled and worried. It was possible that the Head was in the Sixth Form-room; but he had told Mr. Brown to follow him to his study—at all events, Mr. Brown thought that he had.

The master tapped again, and as there was no reply he opened the door to see whether the Head was there.

He glanced into the study.

Dr. Locke was there, but he had not heard the tap at the door. He did not look up as the door opened. He had his back to Mr. Brown as he stood in the study, with his eyes fixed upon a portrait that hung on the wall near his desk.



Gosling's eyes were fixed upon the young master, as if the sight of Mr. Brown had a mesmerising effect upon him. "Goal!" roared the crowd. "Pile 'em up! Goal!" The Remove were seven to one now—a score that was a joke in itself. The crowd yelled with laughter. (See Chapter 20.)

The new master started and paused. He followed the glance of the Head, and his eyes rested on the portrait, too.

It was that of a young man, not more than nineteen or twenty years of age, handsome enough, but with a reckless and devil-may-care expression on the face that told of a nature turbulent and self-willed. There was a faint resemblance between the face in the picture and the kind old face that was looking at it.

Dr. Locke seemed to be absorbed in his contemplation of the portrait, and the new master heard him give a deep sigh.

Mr. Brown stood quite still, with a very singular expression on his face, which had become quite pale.

A full minute elapsed, and then the Head made a movement. He started as he caught sight of the Form-master standing within the doorway.

"Mr. Brown!" he ejaculated.

The Head's eyes were wet—wet with tears. "I—I did not mean to surprise you, sir. I knocked twice, but apparently you did not hear me."

"Then I must ask you to excuse me," said the Head, with a faint smile. "I was—I was preoccupied." He glanced at the handsome, smiling portrait again, and after a pause he went on: "That is the portrait of my nephew, whom I have not seen for many years—very many years." He sighed.

"He is absent from England!" asked Mr. Brown.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 357.

Next Monday's Number of The "MAGNET" will be the usual price, 1d., and will contain a splendid, long, Complete Siccy, entitled:

"Yes, very far away, I think," said the Head sadly. "Somehow, I have been thinking of him very much of late. Perhaps it is the approach of Christmas that has brought him more than ever to my mind, the poor lad. It was at Christmas that he left me, and since then I have had no word from him. Perhaps it was for the best." The Head, absorbed in his thoughts, seemed to have forgotten the presence of the young man, and to be speaking half to himself. "It is many years ago now. Perhaps I was too hard on him. Boys will be boys, and he was but a lad; he was but nineteen. Yet Heaven knows I did all that I could to reclaim him. I have nothing to reproach myself with. Cards and drink, they were the cause of his ruin. Yet I always hoped that his heart was good, that his nature was sound to the core. Heaven knows what has become of him."

"You—you would wish to see him again, if it were possible?"

"I hardly know. I could not bear a repetition of the trouble he caused me; I could not endure that again. And he promised reform so often, and failed to keep his promise. I fear that I could not trust him again, even if he came back to me apparently reformed." The Head sighed. "Yet, at this season of the year—"

Dr. Locke paused abruptly, seeming to recollect himself. He coloured slightly as he looked at Mr. Brown.

"But that does not interest you," he said. "I—I had forgotten. You are almost a stranger to me, too. Pray

"BILLY BUNTER'S UNCLE!" — By — Frank Richards.

excuse me. What is it you wish to see me about, Mr. Brown? I trust you have had no trouble with your class?"

The Head was himself again now. The traces of emotion had vanished from his face.

Mr. Brown looked at him oddly.

"I—I came to see you, sir—"

"Yes. What is it?"

"Did you not ask me to come?"

"I do not remember doing so," said the Head, puzzled.

"If you have anything to tell me concerning your class, of course—"

"I—I understand that you passed the Form-room a few minutes ago, and called to me," said Mr. Brown, in perplexity.

"I certainly did not."

"Then—then I was mistaken. But certainly I thought I recognised your voice," stammered Mr. Brown.

The Head looked very grave.

"Someone called to you in the passage, and asked you to come here?" he questioned.

"Yes, undoubtedly."

"It is very odd. It must have been some boy playing a prank," said the Head. "Some young scamp playing a trick on you, as you are new here, I should think. Certainly it was not I."

"Very well, sir. Pray excuse me."

Mr. Brown left the study.

He frowned darkly as he made his way back to the Remove-room. There was a sound of laughter in the Form-room as he approached.

It died away, however, as Mr. Brown strode in.

The new master looked sharply over the class. The Juniors had become serious at once, but he could see lurking smiles, and he knew that the whole Form were in the joke, whoever had played it. But the voice he had heard had proceeded from the passage, and it did not seem possible that one of the Removites could be responsible for the trick.

The lesson was resumed, with Mr. Brown in a very perplexed mood. Barely had the Remove resumed work when a voice rapped out, outside the door:

"I am waiting for you, Mr. Brown."

It was the Head's voice again.

Mr. Brown looked round, with a gleam in his eyes, and then started for the door. He looked into the passage: it was empty. He went down the passage to the door of the next Form-room.

The Removites burst into a chuckle.

"Another visit to the Head," grinned Vernon-Smith. "He will make the old sport think that he's dotty."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Mr. Brown was not gone to the Head's study this time. He tapped at the door of the Fourth Form-room, and opened it. Mr. Capper, the master of the Fourth, was busy with his class. He looked round inquiringly at his visitor.

"Excuse me," said Mr. Brown. "May I ask if all your boys are here?"

"Yes, they are all here," said Mr. Capper, in surprise.

"Someone has been playing a trick in the passage," Mr. Brown explained.

"Dear me!"

"Someone has cleverly imitated Dr. Locke's voice," said Mr. Brown. "It must be some boy who is out of his class-room, of course. I must find him."

"Stay a moment!" said Mr. Capper, as the new Remove-master was about to retire. "I think, perhaps, I can help you. I have heard from Mr. Quelch that there is a boy in his class who plays ventriloquist tricks—a boy named Bunter. Mr. Quelch has told me of such tricks being played on him in the Form-room."

The new master started.

"I did not think of that. Thank you, Mr. Capper!"

Mr. Brown returned to the Remove-room, with a very grim expression on his bronzed face. There was laughter there, but it ceased as he entered. Mr. Brown fixed his eyes upon the Owl of the Remove.

Bunter!

Billy Bunter jumped.

"Yes, sir!"

"Come here!"

"I, sir? Wha-a-at for, sir?" stammered Bunter.

"Come here at once!" said the Form-master imperiously.

Billy Bunter reluctantly came out before the class. He was shaking in every fat limb now. Mr. Brown was looking dangerous.

"Bunter, I understand that you are a ventriloquist!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Is it the fact, Bunter?"

"Oh, no, sir!" said Bunter at once.

"Indeed! You did not imitate Dr. Locke's voice, and

cause me to pay a useless visit to his study!" exclaimed Mr. Brown sternly.

"Certainly not!"

"You did not imitate the growl of a dog in this room?"

"I couldn't, sir," said Bunter. "Quite impossible, sir. In fact, I don't believe in ventriloquism; it's all rot, sir. I haven't the faintest idea who did it, sir!"

"You have not been playing tricks upon me, Bunter?"

"Oh, sir, I wouldn't think of such a thing! I told Skinner when he asked me—I—I mean—ahem!"

"You told Skinner what, Bunter?"

"Nothing, sir!" said Bunter promptly.

"What did Skinner ask you?"

"Skinner, sir! Did I mention Skinner?"

"You did, Bunter!"

"I—I didn't mean to, sir!" said Bunter helplessly. "Skinner didn't ask me anything, sir, and Bolsover didn't either, sir. Nothing of the sort. Besides, I told them it would be too risky!"

"What would be too risky, Bunter?"

"Ahem! Nothing, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Brown. "Bunter, I am convinced that you have been playing tricks, and that Skinner and Bolsover induced you to do so!"

"You—you may be right about Skinner and Bolsover, sir, but I had nothing to do with it—nothing whatever, sir," gasped Bunter. "I assure you, sir, on that point. I couldn't imitate the voice of a dog, or the growl of the Head—I mean the voice of the Head or the growl of a dog, sir!"

"Skinner and Bolsover, come here!"

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Bunter. "I say, you fellows, you'll bear me out that I didn't have anything to do with it, won't you?"

Skinner and Bolsover glared at him as they unwillingly came forward. Billy Bunter was palpitating with apprehension, and he fairly shuddered as Mr. Brown took Mr. Quelch's case from the desk.

"I—I say, sir, I—I don't know anything about it!" wailed Bunter. "I'm not a ventriloquist at all, sir! Skinner and Bolsover will tell you the same, and if they're truthful they'll own up that I told them it was too risky altogether. I told them you would get into a frightful wax, sir, if I pulled your leg like that. You ask them, sir, and they'll tell you so, I'm sure!"

"You may go back to your place, Bunter, Skinner and Bolsover, I shall case you severely for inducing that stupid boy to play these disrespectful tricks in the Form-room!"

"Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish!"

"Oh! Ow! Yow!"

Bolsover major and Skinner went back to their places, feeling anything but humorous. There were no more mysterious voices in the Form-room that morning. When the Remove were dismissed after lessons Bolsover and Skinner went out, scowling like two demons in a pantomime.

Billy Bunter rolled up to them in the passage.

"I say, you fellows—"

"You fat, sneaking beast!" roared Bolsover.

"Oh, really, Bolsover, it wasn't my fault Brown bowled you out, you know! I can't help it if the beast is as sharp as a razor. Look here, what about that feed?"

"What!" howled Skinner. After the way Bunter had given them away it seemed to the two suffering jokers like insult added to injury for the fat ventriloquist to demand the reward of his labours. "Why, you cheery rotter—"

"Look here, you told me—You! Oh! Leggo! Yarook! Stop kicking me, you rotten beast! Oh, crumbs! Yarook!"

Billy Bunter fled at top speed, with Skinner and Bolsover after him, kicking for all they were worth. And that was all the reward the Remove ventriloquist ever received for his valuable services.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

A Great Occasion!

"SOMETHING extra special!" said Bob Cherry thoughtfully.

"Hear, hear!"

The chums of the Remove were in consultation in No. 1 Study. The Famous Five were there, and Squiff, the Australian, and Tom Brown, and Mark Linley, and Penfold, and Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars. Hazlelene, of the Remove, too, had just come in. It was quite a large meeting; the occasion was an important one.

Marjorie Hazlelene and Miss Clara, the girl chums of Cliff House, were coming over to tea; hence the importance of the occasion.

When Marjorie and Clara came there was always a certain amount of excitement in No. 1 Study. On such occasions it might have been observed that the fender was not half full

of ashes and cinders, that boots and tooters and sweaters were not lying about the study, that the carpet was newly swept, and that there were flowers in the jampots on the mantel piece.

On such occasions, too, a keen observer might have noted that Bob Cherry's necktie did not look as if he had just been trying to hang himself, and that his somewhat obstinate hair was brushed with unusual care, only two or three rebellious tufts remaining in a perpendicular position on the crown of his head.

"Two of us must go and fetch 'em," said Squiff. "The roads are a bit slushy for bikes. Rather a rotten run. I'll go if you like."

Strange to say, that generous offer of the Australian junior was not received with the gratitude it merited. In fact, the other fellows glared at him.

"Will you, by Jove?" said Wharton.

"Clucky and!" said Nugent.

"The cheekfulness of the esteemed Squiff is terrific!" remarked Hurree Singh, with a shake of his dusky head.

"Well, I—I only want to be useful," said Squiff.

"Bow-wow! You can make yourself useful in the cooking line," said Bob Cherry. "I'm going with Hazel."

"Ahem! I was thinking of going," Wharton remarked casually.

"You can both go," said Hazel. "I don't want to go. The roads are beastly."

"Oh, good! I don't mind a bit of mud."

"Same here," said Bob. "In—in fact, there's a certain amount of excitement in riding on a skiddy road."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'll have to walk back," grunted Hazeldene, who was not so enthusiastic about Marjorie's visit as the other fellows. "They won't ride in this rotten weather."

"That's all right; we can wheel the bikes back," said Harry. "We may as well get off then, and you fellows can see about the feed."

"I say, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter's fat face and large spectacles glimmered in at the doorway. There was a general roar.

"Get out, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, you fellows! I say, I suppose I'd better go over with you to fetch Marjorie, you know. She would like it, and a fellow likes to be obliging. I'll borrow Squiff's bike—"

"Let me catch you borrowing it!" said Sampson Quirzy Ilfley Field truculently.

"Ahem! I mean I'll have Johnny Bull's bike!"

"You jolly well won't!" said Johnny Bull emphatically.

"You're not coming, anyway," said Wharton decidedly.

"Can't plant you on an offending people, Bunter. It's too thick."

"Oh, really, Wharton, you know jolly well Marjorie will be disappointed if I don't come! Yow! Ow! Ow! Leggo my ear, Hazeldene! You rotten beast! Yow! Ow! Ow!"

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry quitted the study, leaving the Owl of the Remove still wringing in the grip of the incensed Hazeldene, and went round for their bicycles. The Co. proceeded with the preparations for tea, which was to be of an unusually "stunning" character. The approach of Christmas had brought generous remittances to several members of the Co., and funds were in plenty, which was not always the case.

A keen December wind was blowing as Harry Wharton and Bob wheeled their machines round from the bike shed. The juniors commenced to raise their caps to Mr. Brown, who had just come out in his cap and overcoat.

"Going for a spin, what?" asked the new master, with a smile and a nod.

"Yes, sir," said Harry cheerfully.

Mr. Brown walked down to the gates with them, chatting in his cheery way. The new master had been a week at Greyfriars now, and during that time he had come to be on excellent terms with his Form.

Skinner & Co. did not like him, owing chiefly to their lamentable failure to pull his leg, on account of his youth. Youthful he certainly was, but he had shown that he was quite up to snuff, and since the first day or two there had been no slacking or ragging in the Remove Form-room.

But during that week, in spite of Skinner & Co., Mr. Brown had made himself quite popular in the Remove. He was firm, and he knew how to enforce discipline quite as well as the absent Mr. Quelch. But he was kind and considerate, too, and he seemed to understand boys, and he was always just, and so most of the fellows had taken a liking to him.

He had won the good opinion of the Upper Forms, too, by playing in a footer match with the first eleven, and Wingate of the Sixth had declared enthusiastically that Mr. Brown played a ripping game.

But Wharton was a little puzzled about Mr. Brown. He had not forgotten the evident worry Mr. Quelch had shown on the morning of his appointment with Mr. Brown; he had not forgotten Mr. Quelch's exclamation when the new arrival THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 357.

Next Monday's Number of "THE MAGNET" will be the usual price, 1d., and will contain a Splendid, Long, Complete Story, entitled:

NEXT MONDAY, The "Magnet" LIBRARY, ONE PENNY.

was shown into his study. He had had the impression that Mr. Brown was a surprising if not an unwelcome visitor.

Yet Mr. Quelch had given up his place to the new-comer, commenced his Christmas vacation unusually early, and left his Form in the charge of Mr. Brown.

Wharton could not help remembering, too, the fact that Mr. Brown had betrayed a certain familiarity with Friardale village and Greyfriars School on the day of his arrival; and yet it was generally understood that he was a complete stranger.

And, kind and frank as the new master was, there seemed to be a kind of reserve about him; and when he was chatting with the other masters or the prefects, he was never heard to speak of himself.

That he had travelled and lived abroad was known; indeed, the bronze in his cheeks was a sufficient testimony of that. But of his travels he was never heard to speak a word.

Bunter and Skinner and other fellows whose slacking proclivities had caused the new master to come down heavy upon them, hinted that there was "something fishy about Brown." Harry Wharton & Co. could not help thinking that there was something a little mysterious about him.

But they sensibly decided that it was none of their business, and they had other matters to think of, anyway.

Mr. Brown was a good sort, and they liked him, and that was, enough. Indeed, he had become so popular that they were sorry to think that he would not be at Greyfriars next term.

The new master and the juniors, wheeling their machines, reached the school gates, and Mr. Brown paused to exchange a cheery word with Gosling, who was looking out of his lodge. The ancient porter touched his hat very respectfully to Mr. Brown, with an odd, searching look on his face, which Wharton had noticed there the day Mr. Brown came.

"The snow is giving us a rest, Gosling," Mr. Brown said genially.

"Yes, sir," said Gosling. "We'll get some more before Christmas, though, never fear. Werry 'ard weather this year, I think, sir—which it reminds me of the winter Mr. Percy went away, sir," said Gosling, staring at Mr. Brown.

"Mr. Percy?" said the new master.

"Yes, sir."

"One of the masters?" hazarded Mr. Brown.

"Oh, no, sir; the Hoad's navy, sir!" said Gosling.

"Which he was a wild young beggar, sir, and many a lark has he played on me—drat 'im—but a 'eart of gold, sir! I will say that for Mr. Percy."

"Has he been away long?" asked Mr. Brown.

"Eight or nine years it wasn't long, sir—eight year, at least," said Gosling. "It wasn't low arter the war—the other war, I mean, sir. Which I believe he went to Hafrica. Ever been to Hafrica, sir?"

"Yes, I have been in South Africa," said Mr. Brown; "a good many other places, too, Gosling. Well, I must get on."

And, with a nod to Gosling, Mr. Brown walked on. He walked away towards Courtfield, and Harry Wharton and Bob mounted their bikes and rode towards Friardale.

"Never knew the Hoad had a nephew abroad before," said Bob as they rode. "Did you?"

Wharton shook his head.

"No. May be that fellow whose portrait is in his study, I've noticed it a good many times when I've been in for a barking, and never knew whose it was. My hat! What a rotten road!"

And the difficulty of navigating the bicycles in the muddy and greasy lane cut short further conversation.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprising Meeting!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Get out of the way!"

"Clear off, you silly ass!"

The two cyclists shouted together, to a man who came along the lane, in the middle of the road, with an uncertain step.

It was most exasperating. The lane was almost a morass with half-melted snow and slush, dug into deep ruts with the heavy wheels of farm carts, and it was not easy to ride there, anyway. And the stranger who was coming down the lane appeared to want all the road to himself.

He took no notice of the juniors' shouts, but came on, with a peculiar zigzagging gait which hinted that he had recently been taking liquid refreshment, not wisely but too well.

The two juniors rang their bells furiously, but the vagrant did not shift. They did not want to ride round him, as slushy mud was deep on both sides of the lane, and he was lurching so wildly that they might not have passed without a collision. As he showed no sign of drawing to the side of

"BILLY BUNTER'S UNCLE!" — By — Frank Richards.

the road, they jumped off their machines, in an exasperated frame of mind.

"Hallo, you fathead!" exclaimed Wharton. "Can't you keep to the side of the road?"

The man blinked at him.

"Hold on!" he said thickly. "This road right for Greyfriars—what?"

Wharton and Bob stared.

What that disreputable fellow could want at Greyfriars was a mystery to them.

"Yes; keep right on!" said Bob ungraciously.

"I reckoned so," said the stranger. "Many a year since I've been here, and I guess I don't see quite so clear as I might, just this minute."

And he grinned.

The juniors regarded him curiously. He was dressed in dirty and shabby clothes, and looked almost like a tramp; but his speech was not that of a tramp, but of a man of education. He looked about twenty-six or seven years old, on a close inspection, though the stubby beard on his chin gave him an older look at first glance.

He wore a battered bowler hat on one side of his head, very rakishly. A half-smoked cheroot was sticking out of the corner of his mouth. He had a general aspect of having been out of bed for two or three nights, and without a wash or a shave for as long a time. But on looking at him closely, it was easy to see that at some time he must have been in a better position in life.

He steadied himself on his feet, and blinked at the juniors, still keeping in the way of their bicycles.

"Hold on a minute!" he said, in his thick utterance. "P'raps you belong to Greyfriars—what?"

"We do," said Harry curly.

"Long time since I've seen a Greyfriars boy, I guess," said the stranger. "Same cheeky little beggars, by gum! Dr. Locke still the Head—what?"

"Yes," said Harry. "Dr. Locke has been the Head of Greyfriars for a long time. What the dickens do you know about our school?"

The weather-worn stranger chuckled.

"More than you do, young cockchafer, I reckon," he said. "A good bit more, as I was there for more years than you've been alive, I reckon!"

"What rot!" said Bob Cherry. "Do you think we're going to believe that you're an old Greyfriars chap? Piffle!"

"I guess I'm more than that," said the stranger, chuckling again, and leering. "However, I'll get on. The doctor at home—what?"

"Dr. Locke is indoors, I believe," said Wharton. "But you won't be allowed to see him. You had better clear off, jay man!"

"Why won't I be allowed to see him?"

"Tramps aren't admitted!"

"Tramps—eh?"

"If you shove yourself in there, Gosling will kick you out, or set his dog on you!" said Harry. "Come on, Bob!"

"Gosling will! No; I guess he won't!" said the vagrant.

"He won't turn out an old acquaintance. Gosling always had a soft corner for me. Many a night he's helped me up to bed when I was seeing double, and my uncle never knew. Ha, ha, ha! I'd have Gosling was a good sort, and if I'd made my fortune, I'd have stood him something handsome!"

"Your uncle?" repeated Wharton.

Bob stared at the stranger speechlessly.

"Never heard of me—what? Doesn't the doctor let on that he has a nephew who went to the dogs?" grinned the stranger.

"What?"

"He doesn't expect to see me this Christmas-time—eh? But Christmas-time is the right time for family gatherings, isn't it? It'll make Uncle Henry jump for joy to see his nephew come back at Christmas!"

"You—don't mean to pretend that you are the Head's nephew?" Wharton exclaimed, in disgust and horror.

"And why not?" demanded the semi-intoxicated rascal angrily. "What is it to do with you, anyway? Do you want me to knock your cheeky head off?"

He made a lurch towards Wharton. The junior pushed him roughly back, and he staggered and sat down in the mud with a splash. His reeling legs had refused to support him under the slight shock.

"Oh, gad!" he gasped.

"Come on, Bob!" said Harry. "Leave the drunken brute there!"

"Hold on!" said Bob hesitatingly. "If he's really the Head's nephew—"

"It must be a lie!" said Harry.

"You remember what Gosky was saying—it would fit this chap—"

"More likely a blackmailer, or something of that sort!" said Harry. "I don't believe a word of it!"

"Here, lend me a hand!" gasped the claimant to the honor of being nephew to the Head of Greyfriars. "Help me up, you young scamps! My pins are a bit unsteady!"

Bob Cherry helped him up. Dripping with wet mud, the young man stood unsteadily on his "pins," and blinked at the juniors. What with dirt and mud and drunkenness, he looked so unpleasant an object that the juniors could not help showing their disgust in their faces. The wanderer seemed to resent it, and he shook an unsteady fist at them.

"I'll have you flogged for this!" he said thickly. "I'll make nunky flog you, I guess! Burn you!"

And he lurched away shakily towards Greyfriars.

"My hat!" said Bob, with a soft whistle. "If that is really the giddy prodigal coming home, it's rough on the poor old Head!"

"It can't be," said Wharton uneasily. "Gosling said Mr. Percy was a wild beggar, but surely the Head's nephew couldn't fall so low as that."

"I don't know. I've got a cousin who's pretty nearly as bad, and we're generally considered a rather respectable family," said Bob, with a faint grin.

"My hat! It will be a shock for the Head, if it proves so," said Harry. "I hope Gosling will kick him out, anyway. Let's get on."

They rode on their way in thoughtful silence. The story of the Prodigal Son was in their minds; but evidently this special prodigal was not following the lines laid down for prodigals. The prodigal nephew was coming home worse than he had left—if indeed his claim was well-founded. And, revolting as it seemed, the juniors could not help thinking that there must be something at the back of the man's story, for why should he advance a claim that could be disproved the moment he came into the presence of the Head?

Marjorie and Clara were ready for them when they arrived at Cliff House School. Miss Clara wagged a severe finger at them.

"Two minutes late!" she said.

"So sorry," murmured Bob. "Met a tramp on the road."

"You are forgiven," said Miss Clara magnanimously.

"Come on, Marjorie! Buck up!"

Marjorie smiled, and they started to walk for Greyfriars, the two juniors wheeling their muddy machines. And in chatting cheerily with their chums of Cliff House, the juniors soon forgot all about the vagrant and the queer claim he had made.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

"Mr. Percy!"

GOSLING snorted. It was not a snuff—it was a snort—a snort that expressed angry indignation that had no limits.

"My honky 'at!" exclaimed Gosling, exasperated. "The cheek of it!"

It was no wonder that Gosling was so angry.

A man, shabby and muddy—his torn trousers one mass of mud—with a battered hat on one side of his head, and a stump of a cheroot sticking out of his mouth, had walked in coolly at the gates of Greyfriars.

That such a particularly filthy and unpleasant specimen of a tramp should venture to walk into the precincts of the school, as if the place belonged to him, naturally exasperated the school-porter.

Gosling stayed only to pick up a thick stick, and then he sallied forth from his lodge like a lion from his den.

"Houtside!" roared Gosling.

The man stared at him.

Gosling pointed to the road with his stick.

"Houtside! Do you want me to chuck you out, you vagabond?"

"Gosky, by gum?"

"Don't call me Gosky, you tramp!"

"Gosling, old chap—"

"My eyes," exclaimed the exasperated Gosling, "if you call me Gosling, old chap, I'll lay my stick across your shoulders, you disgusting brute!"

"Forgotten an old friend in a few years, Gosky?" said the stranger in a reproachful tone. "I wouldn't have thought that of you, Gosky."

"Friend!" roared Gosling. "I don't know you."

"Look at me again."

Gosling looked at him again, and lowered the stick.

"Beginning to remember—what?" asked the stranger cheerfully. "Not losing your memory, Gosky? Do you remember the Fifth of November, as they say in the songs—that Fifth when I put fireworks in your grate, Gosky, and nearly frightened you out of your wits, and the Head came me like thunder—what?"

Gosling's jaw dropped. He stared at the disreputable stranger as if he were staring at a grisly spectre. "You remember how my arm was burned, and the marks never went away, in putting out the fire?" went on the newcomer. "Look here!"

He pulled back the shabby sleeve of his coat, and showed dark, burnt marks on the skin of his arm, up to the elbow.

"Remember that, Gossy?"

Gosling gasped.

"Mr. Percy!"

"Haven't forgotten me, after all!" said the prodigal cheerily. "That's right, Gossy, I've come back."

"Come back!" repeated Gosling mechanically.

The stick fell from his hand, and clumped heavily on the ground. Gosling looked almost as if he would fall down too. "Gossy, turn up like the bad penny," said the prodigal cheerily. "Like the prodigal son in the story, Gossy. And when he had wasted his substance, you know, he came back from the wine-basks, and gave the old folks at home a look-in. And they killed the fattest calf for him. Are you going to lend a hand at killing the fattest calf, Gossy?"

"Mr. Percy!" gasped Gosling. "Oh, Mr. Percy!"

"Percy Locke, at your service, my dear Gossy!"

"Oh, Mr. Percy!"

Gosling cast a rapid glance round. A light drizzle of rain was beginning to fall, and most of the fellows were indoors. Gosling was glad of it. But three juniors had just come out of the School House, and were coming down to the gates—Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Janset Ram Singh. They were coming to see if there was any sign of Wharton and his companions on the road.

"Come into my lodge, Mr. Percy," said Gosling hastily.

"I'm going to see my uncle."

"Don't let the young gentlemen see you in that state, Mr. Percy!" implored Gosling. "Come into my lodge, and sit down a bit."

"I'm going to see my uncle," repeated the vagrant, swaying unsteadily. "Won't he be glad to see his dear nephew, and Christmas coming on, too? What?"

"Yes, yes; but come into my lodge!" Gosling caught the prodigal by the arm, and tried to drag him into the lodge.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "Want a helping hand to sing that tramp out, Gossy?"

"No, Master Bull!" groaned Gosling. "It's all right."

"We'll help you with pleasure—though he isn't nice to touch," remarked Frank Nugent.

"The pleasure-will be terrific, my esteemed Gosling," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "You run off, young gents," said Gosling. "I can 'andle him."

"I won't be handled!" roared the prodigal. "Lemme alone, Gossy! Can't a repentant youth come to see his uncle without you stoppin' him?"

"Mr. Percy!" implored Gosling.

"Don't Mr. Percy me! Here, one of you kids run in and tell Dr. Locke that his nephew has come home!"

The juniors stared.

"Dr. Locke's nephew?" ejaculated Johnny Bull. "Yes, you look the part—I don't think!"

"The don't-thinkfulness is terrific, my esteemed and filthy vagabond!"

"Kick him out, Gossy," said Nugent. "The cheaky beast! Why don't you kick him out?"

"Because it's more than his place is worth!" roared the prodigal, struggling with Gosling. "Lemme alone! I'm going to see my uncle!"

Gosling gasped with helpless dismay. Crusty old fellow as he was, he was devoted to the Head, and he had a soft corner in his heart for the prodigal nephew. To throw the newcomer out was impossible, and to admit to the juniors that this was the Head's nephew was appalling.

"Here, take a hand, all of you, and we'll soon fire him out," said Johnny Bull.

"Good egg?"

"Hands off!" roared the prodigal.

"For goodness sake, go away! It—it's all right, I'll keep him quiet."

"But why not chuck him out?" demanded Nugent.

"I—I can't, I—I mustn't!"

The juniors exchanged glances of wonder. For the first time they began to understand that there might be something in the disreputable stranger's claim.

"I say, Gossy, that filthy scoundrel isn't really the Head's nephew, is he?" ejaculated Nugent.

"Don't say anything about this, young gentlemen," groaned Gosling. "Keep it dark, for goodness sake. The Head would never get over this disgrace."

"Great Scott!"

"But—but it can't be true."

"My esteemed hat!"

The newcomer's struggle had suddenly ceased. With a sudden change of sentiment, due to the fumes of liquor from the MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 257.

Next Monday's Number of THE "MAGNET" will be the usual price, 1d., and will contain a Sensitive Lane. Complete Story, entitled:

menting in his brain, he clasped Gosling round the neck, and leaned upon him affectionately.

"Good old Gossy!" he murmured. "I'll go wherever you like. You were always my best friend. How you used to help me in when I was blind as an owl, Gossy!"

"Yes, yes!" said Gosling. "How you used to help me up to bed, after taking off my boots so that nobody would hear, like a good old sort as you always were, Gossy!"

"Yes, yes—come in, Master Percy."

Master Percy—if it was Master Percy—consented to come in at last. Gosling navigated him into the lodge, and he plumped down into a chair.

"Got anything to drink here, Gossy?"

"Yes, yes. I'll get you something in a minute, Master Percy," stammered the unhappy Gosling.

He hurried back to the juniors.

"Don't you young gentlemen talk about this," said Gosling, with tears in his eyes. "It would be a awful blow for the 'Ead—lawful!"

"But what he said isn't true, Gossy—it can't be!"

"It is, Master Nugent!" groaned Gosling.

"My only chaplain!"

"Mam's the word!" said Johnny Bull. "Keep the brute quiet, Gossy. We won't say a word to a soul. Poor old Head."

Gosling closed the door of the lodge and hurried away towards the School House, evidently to inform the Head of the new arrival.

The three juniors remained under the arch of the gateway, lost in wonder.

"Well, this is a go!" said Johnny Bull.

"The go-fullness is terrific," murmured Hurree Singh. "The shockfulness of the esteemed Head will also be great."

"Never knew the Head had a nephew," said Nugent. "He hasn't been here in our time. And what a giddy specimen!"

"It can't be true!" growled Johnny Bull. "He's some spoofer, and he's taken Gosling in. Gosling's an old donkey, anyway. But he won't take the Head in."

Frank Nugent shook his head doubtfully.

"Here they come," said Bull, as four figures appeared in the road. Marjorie and Clara and their escort had arrived.

"All's ready!" said Nugent, as they greeted the Cliff House girls. "Back up and get out of the rain."

It was not the rain Nugent was thinking of so much as the vagrant in Gosling's lodge. He did not want Marjorie and Clara to see him. But he had barely finished speaking when the lodge door opened, and a frowzy face and bleared eyes peered out.

"Where's my uncle?"

Clara gave a little shriek, and Marjorie looked in amazement at the uncouth stranger.

"My hat!" said Miss Clara. "Who's that Johnny?"

"I want my uncle!" said the prodigal, holding on to the door. "Fetch my uncle!"

"Who can it be?" said Marjorie, in wonder. "Is that a friend of Gosling's?"

Wharton and Bob Cherry had recognised the man at a glance—the drunken rascal they had met in the lane, and who had claimed to be Dr. Locke's nephew. They were astounded to find him in Gosling's lodge.

"Oh, never mind him!" said Nugent hastily. "Let's get in out of the rain."

They hurried across the Close; but Nugent lingered behind, and went back to the lodge.

The prodigal blinked at him.

"Keep quiet," said Nugent. "Gosling's gone to fetch your uncle. Don't make a row."

The prodigal dropped into his chair again; and Nugent drew the door shut, and hurried after his friends. Johnny Bull and Inky had taken the two girls into the house, but Wharton and Bob Cherry waited in the porch for Nugent. He came up with a flushed face.

"Who the dickens is that, Frank?" Wharton demanded.

Nugent bit his lip. He had promised Gosling to say nothing, and his chum's question was awkward.

"We've seen him before," said Bob.

"Seen him before!" exclaimed Nugent.

"We met him in the lane. He told us a cock-and-bull story about being the Head's nephew," said Wharton.

"Then—then you know!" said Nugent.

"We know he told us so, but we don't believe it."

"I'm afraid it's true!" said Nugent.

"But—but it can't be!"

Gosling thinks it is, anyway," said Frank. "He's taken the rascal in, and calls him Mr. Percy; and I think he's gone to fetch the Head to him. Gossy made us promise to say

nothing about it, because of the disgrace for the Head; but as you know, you're in the secret, too. Keep it dark, kids."

"You—you mean to say that Gosling has recognised that horrible rotter as the Head's nephew?" gasped Wharton.

"Yes."

"My only hat!"

"Not a word, then!" said Bob seriously. "It will be a shock for the Head, but he needn't know that we know. It would make him feel beastly! Mum's the word!"

And the juniors agreed that mum was the word. They hurried up to No. 1 Study, where the feast was soon going strong. But the Famous Five were unusually thoughtful. While the merry party chatted in No. 1 Study, Harry Wharton & Co. could not prevent their thoughts from wandering to the blackguard in Gosling's lodge—the prodigal nephew. The prodigal had returned. And what was to follow?

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Prodigal Nephew!

"COME in!" said Dr. Locke. Gosling opened the door of the Head's study. The Head of Greyfriars was seated at his desk, writing. He looked up as Gosling came in, and then he gave a start as he saw the expression on the old porter's face.

"What is the matter, Gosling?"

"Oh, sir!" gasped Gosling.

The doctor rose to his feet.

"What has happened? Is anything wrong?"

"Oh, sir!" Gosling could only gasp.

The Head looked at him sharply. Gosling was addicted to gin-and-water in his leisure moments—and not only in his leisure moments. He was looking excited, and there were tears in his eyes. Naturally the Head suspected gin-and-water.

"Gosling," he said sternly, "you should not come into my presence in this state!"

"Not!" stammered Gosling.

"You have been with me many years, Gosling, and I make many allowances for an old and attached servant," said the Head mildly. "But really, Gosling—"

"Which I ain't touched a drop, sir!" said Gosling indignantly.

"Then what is the matter with you?"

"Oh, sir!"

"For goodness' sake, Gosling, explain yourself, if you are not intoxicated!" exclaimed the Head impatiently.

"M-M-Mr. Percy, sir!" stammered Gosling.

The Head started violently.

"Mr. Percy! My nephew! You have heard something from my nephew, Gosling?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir!" groaned Gosling.

The Head's kind old face lighted up. He glanced at the portrait on the wall, with the smiling, insouciant face. His expression softened wonderfully.

"This is good news, Gosling! I know you were always attached to the lad. Gosling, I have always remembered your attachment to a little, and it has made me regard you rather as an old friend than a servant. Many times I have thought that I was a bit hard on him, my old friend. Boys will be boys; and he was young. And youth will be self-willed. If my boy comes back, Gosling, we shall make a fresh start." The doctor rubbed his hands. "But how is it he has written to you, and not to me? Perhaps he feared to approach me; he was afraid I should be stern and cold, as I fear I was before. He has asked you to speak to me, is that it? He need have feared nothing, the poor lad!"

"Oh, sir!" said Gosling miserably.

The tenderness in the Head's face went right to his heart. He hardly dared utter the words which would dispel the old gentleman's kind imaginings.

"He has travelled long, and has learned the ways of the world, Gosling; he has had time to repent the follies of his youth, and I have no doubt he has settled down into a man whom we can respect. I am sure that his heart was always good, Gosling. You always said so, I remember, when I had lost patience, my old friend."

"Oh, sir!"

"This will be a joyful Christmas," said the Head. "Only this morning little Molly was speaking of her cousin, whom she barely remembers. My wife will be overjoyed to welcome him this Christmas, Gosling. The poor boy shall find warm hearts and a cheery fireside. The past shall be forgotten and forgiven on both sides. But where is his letter? Show me his letter, Gosling!"

"He—he ain't written, sir," stammered Gosling.

"No? Then how have you heard from him?"

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"He—he—which he——" Gosling's voice failed.

"He has come!" exclaimed the Head.

Gosling nodded; he could not speak.

"Then why haven't you brought him to me?" exclaimed the Head. "Ah, he is waiting to see what kind of a welcome I will give him!" The Head stepped to the door and threw it open. "He is here, is it not so, sir?"

"I—I've left him in my lodge, sir."

"Bring him here at once!" exclaimed the Head warmly.

"You should not have done that, Gosling; you should have brought him in at once. You may have made him doubt that he is welcome. Fetch him at once! Why don't you go?" exclaimed the Head, as Gosling did not move.

Gosling gave a groan.

Dr. Locke's expression changed. He grasped the old man by the arm, almost shaking him in his anxiety.

"What are you keeping back, Gosling?" His voice was strangely altered. "What is it that you have not told me? Do you suppose I am not anxious to see my boy—my brother's orphan, who has been a son to me? What is the matter with you, Gosling? Why have you left him there?"

"Because—because——"

"Speak, man!"

"Because—because I—I was afraid the young gentlemen would see 'im, sir, or the servants, or—or Mrs. Locke, sir——"

"And why should they not see him?" said the Head, in that same changed, strained voice, from which all the joy had gone.

"He—he ain't fit to be seen, sir."

"Gosling!"

"Which, sir, he—he's come back——" Gosling broke off again.

"He has come back poor, you mean?" said the Head, his eyes almost imploringly on Gosling's troubled face. "He is poor—shabby? What does that matter? What do I care if he is in rags? Fetch him at once!"

"Tain't that, sir!" groaned Gosling.

"Then what is it?"

"He—he ain't in a state to come 'ere, sir. It—it's the old game, sir," said Gosling, getting it out at last. "He—he's been drinking, sir!"

Dr. Locke pressed his hand to his heart. For some moments he stood quite still, without speaking, his old face growing very pale.

"Which it's 'ard for me to tell you so, sir," mumbled Gosling. "Which it was a shock to me, sir. But—but——"

"I will come to him," said the Head quietly.

He left the study, and strode out into the Close, heedless of the drizzle, unconscious of it. Gosling followed him slowly and miserably. The return of the prodigal had been almost as great a shock to the faithful old servant as to the Head.

Dr. Locke opened the door of the lodge, and went quietly in. In a chair before the fire the vagrant was seated, with a glass in his hand. He had found Gosling's supply of gin, evidently, and had helped himself. He blinked round at the Head stood looking at him, and set down the glass with an unsteady hand, spilling half the liquor on the table.

Raised as he was, he seemed abashed by the calm, steady gaze of the old gentleman. He staggered to his feet, and stretched out a dirty hand. The doctor did not appear to notice it.

"Lodge!"

"You are my nephew, Percy Locke?"

"Don't you know me, uncle?"

The Head gazed at him steadily.

"It is eight years since I have seen my nephew," he said coldly. "In that time he must have changed considerably, and I do not expect to recognise him at a glance. You are very little like the lad who left here eight years ago. Besides, I recognise you as my nephew, you must prove your identity."

"And you cannot prove it," said the Head, his voice trembling. "I will have you beaten from my gates like a dog!"

Gosling mumbled. He understood the hope that had leaped up in the doctor's breast; that this wretched vagrant was not his nephew, after all—that he was an impostor, seeking to impose himself upon the old gentleman after so long a lapse of time.

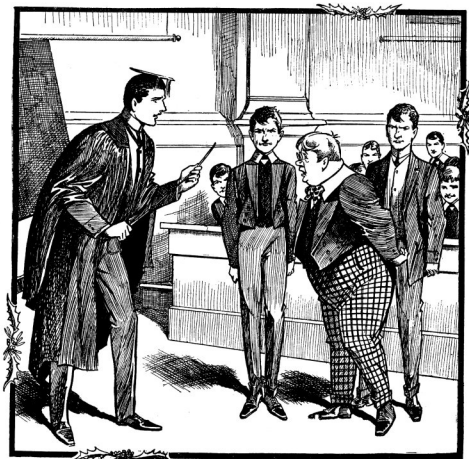
But the old porter shook his head. He had no doubts.

The vagrant blinked at the Head. The cold, calm voice seemed to have a sobering effect upon him.

"Gosling has recognised me," he said sullenly. "Where is Mr. Quelch? He will recognise me fast enough, if you do not."

The Head trembled. If the man was not what he claimed to be, how did he know so much as he knew?

"Mr. Quelch is absent from Greyfriars at present," said



"I—I say, sir, I—I don't know anything about it," wailed Bunter. "I'm not a ventriloquist at all, sir! Skinner and Bolsover will tell you the same, and if they're truthful they'll own up that I told them it was too risky altogether. I told them you would get into a frightful wax, sir, if I pulled your leg like that!" (See Chapter 8.)

the Head. "He will not return before Christmas. It is myself that you must satisfy!"

The returned prodigal sat down again, with a sipping gesture.

"Ask me anything you like!" he sneered. "I am your nephew, Percy Locke, and you know it. Gosling knows it. Look here! This burn on my arm was done on a fifth of November, when I put fireworks in Gosling's fire!"

The Head looked at the scars.

"Shall I repeat to you what you said to me when I left, eight years ago?" said the vagrant. "I haven't forgotten a word, uncle!"

"Neither have I," said the Head. "Repeat my words, then."

"I have lost patience with you! You shall disgrace me no longer; you shall not contaminate my House with your drunkenness and vice! If you remain, I must resign my position as Head of Greyfriars! So you must go! That's what you said, uncle; and I took you at your word!" That's what the Head came nearer to him, and peered into his face closely. The vagrant met his eyes defiantly.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 357.

Next Monday's Number of The "MAGNET" will be the usual price, 1d., and will contain a splendid, long, complete story, entitled:

There was a short silence.

"Are you satisfied?" sneered the prodigal.

Dr. Locke nodded slowly, heavily.

"I am satisfied," he said, in a dull voice. "Heaven help me!"

Silence again. The Head's face was working. The prodigal picked up the glass, and then the Head moved. With a fierce gesture he struck the glass from the young man's hand, and it was shivered to pieces in the grate.

"No more of that!" said the Head fiercely. "Have you no decency? Listen to me, Percy! I have many times thought during your absence that I had been hard upon you!

I see now that I was not hard enough. You left me a reckless, self-willed, selfish boy; you have returned a man, and a blackguard. Instead of reforming, after experience of the world, you have gone from bad to worse—you have returned ten times baser than you ever were in the old days. When you went, I gave you money enough to begin life in a new country. I gave you a purse containing a large sum of money, which in those days I could ill spare. What have you done with it?"

"BILLY BUNTER'S UNCLE!" — By — —
Frank Richards.

The vagrant fumbled in his pockets, and drew out a leather purse.

"I kept it to remind me of you, uncle."

"Yes, that is the purse," said the Head, glancing at it, and wincing at the fresh proof of the man's identity. "And what became of the money?"

The prodigal shrugged his shoulders.

"Riches take unto themselves wings, and fly away," he remarked. "It went. I have had my ups and downs since then. I was rich once, and I lost again in a speculation out West. I was robbed by my partner, Daney Jim. I've been trying to keep my head above water ever since, and at last everything failed!"

"Owing to your vices?"

"Weaknesses, uncle—weaknesses," said the prodigal, with a grin. "What hard words you use! But you were always hard. So at last I decided to come home, and get a fresh start!"

"You came home, because your vices—your weaknesses, as you call them—had reduced you to beggary!" said the Head bitterly. "And now you are here, what do you want?"

The prodigal laughed; he had recovered his coolness.

"What do I want? A welcome—a fireside at Christmas—the fattest calf, and the rest of it—the proper welcome for a repentant prodigal!"

"If you were repentant, you should find my heart and home open to you," said the Head, with a sigh. "But the scapegrace of nineteen has become a scoundrel of twenty-seven."

"Put it as you like. Here I am. What are you going to do with me?"

The Head regarded him sternly.

"You have no claim upon me. You are the son of my dead brother, but that gives you no claim, unless I choose to recognize it. What is to prevent me from having you thrown out of the gates of Greysfriars, as you deserve?"

"Nothing—but the scandal!"

"You threaten me with a scandal if I treat you as you merit!"

The prodigal shrugged his shoulders.

"Not at all. I only say there would be a scandal if the Head of Greysfriars turned his own nephew out of doors. I did not think of that eight years ago; I was a boy then. I am a man now, and I have learned in a hard school. I know my power, and I shall use it. Treat me as you like; I am ready. If you please to turn your brother's son out to starve, do so!"

"I shall not do that," said the Head coldly. "My brother's son shall not starve while I have bread. But it is not your threat that moves me. It is not the fear of a scandal!"

The man's expression changed a little.

"Uncle, give me a chance! I've been down on my luck; I have been drinking, but it was to keep out the cold, I swear!"

"Do not swear to a falsehood!" said Dr. Locke wily. "Your face betrays your habits of drink. I doubt if you have been sober a day at a time for years past!"

"I will give it up, uncle."

"You will have to give it up, if you remain here even for a day!" said the Head. "I warn you that if, within the precincts of Greysfriars, you are once seen under the influence of liquor, I will wash my hands of you. Listen to me! You are my nephew, and I will give you food and shelter, and what else you need. But I will do so upon conditions!"

"I am in your hands," was the sullen reply.

"You will not mention to a soul that you are my nephew," said the Head. "That disgraceful secret can be kept. Gosling will provide you with more decent clothes, and you can make yourself presentable. I will have a room prepared for you in the house. So long as you behave yourself decently, you can remain, and I will try to find some opening for you, which will enable you to earn your bread decently and respectably. That is all I promise you!"

"That's all I ask, uncle."

"Very well. You can stay in my house as a guest, so long as you observe the conditions I have imposed. Fail to keep them, and you know what to expect. Prove that you have some decency left, make an effort to reform, and when I am satisfied with you I will own you as my nephew!"

The Head paused.

"Until you are decently clad, you can remain here. I will give Gosling instructions to obtain what you need. But, mind, no more drink—no more rascality of any kind. Gosling, if you should see this man under the influence of drink, I order you to throw him out at the gates!"

The young man gritted his teeth.

"You can trust me," he said sullenly. "I'm on my feet."

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uppers, and I'm not fool enough to quarrel with any level-headed butter!"

"That is enough."

The Head left the lodge. The vagrant listened to his footsteps dying away across the Close, and looked at Gosling.

"Pretty welcome for a returned prodigal—what!" he sneered.

"Oh, Master Percy?"

"Give me the bottle, Gossy."

Gosling shook his head.

"You 'eard the 'ead's orders, Master Percy?"

"The young man made a discontented gesture.

"So you are against me, too, Gossy?"

"I don't vote the 'ead orders,'" said Gosling stolidly. "Which 'a's a wery fond of you in 'is 'art, Master Percy; and if you was to turn out wery good 'a'd make 'im 'appy. It's wery worth the trouble, Mr. Percy, it is really!"

The vagrant grunted, and relapsed into silence, staring gloomily at the fire.

Dr. Locke had returned to his study.

Until the door was closed upon him, the Head retained his calmness. No one passing him in the Close would have dreamed of the emotion he was holding in check.

But when he was alone his self-command gave way. He sank into his chair with a heavy groan, and covered his face with his hands.

"My boy—my boy!" he muttered, with white lips. "Heaven help me!"

The prodigal had returned—that return, which the old man had thought of, dreamed of, for so many years. It was come about at last, and in this manner. The boy whom he had loved as a son, whom he had been prepared to welcome as a son—he had come back, and he had come, a hard-hearted reprobate, a hard and cynical blackguard. Long the Head sat there, in the deepening darkness, buried in miserable thought, the tears trickling through the fingers that covered the kind old face.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Ten in No. 1 Study!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter blinked into No. 1 Study. The study was crowded, in fact, crammed. There was not much room for Bunter's bulky person, and the juniors who were in his way did not show the slightest disposition to get out of the way.

"Hallo, Clara! How do you do, Marjorie!" said Bunter, blinking affably at the two Cliff House girls through his big spectacles. "So jolly glad to see you. I should have been in before, but I've been busy. Make room for a chap, you fellows."

Bunter squeezed himself in. Squiff extended a foot, and the fat junior fell over it. There was no room for him to fall on the floor, and he fell on Tom Brown. The New Zealander gave a roar, and shoved him off, and he rolled on Johnny Bull. Johnny Bull shoved him off without ceremony, and he sat down in the doorway and blinked.

"Oh, really, you fellows?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I can take a joke, you know," said Bunter, scrambling up. "Do let me shake pass, you fellows. Sorry to tread on you, Nugent!"

"Yow!" roared Nugent, as Bunter's weight came on his foot. "You—you blessed elephant, geroff!"

"Sorry! You don't mind if I push you, do you, Field? Thanks, I'll have some of those tarts, Wharton. Pass 'em over this way, Hazel, old chap."

The juniors glared at Billy Bunter; but in the presence of Marjorie and Clara they did not care to hurl him into the passage. Bunter squeezed the other fellows out of the way, and planted himself at the table, and blinked round for a chair. All the chairs were occupied, and half the company were standing, but that did not matter to Bunter. He wanted to sit down.

"You don't provide chairs for your guests—what!" said Bunter, with a sniff. "Gimme half of yours, Bob, old chap."

"Half wouldn't be any good to a porpoise!" sneered Bob. "Well, give it all to me, then. Dash it all, there's something like civility to a guest!" said Bunter. "I say, there are jolly decent tarts. Never mind, I'll sit on your knees, Bob, if you like."

"Do" said Bob, with a dangerous gleam in his eyes. Bunter did, and Bob Cherry's knees suddenly moved, and the fat junior slid under the table. There was a roar.

"Ow, ow! What a rotten trick! Groo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You beasts, I've got tarts stuck all over me—groo!"

Bunter scrambled out from under the table with a furious

face. He knew that he would not be pitched out while the Cliff House girls were there, and he proceeded to make himself as obnoxious as possible. He dabbed the jam off his fat face with his handkerchief, and snorted.

"You should come to tea in my study, Marjorie," he said. "We'd treat you better than this. What a blessed crowd! You ought to leave your feet outside at a time like this, Bob."

"Leave my feet alone!" growled Bob.
"Wouldn't touch 'em with a barge-pole," said Bunter. "Pass that pie, I suppose I can eat, if I can't sit down? I say, you fellows, there's something going on in Gosling's lodge. What do you think?"

"Oh, stuff, and dry up!" said Johnny Bull.
"Oh, really, Bull!" Bunter crammed his mouth full of pie, and proceeded to retail his news. "There's an awful sort of bouncer in Gosling's lodge. I spotted him. I thought it was jolly queer he should be there, you know. Gossy is generally dead-nuts on tramps. What do you think? Gosling is giving him a new outfit of clothes. I heard him say—"

"Don't tell us what you heard him say," said Harry Wharton. "Shut up, for goodness' sake, Bunter! You talk too much."

"Your talkativeness is terrific, my esteemed fat duffer!" "Shut up, Bunter!" chorused the juniors.

"It's pretty certain to freeze," Wharton went on, continuing the subject which had been interrupted by Bunter's invasion. "We'll do some skating next half-holiday. You will both come! And on Saturday's the Rookwood match. You've got to come to that."

"Yes, rather," said Miss Clara.
"Certainly," said Marjorie. "We've been looking forward to the skating."

"You rely on me," said Bunter. "I'll look after you. I'm a dab at skating, and you can depend on me to give you a really good time."

Marjorie Hazledene did not seem to hear the remark. But the Owl of the Remore was not easily discouraged.

"I'll be there," went on Bunter. "I'll show you how to do figures, you know. I'm quite a dab at it. But, I say, you fellows, ain't it queer that that tramp fellow should be staying at Greyfriars? Looks an awful rascal, too. But they're getting a room ready for him in the house, you know."

"What silly rot have you got hold of now, you fathead!" said Squiff in astonishment. "Blessed if your yarns don't grow thicker and thicker every day!"

"Oh, really, Fiddle! I tell you it's a fact. Gosling was talking to Mrs. Kebble, and he told her it was the Head's instructions. You can bet the housekeeper was surprised. She asked who the man was, and Gosling said it was Mr. Lambert. I've never heard of Mr. Lambert, and Mrs. Kebble hadn't," she said so. She said—

"Oh, dry up!"
"No, she didn't. She said was it a friend of the Head's, and Gosling said it was. Now, I ask you—"

"Cheese it!"
"I ask you," persisted Bunter, "how could that dirty tramp be a friend of the Head's? Something jolly queer about it all, ain't there?"

"Are you run down yet?" demanded Bob Cherry.
"Oh, really—"

"Because we're fed-up. Cheese it!"
"But ain't it jolly queer," persisted Bunter. "Fancy the Head taking in an awful character like that—a chap fatty in rags and tatters, and giving him a room in the house. He looks as if he might be a burglar, you know. I really think we ought to lock the dormitory door to-night."

"Is there really anybody in Gosling's lodge, you fellows?" asked Mark Linley, looking at the Co. inquiringly.

"Yes," said Harry reluctantly, "a man was there when we came in. I can't see that it's any business of Bunter's."
"He did look a queer merchant, didn't he, though?" said Miss Clara, in her boyish way. "A regular horror to look at."

"Oh, Clara!" murmured Marjorie.
"Well, he did, you know," said Clara. "But if the Head is giving him shelter, it's very kind of him, I must say. I don't see anything queer about it, and I think you are an ass, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Miss Clara—"
"I think you are a duffer!" pursued Miss Clara deliberately.

"Oh, I say—"
"And a fathead!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter blinked wrathfully at Miss Clara. That young lady had a direct way of speaking that was quite painful sometimes.

"Look here, Miss Clara—"
"Oh, how-now!" said Clara cheerfully.
"If you were a boy I'd punch your head!" roared Bunter. "I don't allow anybody to call me names, I can tell you!"
"Don't you!" said Squiff. "Fathead!"

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"Look here, Field—"
"As! Duffer!" proceeded the Australian junior.
"Do you want me to punch your head, Field?"
"Yes," said Sampson Quincyiff Field cheerfully.
"Pile in. There will be an expiring porpoise lying about soon afterwards. Go ahead!"

"Ahem! Of course, I can take a joke."
"But I'm not joking!"
"Pass the jam, Wharton," said Bunter, dropping the subject hastily. "You might pass a follow thing, even if you keep your guests standing up. I say, you're not going yet, Miss Marjorie?"

Marjorie had risen from the table.
"We have to be in by dark," she remarked, not to Bunter. "Wait a bit till I've finished my tea, and I'll walk home with you," said Bunter gallantly.

"Rats!" said Miss Clara.
"Hats and coats and mufflers being adjusted, Marjorie and Clara prepared to leave. The whole Co. were walking home with them. Billy Bunter looked at the table, still well-spread, and looked at the girls. He wanted to walk home with Marjorie and Clara. The Owl of the Remore fancied himself as a ladies' man. But he could not tear himself away from the feed while anything remained unseized."
"Won't you wait a quarter of an hour?" he suggested.

Marjorie laughed.
"Good-bye!" she said.
"I suppose your fellows will see them home safely," said Bunter, dropping into the chair vacated by Bob Cherry. "Well, good-bye! Don't forget our appointment about the skating. I'll call for you."

"Please don't!" said Marjorie.
"No trouble at all," said Bunter. "I'll call, Good-bye!"
The Famous Five left the study with Marjorie and Clara. They made signs to the other fellows as they went, and the other fellows understood. As soon as the girls were gone, the unspeakable Bunter was to pay the reckoning. Squiff & Co. allowed five minutes to elapse. Bunter was still tucking in at top speed.

"I say, you fellows, I suppose I ought to have gone," he remarked, blinking at the juniors in the study. "Marjorie and Clara will miss me, of course. But they might have waited a bit. I'm hungry."

"You fat roach!" said Squiff.
"Pass the tarts again, will you Brown?"
"No," said Brown, "I'll pass you. Take the pass, Squiff!"

"Ready!"
"Here, hold on! Yow! Ow! Whizzer you at! Leggo! My word! Yaronop!"

Tom Brown "passed" Bunter to Squiff, as if he had been a football, and Squiff passed him on to Mark Linley, who passed him to Penfold. Bunter roared. Penfold passed him on to Vernon-Smith, and the Bouncer passed him into the passage, where he alighted with a terrific bump. He sat up and yelled; but he had no time for yelling. Peter Todd passed him down the passage.

"You—ow—ow! Beasts!"
Bunter disappeared down the stairs.
Harry Wharton & Co. and the Cliff House girls were waiting down the lane, chatting cheerily, when there was a pattering of footsteps behind them. Billy Bunter came up panting. The juniors glared at him.

"I thought I'd better come after all," said Bunter calmly. "I don't mind leaving my tea, when it's a question of looking after ladies. Will you take my arm, Marjorie?"
"No!" said Marjorie.

"Ahem! Can I assist you, Clara?"
"Rats!" said Clara.
"Ahem! Leggo my arm, Cherry."

Bob Cherry took the Owl's fat arms. He hung back behind the others, and Harry Wharton & Co. disappeared in the growing dusk. Bunter blinked a little apprehensively at Bob as the others vanished in advance.

"Look here, Bob, leggo my arm—"
"Certainly," said Bob, releasing Bunter's arm, and taking him by the shoulders. "Now we're going to have a race back to Greyfriars, us two. You can start."

"I'm not going back to Greyfriars!" roared Bunter.
"Your mistake; you are!" said Bob, bringing his heavy boots into play. "You see, I'm going to kick you all the way unless you get out of reach. Put your beef into it!"
"Yaroooh!"

"Biff! Biff! Biff!"
"You-ow! Hold on, you breast! I'll raze you if you like! Gerroooh!"

Billy Bunter started for Greyfriars at top speed. Bob Cherry pursued him, letting out with right and left alternately, for a couple of minutes, and Bunter put on speed as

if he were on the cinder-path. Bob Cherry halted and chuckled; Bunter was still running for dear life. Bob turned round and sprinted after the Cliff House party, and rejoined them a few minutes later.

"Hello, hello, hello! Caught you up!" he remarked.

"Where's Bunter?"

"He decided not to come."

The juniors grinned, and Marjorie and Clara discreetly asked no questions. And that little walk to Cliff House finished without the honour of the company of William George Bunter.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Unrepentant Prodigal!

THE next day it was known that Billy Bunter's news was correct in one particular at least; there was a guest staying in the house.

Harry Wharton & Co. saw him when they came down in the morning.

He was sauntering in the Close, looking about the place.

It was the man they had seen in Gosling's lodge; whom Gosling had told them was the Head's nephew—a fact which they had promised to keep secret, and which they had no intention of revealing.

But his appearance was greatly changed.

He had been provided with good clothes, he had been cleaned and shaved, and the difference it made was tremendous. Save for the very plain marks of dissipation in his face, he looked respectable enough now—a striking contrast to the vagrant who had presented himself at Greyfriars the previous day.

The juniors did not like his looks. In the unhealthy, dissipated face the signs of fast and reckless living could be easily seen, and he had a brooding expression of discontent and bad temper which was very noticeable. Probably he was feeling the effects of the previous day's libations.

The Famous Five "capped" him, not because they felt any respect for him, but because he was a guest of the Head's. The man stared at them, and stopped to speak.

"You are the kids who saw me here!" he said. "Yesterday."

"Yes," said Wharton.

"You—you heard that old fool Gosling chattering—"

"We know who you are, and we have promised to say nothing about it, if that's what you are thinking of," said Harry quietly.

The prodigal looked at him searchingly.

"You know I am Dr. Locke's nephew?"

"Yes."

"My uncle does not wish it to be known. He does not know that you know?"

"I suppose not."

"You are going to keep it secret?"

"We have promised to."

The young man smiled cynically.

"Promises are like pie-crusts; made and broken," he remarked.

"You may be," said Harry Wharton coldly. "Ours are not. There will be nothing said so far as we are concerned."

The young man looked relieved. He had no doubt that the Head would keep his word, and that if his relationship was betrayed, he had nothing more to expect from Dr. Locke. The doctor had a kind heart, but he had an iron determination, too, and he was a man to keep his word under any circumstances. So long as his nephew did not disgrace him by making his relationship known, he would shelter and provide for the vagabond. So he had said, and so he meant.

"Thank you!" said the young man, after a pause. "Of course, it's all rot. There is no reason why my uncle should not acknowledge me. But he is hard as nails. Later on it will be all right—it will come out all right in the end. It is only a question of showing him that I—that I am all right, myself. Hold on a minute—I want to speak to you. As you know whom I am, you can have some confidence in me. I'm stony."

"Well?"

"My uncle has given me nothing."

"Perhaps he knows where it would go if he did," said Bob Cherry caustically.

"I suppose you could lend me half-a-sovereign."

The juniors stared at him. They had the lowest opinion of the returned prodigal. But that he would try to borrow money of junior schoolboys was a surprise. It was pretty clear that Mr. Percy was not troubled with the slightest sense of shame.

"We could," said Harry Wharton, "but we're not going to."

"You cheeky cub—"

"If the Head wanted you to have any money, I dare say

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he'd give you some," said Harry quietly; "we're certainly not going to disregard his wishes. Good-morning!"

The Famous Five walked on, leaving the young man smiling.

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "What a specimen! What a thumping specimen! What on earth would the Head say if he knew the cad had been trying to get money out of kids in the Lower Fourth?"

"He would kick him out of the place, I should think!" said Harry Wharton, frowning. "The beastly cad! He wants money for drink—it's easy enough to see that! This is awfully rough on the Head. Well, he will never know that we know anything about it."

"And it's being kept dark that he's the Head's nephew," said Frank Nugent thoughtfully. "I suppose that's wise. When he breaks out—and he's jolly certain to break out some time, I suppose—the Head doesn't want to have that known. But what does he let him stay here at all for?"

"Giving him a chance to reform, I suppose," said Harry. "Lot of reforming that beast will ever do," said Bob, with a contemptuous sniff. "He would be boozing now, first thing in the morning, if he had any money. What an utter blackguard!"

The prodigal was staring after the juniors with a scowling brow. He walked away to Gosling's lodge at last. Gosling met him with a grim brow. Perhaps he knew what his one-time favourite wanted.

"Gossey, old man," said the prodigal, in a wheedling tone. "I believe you're a friend to me."

"Which I always was," said Gosling stolidly, "and yet I says in this 'ere, I ain't changed neither."

"You'll lend me a quid then, Gossey?"

Gosling shook his head.

"Can't be done, Mr. Percy. 'Ead's orders."

"But—but I always have a nip in the morning, Gossey. It sets me up for the day," said the wretched man pleadingly.

"You've got something to drink in your lodge, Gossey."

"You're better without it, Mr. Percy."

"No glass, Gossey—just one glass—"

"Not a thimbleful," said Gosling. "'Ead's orders."

The young man gritted his teeth.

"So I'm to be provided with clothes, and food, and a bed, and nothing else," he said savagely. "I'm not to be trusted with money in my pocket, eh?"

"Not until your uncle gives confidence in you, Mr. Percy. Which you can't say that the way you come 'ere yesterday was the way to give 'im any confidence, can you?"

"Oh, don't preach to me!" said the young man irritably. "I'm not going to be treated like a child, I know that! Precious life for me here, isn't it? I'd rather have my old life than this kind of thing!"

"Well, the 'Ead ain't keeping you 'ere against your will, Mr. Percy."

"Hang you, Gosling! I'll find a way, all the same," said the prodigal sullenly. "I'm not going to be treated like a baby! I'll give this kind of thing a trial, and if something better than this don't turn up there will be a row, Gosling!"

"Which the 'Ead is giving you a good chance, Mr. Percy," said the old porter earnestly. "You ain't a boy now; you're a man. And you know better than to waste your life like wet you've been doing. Why not make an effort, Mr. Percy, and turn over a new leaf? Your uncle would do anything for you, once you was what he wants to see you."

"You are a pretty preacher, you old rascal! You've been drinking yourself, early as it is!" growled the other.

Gosling passed his hand over his mouth, with a guilty look.

"Just a little nip to keep out the cold!" he stammered.

"Well, be a jay, and let me have a little nip, too!"

"'Ead's orders, Mr. Percy!"

"Hang the Head!"

"Oh, Mr. Percy!"

"And hang you!"

And the returned prodigal shoved his hands deep into his pockets and strode sullenly away, the old porter looking sorrowfully after him. Gosling shook his head sadly, and went into his lodge, and comforted himself with another "nip."

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Wants to Know!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. did not see "Mr. Lambert" again that day.

Mr. Lambert—the name by which the Head's guest was called, evidently not his real name—had a room in the Head's house, and so he did not come into contact with the school. The masters all had rooms in the School House, and had their meals in the dining-room with the boys,

but Mr. Lambert dined at the Head's table in his house. The weather being drizzly, he was not tempted out of doors, and so quite a considerable part of the school had not even noticed that there was a guest staying in Greyfriars at all.

The Famous Five kept their own counsel, of course. Not for worlds would they have inflicted upon the Head the humiliation of knowing that they knew the real identity of the tramp who had arrived at Greyfriars, and had since been so metamorphosed.

Billy Bunter, of course, was deeply interested in him. Bunter had seen him in his former state in Gosling's lodge; he had seen him later in his new guise, and he was intensely curious. Bunter scented a mystery, and wanted very much to get to the bottom of it.

But he seemed to have few opportunities; though he informed the junior common-room that evening that he had seen the fellow in the Head's garden, walking about and smoking a cigar and scowling.

"Seems to be a bad-tempered beast," was Bunter's verdict. "But what on earth is the Head taking him in for—what? You should have seen the state he was in yesterday."

"Oh, rats!" said Bolsover major. "You can't expect us to swallow your description, Bunter."

"But I saw him!" howled Bunter indignantly.

"You see such a lot of things!" grinned Bolsover— "generally not."

"I tell you—"

"Oh, cheese it!"

Indeed, Bunter's description of Mr. Lambert's early state was generally regarded as a figment of Bunter's lively imagination. The juniors were not inclined to believe that the Head had taken a disreputable tramp into his house.

Bunter paid a special visit to Gosling's lodge in search of information. Gosling proved cruder than ever, and he banded the fat junior out of his lodge without ceremony. The Peeping Tom of Greyfriars departed unsatisfied.

He came back into the School House feeling exasperated. Curiosity was almost a disease with him, and he felt that he must know; but Gosling had been decidedly unsympathetic towards his desire for knowledge.

"The old beast!" said Bunter, as he came in. "The cheeky old cat! A filthy school porter laying hands on a gentleman! Fancy that!"

"Rot!" said Bob Cherry. "Whom has Gosy been laying hands on?"

"Me!" howled Bunter.

"As well as the gentleman!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass! He laid hands on me—actually shoved me out of his lodge because I asked him a civil question!" said Bunter. "I've a jolly good mind to go to Brown and complain. But Brown's a beast, too! Gosling's keeping it dark; he pretended not to understand what I wanted to know. There's something jolly fishy about it. That fellow must be a poor relation of the Head's. He looked as if he'd been in prison, too."

"Oh, rats!"

"I guess you'll get into trouble, Bunter, if you're heard blowing off your mouth in that style!" remarked Fisher T. Fish.

Bunter snorted.

"I tell you there's something fishy about it," he said. "You didn't see that fellow—Lambert they call him—when he arrived yesterday. I did!"

"We've had all that before," yawned Vernon-Smith.

"Yes, draw it mild, Bunter!" urged Skinner. "We know you're lying, you know!"

"I'm not lying!" howled Bunter, greatly incensed at being supposed to lie when he was telling the truth for once. "Whether he's the Head's friend or not, I tell you he was in rags and tatters, and he looked like a filthy tramp when he came in—"

"Shush!" whispered Bob Cherry hastily.

Mr. Brown had come out of his study, and he started as he heard Bunter's loudly-uttered words.

But the short-sighted Owl of the Remove did not see Mr. Brown, and he went on with emphasis:

"A filthy tramp, I tell you! The Head's taken him in, and given him new clothes and things, and I want to know what it means—"

"Bunter!"

Mr. Brown's voice was quiet and incisive. It might have been a roll of thunder, from the effect it had on Bunter. The fat junior jumped almost clear of the floor.

"Ye-es, sir? I didn't see you, sir!"

Mr. Brown smiled grimly.

"I presume you did not, Bunter, or you would not be speaking in that disrespectful manner of a gentleman who is a guest of Dr. Locke's."

"I—I—"

"Come into my study, Bunter."

"If—if you please, sir—"

"You hear me, Bunter?"

"But—but it's all true, sir!" stammered Bunter. "I ain't telling lies, sir. You didn't see the man when he came in, sir—"

"I have not seen Mr. Lambert at all," said Mr. Brown. "I have heard his name mentioned as a guest of your headmaster's, Bunter. And I shall strive to impress upon you that you must speak with respect of your headmaster's guests. Follow me!"

"B-b-but, sir—"

Mr. Brown dropped a hand on Bunter's shoulder, and marched him into his study. From that study a minute later sounds of wild anguish were heard proceeding.

Billy Bunter came out with his fat hands tucked under his arms, looking as if he were trying to curl up like a hedgehog.

"Or, ow, ow!" groaned Bunter. "Ow! Yow! Yah!"

"Serve you jolly well right!" said Bob Cherry.

"Beast!" groaned Bunter. "Ow! Yow!"

"I guess you'd better keep your yow-tray closed, my tulip!" grinned Fisher T. Fish. "Brownie is as sharp as they make them, I guess."

"Brown is a beast!" groaned Bunter. "Brown is a horrible beast—"

"Bunter!"

The unhappy Owl of the Remove spun round.

"Yes, sir?"

"You were alluding to me!" exclaimed the Remove-master sternly.

"Oh, no, sir! I—I was speaking of Tom Brown, sir!" said Bunter. "Brown of the Remove, sir! He's a beast, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Brown suppressed a smile and walked on. Billy Bunter's Ananias-like gifts had saved him, for once. But when the Remove-master had gone the New Zealand junior, who rejoiced in the famous name of Brown, came up to Billy Bunter and displayed a very hard set of knuckles under his fat little nose.

"So I'm a beast, am I?" he demanded.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Yes—I mean, no! I was only pulling the other beast's leg, you know, old chap," said Bunter feebly. "I regard you as an old pal, you know."

Tom Brown snorted.

"You can regard me as a beast if you like," he said; "but if you regard me as an old pal I'll pull your nose, you fat rotter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Tom—"

"Oh, scat!" said Tom Brown. "In fact, I'll pull your nose anyway!"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter jerked his nose away and fled.

In the dormitory that night the Owl of the Remove had further news. A caning and a nose-pulling could not check Billy Bunter when he was on the track of affairs that did not concern him.

"I say, you fellows, that chap Lambert has been making friends with Loder of the Sixth," he announced. "I saw him in Loder's study just before we came up to bed. You know what sort of chap Loder is. I'll bet you they're going to play cards!"

Who?

A pillow came hurtling through the air, and it bowled Billy Bunter over like a ninepin.

"Yow! You horrid beast, Bob Cherry—"

"Now, do you want the bolster!" demanded Bob.

"Yow-ow! No! Oh, crumbs!"

"Well, you'll get it, and a boot too, if you don't shut up!" said Bob. "We're fed up with you, Bunter!"

And Billy Bunter decided to shut up.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Face to Face!

"D ANDY JIM! You!"

Harry Wharton jumped.

It was Mr. Brown's voice, but so changed in its tones of surprise and anger that the captain of the Remove hardly recognised it.

Wharton spun round.

Morning lessons were over, and Harry Wharton was strolling down to the football field to see the state of the ground. He had passed Mr. Brown in the Close, where the Remove-master was taking a brisk walk before lunch. It was just after he had passed him that he heard that hoarse exclamation.

Wharton stared round in astonishment, wondering whom on

earth Mr. Brown could have addressed in that strange tone and by that curious name.

It was Mr. Lambert.

The Head's prodigal had come out of the garden, and was strolling aimlessly across the Close, when he came almost face to face with the Remove-master.

The two men halted simultaneously.

Mr. Brown's handsome face had gone deadly pale, and his eyes seemed to burn as they were fixed on the startled face of the prodigal.

The latter seemed utterly taken aback.

He made a movement as if to flee, and then pulled himself together and stood his ground.

"Dandy Jim!" repeated Mr. Brown hoarsely. "You here! You scoundrel, what are you doing at Greyfriars?"

Lambert made a gesture towards Harry Wharton.

"Are you talking to me, or to the whole school?" he asked.

Mr. Brown bit his lip.

Harry Wharton hurried away. He had surprised that much,

but he did not want to hear any more, curious as he could not help feeling.

Mr. Brown, the new master, was an old acquaintance of the prodigal's, and he had addressed him as "Dandy Jim" and called him a scoundrel! Wharton's brain was in a whirl as he hurried away. That the prodigal was a scoundrel there was not much doubt; but it was amazing that Mr. Brown should know him. Wharton could not help recalling to mind the mysteriousness of Mr. Brown himself, which he had almost forgotten during the past week or so.

Mr. Brown did not speak again till the junior was out of hearing. Then he came closer to the prodigal, his eyes gleaming, and his hands clenched hard. As the two men stood face to face, a curious resemblance might have been noted between them—not in expression, but in features, in the colour of their

Readers are recommended to detach the 4-page Supplement inserted in the centre of this issue. They will then find that the School Tale runs on from page 22 to 23.



Unselfish gallantry is the keynote of the heroic members of the Royal Army Medical Corps. For such a splendid fellow as our artist depicts above, death would seem to have no terrors. The three helpless Britishers, wounded in an engagement at Ypres, would have been left to die but for the noble heroism of their comrade, who, in spite of being badly wounded in the arm, bore them to a place of safety.

Tom Merry's Weekly.



No. 85. Vol. 3.

CHRISTMAS 1914 NUMBER.

PRICE NIX



All St. Jim's scholars who peruse our topping Christmas Number will be pleased to hear that we have been enabled to turn out sufficient copies of the "Weekly" to set before every reader of that unrivalled book for boys, the "Magnet" Library. This is great, kids, isn't it? What-ho!

While the editorial staff does not wish to blow its own trumpet, the members thereof are proud to think that thousands of Magnetites will make an heroic effort to struggle through the contents of this number. Those who succeed in wading through Figg's ghastly serial without experiencing a sudden death, or at least an apoplectic fit, will deserve an Iron Cross for valour and endurance.

The production of this issue has only been achieved by much burning of midnight oil, though other things have taken place in the silent watches of the night, apart from editorial labours, as Fatty Wynn's poem will show.

At the time of going to press, the following letter comes to hand from our old chum and rival, Harry Wharton, of Greyfriars School. Its reproduction in these pages gives me great pleasure.

"Dear Merry.—On behalf of the Famous Five and all the Greyfriars Kids, I take this opportunity of wishing you all a stunning time this Christmas, in spite of the fact that sundry Remore feelings will rankle in your manly breast.

I hope we shall meet many more times on the footer field, and that we shall give you your revenge in return for the whacking you sustained a week or two ago at the hands—or, rather, the feet—of the Black Footballers. Your chaps always give us a good game, anyway, and have got the reputation of being thorough sports.

Tell Fatty Wynn not to make a beast of himself this Christmaside in the matter of tuck, and give our united regards and best wishes to all the fellows.—Yours ever,
"HARRY WHARTON."

We much appreciate Wharton's good wishes, but, of course, it's all rot about Greyfriars being "top dog" in the footer world. St. Jim's will come into its own one of these fine days, and then things will hum.

It will be noticed that the war has

not affected our present issue. We had hoped to keep off the grass as far as this topic was concerned, but one of our contributors—I need not mention his name, since he is well known by his size in boots—insisted on our finding room for what he was pleased to term a "patriotic ode." The editorial staff was reduced to a state of coma after reading the rot. Another stanza, and we should have come to a "full-stop." [N.B.—The Editor accepts no responsibility for this stunt; it was perpetrated by Lowther.]

It is the great regret of us all that on account of our youth we cannot rally round the flag, but our exclusive little Roll of Honour includes the name of Lord Conway, brother of the one and only Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Esquire. This gallant warrior is now at the front with the Sussex Yeomanry. May he come from the fray with flying colours!

Comrades of St. Jim's, and readers of the Invincible Four, I wish you from my heart a feast of good cheer and a right royal time of it this coming Christmas!

Tom Merry

NOTICE!

A Far-well Feed will be held in

THE WOOD-SHED

ON

Tuesday, December 22nd,

at which

D. WYNN

will preside.

**THE FINAL FEED
BEFORE XMAS HOLIDAYS.**

Subscriptions and Tuck, Etc.,
Should be Handled over to Tom Merry at Study 6 by mid-day.
Feed at 6 o'clock.

ROLL UP IN YOUR THOUSANDS.



Conducted by Jack Blake.

As a member of the top study in the School House, it is only fitting that I should be allowed to air my views on the subject of the great winter game.

I suppose most of us have made ourselves acquainted with the first principles of footer from early childhood, barring certain Shell bouncers, whose childish recollections are centred around hopsotch and marbles.

Should any Shell-fish be desirous of being coached in the first stages of the game, Messrs. Blake, Herries, D'Arcy, and Digby will be pleased to impart their fatherly tuition. 'Nuff said!

The St. Jim's season to date, so far as the juniors are concerned, has been eminently successful. We have played fifteen matches, won twelve, drawn two, and lost one, our only defeat being inflicted upon us by "The Black Footballers"—Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars—who sent us home to raminate over a 2-1 reverse.

The following game have been played since our last issue was published:

ST. JIM'S v. GREYFRIARS. At Courtfield.

This match was played under most peculiar circumstances, the Greyfriars Remore being attired in vivid yellow garb which could not fail to strike the eye. Through circumstances over which they had no control, they were compelled to adopt this disguise, and looked bigger freaks than usual. Still, it was a great game, and though defeated, we were certainly not disgraced, and hope to get our revenge ere many weeks have elapsed. To give the Greyfriars kids their due, they are the finest team one could possibly meet in a day's march. The score in their favour was 2 goals to 1.

**ST. JIM'S v. COURTFIELD
ATHLETIC.**

Fatty Wynn was the hero of this match, which we pulled out of the fire after being 2-0 down at the interval, the final score being 4-3 in our favour. The Falstaff of St. Jim's was in fine form, and fully deserved the stunning feed which was afterwards held in celebration of the victory.

Jack Blake

THE FIRST INSTALMENT OF OUR AMAZING SERIAL STORY.



Purloined by Pirates!

OR
THE ESPERADJES OF THE "DRIPPING DAGGER."

By GEO. FIGGINS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. A Sail is Sighted!

THE good ship Dripping Dagger had been sailing peacefully along the Spanish Main hoping to meet a Spanish galleon laden with gold and treasure, and to fight it to the death.

The sun was shining brightly, and the pirate-ship rose and fell on the heaving billows. She made a gallant picture on that fair morning. Her long, low, black hull, pierced with holes for the guns, danced on the crested waves, her sails spread to their full extent, gleamed in the morning light, and above all, floating proudly from the main-mast-head, was the black flag, the Jolly Roger, and abaft the mizzen was the flag of their own Society, a yellow flag, with a red dagger dripping blood.

Such a ship, and such a flag, struck instant terror into the hearts of any innocent trader who sighted them at sea.

Let us transfer our gaze to the deck of this strange craft. What is passing there? Captain Conker, a near relation by marriage of the world-renowned Captain Kidd, paces his quarter-deck, his hand sunk on his breast, and his black pointed beard flowing over his glistening gold-lace and jewelled meddles, all of which are booty from many a stout ship long since sent to their last resting-place among the sharks.

He is muttering hearty curses to himself in Spanish and English, while he paces to and fro anxiously. Every now and then he glances impatiently to the horizon, still cursing horrible.

Suddenly, without warning, one of the crew perched on the four mast sings out in a loud voice:

"A sail! A sail at last!"

"Wear away!" roared Captain Conker, excited, sweeping the sea with a powerful telescope as he pored out oaths.

"On the starboard bow," answered the trembling mariner. "Two points to windward, sir!"

"By the bones of my fathers!" cried the captain. "Can you see her colours?"

"Yessir; Spanish!" shouted back the sailor.

"Cospetto!" hissed the noble pirate through his teeth. "It must be mine enemy!" And turning to the first mate Patcheyed Peter, he roared: "All hands on deck!"

The first mate gave the order, and the pirate crew came tumbling up the hatchway, all stained with blood, with their knives between their teeth, glaring around ferocious in search of prey.

"Lively, my men!" shouted the captain. "I'll shoot the last man on deck!"

Patcheyed Peter stood at the hatchway to assist the men on deck with his heavy boot. He launched a kick at one of the crew who did not move smart enough, and so powerful was the blow that the poor fellow was sent in a high curving trajectory, right over the rail into the sea, where he disappeared beneath the surging waves. After a time he came up, and pored volleys of oaths on the mate, when a shark came up, and the man vanished, and the water was died an ominous red.

The captain laughed a laugh of savage glee as this happened, and howled in a voice of thunder:

"Hoed not, he has gone to his air. Line up, and hear your captain speak."

THE SECOND CHAPTER. The Fight with the Spanish Galleon.

When the crew had lined up, the captain, eyeing their grim and blood-stained ranks with approval, said:

"My men, yonder is my mortal enemy's ship, the Santa Maria, of Cadiz. I have news that it is returning to Spain after a successful hunt after treasure, etc., and is packed with diamonds and rubies. This is not all. On board is my mortal enemy himself, Don Fernando Poo, and his charming daughter, 'The Pearl of the Seas.' I have sworn to take the life of the former, and make the latter mine. Men, she shall be my wife, and you shall divide between you the treasure!"

He paused to wipe a drop of blood from his shining sword-blade, and the crew broke into a mighty cheer that made those on board the Spanish galleon quake with fear.

"Thank you, indeed," said the captain, bowing courteous, and sweeping the quarter-deck with his gold-laced hat. "This is very kind." And with a sudden change which made him the terror of friends and foes alike, he roared: "To your posts, men! Clear the decks for action! I'll shoot any dog who disobeys me!"

The crew sprang to their posts, armed to the teeth, and ready to do or die.

The proud vessel, however, continued on its way, and, gnashing his teeth with rage, the pirate-captain ordered the swivel gun to be fired.

The Dripping Dagger turned round, however, and answered with her broadside. With a horse cheer the pirates seized the grappling irons and threw them on the deck of the Spanish ship.

The two vessels came together with a sickening thud, and the pirates leapt over the bulwarks, their cutlasses between their teeth dripping blood! The fight was long and fierce, and Captain Conker, Patcheyed Peter, and

Terrible Tom, with the rest of the crew, did grate execution among the Spaniards, and at last they were kicked down the hatchway, and the door locked on them.

The pirate crew then proceeded to throw the bodies overboard to the sharks, and to pull down the Spanish flag from the mast.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Captain Conker Meets his Mortal Enemy.

"Bring up the prisoners!" shouted Captain Conker.

The miserable captives were brought before the noble pirate, who eyed them very menacing, and roared in a voice of thunder:

"Mille Demonios! Where is mine enemy, the haughty Fernando Poo? Search the vessel, varlets; I swear he will not again escape my vengeance!" The trembling sailors, aided by the terrible and dreaded boat of the first mate, fell to the task with alacrity. Before long the proud Spaniard was found by one of the crew, Red Roger by name, hiding in the binacle.

"Ha Ha-r-r-r! Haul him out, my men!" shouted Captain Conker, with glee. A dozen willing hands pulled the prostrate man from the cover of the binacle, and he was brought shrieking and howling before the august presence of the captain.

"Ha, ha!" laughed the terrible captain. "Tie him up to the main-mast. He shall be skerged!"

The wretched victim was led grovelling and howling to the mast. Turning to the first mate, Captain Conker roared:

"Peter, you will now proceed to give him ten doz. on his bear back, and lay them on thick! We will soon robust his proud spirit!"

A skerge, or heavy whip with bits of tin on the end, was brought, and Peter prepared the victim for his punishment. His hands were tied with thongs, and he groaned in heart-rending anguish.

The first mate, with a laugh of fiendish glee, raised his skerge to strike.

"Hold!" roared the noble captain. "Fernando Poo, on one condition only will I let you off."

"Speak!" wailed the prisoner.

"Tell me where your daughter is hid," shrieked Conker, "and I will lose your bonds!"

"Never!" replied the Spaniard, as he prepared to receive the cruel lash. "I would die first."

The lash descended with a swish, and the captain leaped into the air.

"Now," said Captain Conker, striding up to the Spaniard and tapping him on the shoulder, "will tell me where the fair Matilda is hid—the Pearl of the Seas?"

"I will die first!" returned the wretched man, drawing himself up and rubbing his back, for it smarted horrible.

"Thou wilt!" roared Captain Conker. He whipped out his dagger and prepared to strike. "Your last chance—the fair Matilda, where is she hid?"

"Where thou wilt never find her, dog!" hissed the prisoner.

Captain Conker brought thy fatal dagger nearer his victim, enjoying his cruel sport. Down came the weapon—down—down—
(To be continued.)



By
GEORGE
HERRIES.



—AND HOW
HE RAN THE
KAISER
TO EARTH.

"Clothes? Yaas, deah boy! I am verry glad to have a chance of remarking that it is positively disgraceful, the way some fellahs are goin' about!"

"I saw Hewwies, for instance, the other day, with some specks of mud on his boots. When I pointed this irregularity out to him, he calmly said it didn't matter, and followed up this atrocious statement by saying his boots hadn't been cleaned for two days."

"Just get a grasp of that howwible fact!"

"Yes, it's rotten!" agreed our interviewer. "And about—er—stout people. Can they be made to look presentable?"

"Well, there's Wynn. His appearance is another disgrace. Of course, he is a fellah one cannot expect to be weally tidy, but his goin' about with the bottom two buttons of his waistcoat constantly undone should have a -roppah put to it. It is absolutely scandalous, and reflects on the honour of St. Jim's. If he will be such an abominable hog, and will stuff himself with tuck so that his tailah can't get a waistcoat big enough for him, let him come with me to my tailah. He is a tailah, and not a ham and beef catalah, as some advertisements vulgarly have it, and he would suit Fatty down to the ground in no time."

"But don't you think that as a rule St. Jim's chaps dress well?"

"No, deah boy; you can't say that more than a fraction of your fellahs are weally dressed. I don't insist on a monoco, but you must admit it looks verry dressy."

"And take spats. I sincerely believe that there ought to be a law making spats compulsory. Apart from the fact that they keep your ankles warm in cold weathah, they look so distinctive, so dignified, deah boy."

"Yes, quite so," assented our interviewer. "And how about the book you are supposed to be writing, 'Socks For Soccer'?"

"Oh, yaas, deah boy! It will be out shortly. I have started on another one, too, you know—'Notes on Twousah Cweases.' I believe they will have a weally wonderful circulation—the books, I mean, not the cweases."

"What do you think is the best combination of colours in a tie?" queried our representative.

"Well, weally, that's a verry hard question to answer. It depends so much on the wearer's complexion and his general get-up, you know. Personally I am inclined to favour light green, with yellow stripes; but it all depends on a fellah's eye for colah."

"Quite so!" remarked our reporter. "I'm much obliged for your valuable hints. They shall go in the 'Weekly'—if there's room."

"Yaas, wathah!" And, as our representative gathered up his notebook and made ready to go: "Don't forget to remark on Fatty Wynn's disgraceful untidiness, will you, deah boy?"

"Oh, no!" said our reporter. "Good-day!"

I'll proceed to tell you now, sir, of the wondrous tricks of Towser, Such a bulldog, I avow, sir, never trod the earth before.

Should he track a furry rabbit—which he does by force of habit—

You can bet your boots he'll nab it ere he wallows in its gore.

He's a standing joke of Merry's, but as sure as my name's Herries

I am confident that there is not a finer to be found.

May I with the fools be classed if any mongrel, hound, or mastiff

Wouldn't undergo its last tiff with old Towser knocking round!

The cute and cunning Kaiser went one day and did a guy, sir,

Though I'm sure I don't know why, sir, he so suddenly retired.

But he trembled like a kitten when he reckoned he'd be smitten

By the bonnie boys of Britain, when their giant guns were fired.

Up spoke French and General Joffre: "We will make a splendid offer.

There's a quidlet in the coffer of the man who routs him out.

Far from battles wild and whirling, his moustachios he is twirling"

In the guarded streets of Berlin, there is not the slightest doubt."

Then the Tommies all saluted, and with one accord they scooted,

And the Kaiser's legions looted as they rode with might and main.

'Mid the noisy roar and rattle of the blood-besprinkled battle

Forth they flashed like furious cattle out on Arizona's plain.

But they couldn't find the Kaiser, though they made a splendid try, sir,

'Twas my friend and close adviser, dear old Towser, won the day.

German sausages he sniffed, sir, then he made a sudden shift, sir,

Where the mighty billow lifts her stately head in shining spray.

Any worthy British man'll tell you how he swam the Channel

(No, he wasn't wrapped in flannel when he furrowed through the fog);

But he faced the Hun's twelve-pounder, and he tracked the Royal

bounder.

What a rattling good all-rounder is my dear, devoted dog!

G. Herries.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

"Skimpy."—You should have written to our Literary Editor; but as your communication has come to this department, and you want to know so many little things, we will deal with your tale of woe in this column.

No, we have not quite read your masterpiece, "Don's" for Determinists," but so far as we have gone the style appears remarkably individual. We shall lose no time in reading the remainder.

The current market price for waste paper is 2½d. per lb. As you are in want of funds, you should be able to raise a nice little sum. The MSS. should be packed in convenient bundles and taken to any marine store. This will not only be profitable for yourself, but convenient for your study-mates, who will doubtless appreciate the room that you say is being taken up by your valuable writings.

We regret we have no room in the "Weekly" at present for your thrilling serial, "From Lift-boy to Social Reformer." The ups and downs of this paper do not warrant a serial with such a title.

On referring to "Old Moore's Almanack," we find that Professor Alnoy-crumpet was born on November 5th, 1841, so you will be just too late to send him the pair of hand-painted

carpet slippers you mention. Besides, there is a rule at the institution where he resides which forbids inmates from receiving presents of this nature.

"Figgy."—So far as we are aware, there is no cure for the ailment you mention. Becoming bandy will not help you at all, in spite of what your auntie advises, because your legs will be just as long as before, although we must admit that the rest of you will be nearer the ground. After all, you need not be ashamed of having long legs; many great men in history were by no means stumpy. Napoleon, for instance, although short, had no difficulty in crossing the Alps, and the Colossus at Rhodes was so tall that he could place each foot on either side of the Rhodé. And above all, the example of the immortal Shanks, of pony fame, should ever be a beacon to you through life. Cheer up, "Figgy," and don't let the thoughtless gibes of your school-fellows deter you from putting your best foot foremost all the time.

Gore.—The book you mention can be obtained from any bookseller for half-a-crown, or, if you want till he's looking, the other way, for nothing. It is by a brilliant German author, and is entitled "The Complete Cad." We do not, however, advise you to obtain a copy, as it is very improbable that any book, however up to date, could teach you much in this particular line. A cad is usually born, not made, and you can surely have little to learn at your stage of cadishness.

"An Anxious Aristocrat."—And pardonably so. "I am fifteen years of



The Midnight Feast!

Or, NOCTURNAL REVELS IN THE NEW HOUSE.

Not a sound was made, not a movement heard,
As the tuck to the dormy we carried;
Not a fellow there uttered a single word
Around by the bed where we tarried.
We laid it out quickly at dead of night,
Our sheets into tablecloths turning;
By the Christmas candle's smoky light
And a lantern dimly burning.
No useless trifles encumbered our feast,
Neither bread nor water we tasted;
But the cake spread with jam and the buns that were greased
Were eaten, and nothing was wasted.
Few and short were the words we said,
And we gave not a hint of sorrow;
But we silently gazed on that vanishing spread
And bitterly thought of the morrow.
We thought, as the ginger-beer poured o'er the bed,
And the jam fell in lumps on the pillow,
That the morrow would see us in front of the Head,
And probably birched with a willow.
But half of our midnight meal was done
When the scout gave the sign for retiring;
And two minutes later all traces were gone
Save the smell of the lights on expiring.
Softly "old Ratty" crept in at the door,
And his gaze was severe and searching;
But we gave not a sign save a thunderous snore,
And so we were saved from a birching.

D. Wynn.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

(Continued from page III.)

age, and my moustaches are coming too fast. Please insert in the Correspondence Column of the "Weekly," how to stop them until I am eighteen."

Can any of our readers oblige this anxious youth whose hair is too apparent? He wants no dangerous nostrum which would keep his beard back until the pressure becomes so great on the eve of his eighteenth birthday that in the night the hair has to burst forth and cover his face with a three years' growth, but some nice, soft liniment that will prevent the undue growth of the hair.

We should have thought, however, that this young gentleman would have considered a becoming moustache quite in keeping with his fancy waistcoat.

Reginald T.—Congrats, old man, on having won for yourself a permanent place in the ranks of the Shell! You have certainly "been through" the mill," and it is perhaps unwise to dwell upon the shadowy past; but to your credit be it said that you have fought your battles splendidly and come out on top, and the door of Study 5 will ever be thrown open to you, old son.

Monty Lowther.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

LOST.—On Saturday, near the footer ground, a Pocketbook.—Will finder please return to Redfern, New House.

A MEETING will be held in the box-room at 3 o'clock to-day, when all fags should rally to the flag. W. D'Arcy in the chair. Subject: "To get our own back on the Shell-fish before we break up for the holidays."

KIND-HEARTED PERSON WANTED to give a donation to the Society For Supplying Braces To The Blacks.—Subscriptions should be sent to H. Skimpole, the organiser of the Society.

DON'T FORGET the great Farewell Feed in the Wood-shed on Tuesday, December 22nd. Tons of grub been promised. D. Wynn will preside.—Full particulars willingly given by T. Merry.

MR. KINK, 25, High-Street, Rylcombe, wishes to inform all readers of "Tom Merry's Weekly" that a splendid selection appears in his shop—

"The Magnet" and "Chuckles," "The Gem" and "The Pop."

WANTED.—A brain-box, by an aristocrat who is sorely in need of same.—Address inquiries to A. A. D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

"Dear Editor,—Will you please insert in your paper a protest from one who would be able to put a stop to the war in about a fortnight if he got the chance? I hope you will, because it will show what a rotten lot the Government really are.

"My idea is this. If the Government would provide me with sufficient petrol to work my new aeroplane and an unlimited quantity of insect-powder, I would make very short work of the Germans. The procedure, my dear Editor, would be as follows: To fly over the German lines, and, having located the enemy, to tip overboard a lot of the concentrated insect-powder. This, I think, would rather stupefy them or make them sneeze a lot. While they were getting over it, my aeroplane would descend, and we could easily dispose of them.

"I wrote to Lord Kitchener at the War Office, giving him full particulars, and I have received an answer to the effect that my letter is having attention. So I wrote again, saying how urgent the matter was, and pointing out that it was a very good idea.

"That was over a week ago, and I have not had an answer to the second letter, so if you would publish this protest in the "Weekly" it will have additional force, as no doubt a paper with such a large circulation is often read in War Office circles.

"You will see for yourself that it is a first-class idea and only wants a first-class chap to carry it out. The undersigned has volunteered for this dangerous work, so if I take it up the war will be over in no time.—I am, etc., etc.,

Herbert Sample.

[It is very unfortunate that you have not heard from the War Office, Skimmy. You should write again. Probably your letter has been used as a pipe-lighter.—Ed.]

To the Editor of "Tom Merry's Weekly."

"Sir,—I call upon you to take back the slanderous statements contained in the last issue of your vile rag.

"As head of the Fifth, I strongly resent being classed as 'the rottenest cad who ever crawled,' and when you state that I visit the Green Man, back-groes, hold card-parties, etc., I can only conclude that you are a lineal descendant of the celebrated Ananias.

"Take warning, here and now, that the next time my name is foolishly labelled in the vile perpetration you are pleased to call a paper I shall come down heavy—so heavy that you and the members of your precious staff will whine and cringe for the mercy which you will never get.—Yours contemptuously,
GERALD CUTTS."

[Our friend Cutts is a funny freak. Does he imagine for one moment that the editorial staff of the "Weekly" will cower at his idiotic threats? He will find us quite ready for him, and, bully though he is, we shall give as good as we get—every bit. Go, my dear Cutts, and eat roke.—Ed.]



The snow-fight had suddenly stopped; all eyes were upon Mr. Quelch now. Some of the juniors supposed that the Form-master was essaying the slide of his own accord, and as Mr. Quelch was not usually regarded as an athlete, they cheered him with great enthusiasm. "Hurrah! Stick it out, sir!" (See Chapter 2.)

eyes and hair. But for the stamp of dissipation on the prodigal's face, the resemblance would have been more marked.

"Now answer my question!" said the young master, his voice hard and savage. "I do not want to make a scene in this place, or I would throw you out of the gates without a word! I give you a chance to go quietly."

The man he had called Dandy Jim shrugged his shoulders.

"You don't want to make a scene?" he queried. "You are making one, partner. You'll have all the eyes of the school upon you soon. Come into the garden here, where we can talk."

"I have nothing to say to you."

"I guess I have something to say to you, though," said Dandy Jim, with a grin. "I want to express my surprise and pleasure at seeing an old partner again."

Mr. Brown clenched his hands harder. But he followed the prodigal into the Head's garden, where they were secure from observation. He halted under the leafless old trees, and fixed his eyes upon the dissipated face.

"Now!" he said menacingly.

"Keep cool," urged the other. "There's nothing to be gained by quarrelling. I never expected to see you here. But—but I don't understand. I guess that you have knocked me flat. You—you're not here under your own name, I know that!"

"How do you know?" said Mr. Brown coldly.

The prodigal laughed.

"Never mind that. I do know. What are you doing here, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 357.

under a false name? What game are you playing, partner!"

"That is my business."

"Mine, too, I guess," said the prodigal coolly. "Who are you—here? Whom does Dr. Locke suppose you to be? What are you after? The safe?"

Mr. Brown gritted his teeth.

"There is no harm in telling you, as you can easily find out," he said. "Here I am Mr. Brown, the master of the Lower Fourth."

"Thunder!"

The prodigal stared blankly at the Remove-master. That statement had evidently taken him utterly by surprise.

"You—a Form-master?" he ejaculated.

"Why not?"

"You! Thunder! What next!" The prodigal burst into a mocking laugh. "When did you learn to be a school-master?"

Mr. Brown frowned angrily.

"You—a schoolmaster?" went on the prodigal. "My word, what a joke for the boys if they knew—not those boys! Ha, ha, ha! The boys out West, I mean, where they know you as what you are—"

"What I was!" said Mr. Brown sternly.

"Ah! You have reformed?" grinned the prodigal.

"Yes."

"Pile it on!" said the young man, in an adoring tone.

"You were always a humorous-cuss. You always had a funny

turn. You a schoolmaster! Ha, ha, ha! How long has that been going on!"

"For three years I have been working hard, and studying, with the intention of coming here," said Mr. Brown quietly. "By the kindness of Mr. Quelch, I have been enabled to carry out my desire."

"Quelch! He knew you?"

"Yes."
"He was master of the Lower Fourth Form here. Then you are the new master who has taken his place?"

"I am."
"I heard of you, but I never guessed"—the prodigal went into a paroxysm of merriments—"I never guessed it was my old partner! Ha, ha, ha! And the Head doesn't know, of course, I know that."

"He has no suspicion."
"But what's the little game?" asked Dandy Jim curiously. "What are you up to? You don't ask me to believe that it is all genuine? You haven't chucked up the wild and woolly days of our youth, the nights and suppers of the gods, to settle down as a schoolmaster? Don't ask me to believe that!"

"I ask you to believe nothing," said Mr. Brown contemptuously. "I know you too well to think that you would believe in honesty or honourable purpose. I am ashamed that I ever called you my friend, that I was ever low enough to be on familiar terms with you. I was reckless in those days—almost as big a blackguard as yourself, I am afraid, but I did not know you then so well as I know you afterwards. I gave you my confidence, I made you my comrade."

"I guess we did well as partners out there," smiled the other.

"Until you robbed me and fled," said the Remove-master sternly.

"Every man for himself," said Dandy Jim coolly and cynically. "We had struck oil. It was a neat little haul, and half wasn't enough. Besides, I wanted to play—I had the gambling fever on me—and it did not last long. If I had had luck, I should have brought back what I owed you. But I lost."

"It was not only the gold you robbed me of, but other things. Things I had kept as souvenirs of my former life—all I had," said the master. "What have you done with them?"

The prodigal shrugged his shoulders.

"Lost! I was cleaned out in New York."
There was a short silence. The scapgrace was regarding the Remove-master closely, the mocking light still in his eyes. "And you worked? You gave up the wild life and turned to work?" he said, in wonder. "And you made yourself fit for this job—in a school?"

"I did."

"And then, I suppose, you saw Quelch quietly, and took him in—"

"I did not take him in. I told him the facts."

"The way you were after the old man's money with a new dodge?" asked the scapgrace cynically.

Mr. Brown clenched his hands.

"Don't tempt me too far," he said, between his teeth. "It is useless to ask you to believe that I have thrown my past behind me, that I have seen the selfish error of my early days, and desire to win respect and make reparation."

"Quite useless," said the prodigal. "I don't believe a word of it. You are on the make, and you want to keep your old partner out of it. That's your little game."

"Let it go at that, then," said Mr. Brown quietly. "I do not expect you to understand. You were my partner for two years. We slept under the same tent, I confided everything to you, we worked side by side, and you robbed me in the night and fled. After that, I know what to think of you. You are a scoundrel. And now I ask you again, what are you doing here?"

The prodigal was silent.

"I have heard, by chance, of your arrival here," said Mr. Brown. "You came in rags and tatters, and for some reason Dr. Locke has taken you in and taken care of you. You have imposed upon him in some way."

"The name you are known by here is not your own," said the Remove-master. "In California you were named Leggett, and called Dandy Jim. Here you call yourself Lambert."

"A change of name is necessary sometimes," said the prodigal, with a laugh.

"What are you doing here?"

"Nothing."

"You did not come here for nothing," said the Remove-master. "You are playing some game. By what trick did you induce Dr. Locke to admit you to his house as a guest?"

The prodigal looked curiously at the Remove-master. The question seemed to strike him as humorous, for he was quiver-

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ing with subdued laughter. The new master looked puzzled, as well as angry.

"You had better speak out," he said, "or—"

"Or what?"

"Or I shall speak to Dr. Locke, and warn him of your true character."

"And betray your own secret at the same time?"

"No," said Mr. Brown, after a pause. "I shall not do that. My secret will be kept until the time I have marked out for myself—until by upright and honourable conduct I have proved that the past is indeed dead, and that, whatever I may have been, I am now an honourable and trustworthy man. Mr. Quelch has generously given me the chance, and that is what I shall do. Neither will you betray me."

"That is as I choose."

"That is not as you choose, Dandy Jim!" said Mr. Brown, steadily. "You forget that the police in America would be glad to hear from you, and that you are amenable to the law for robbing me, and for robbing others. And if you utter one word that I do not choose you to utter, I shall give the necessary information, and you will leave here with handcuffs on your wrists."

"You will betray an old partner?"

"Not unless I am forced to. But if you utter one word to Dr. Locke concerning me, I shall not hesitate to do my worst for you."

Dandy Jim laughed.

"I am silent," he said. "Your secret is safe in my keeping. If you knew all you would understand how safe it is." And he laughed again derisively.

"I ask you once more, what is your game here?" said the Remove-master.

"Food and shelter," said Dandy Jim. "The Head has taken me in and given me a refuge from the weather. He has given me nothing else. That is all."

"But why should he do so?" Mr. Brown was evidently perplexed. "What connection have you ever had with the Head of Greyfriars? When I told you all my history, you never told me yours; yet if you had had any connection with this place I should surely have known. You have imposed upon Dr. Locke in some manner."

"Not in the least. Suppose I have pitched him a story of distress, what then? What objection have you to a kind old gentleman exercising benevolence at Christmas-time?"

"I have an objection to a reprobate like yourself remaining in this school," said Mr. Brown sternly, "and I am convinced that I have some underhand game to play."

"I swear—"

"That is enough. I do not take your word. If you do not quit Greyfriars this morning I shall request an interview with the Head, and tell him what I know of your true character!"

"Without giving yourself away!"

"I have said so. Why do you repeat that question? How does that concern you?" Mr. Brown exclaimed irritably.

"Mere curiosity," said the prodigal, smiling. "Will you have a cigar?"

Mr. Brown's eyes gleamed.

"They are good cigars," went on the prodigal, imperturbably. "The Head stood me a box. Will you have one?"

"Are you going to leave Greyfriars?"

"I guess not."

"Then I shall see the Head about it!"

"Go it!" said the prodigal cheerfully. "Quite sure you won't have a cigar? I can roly recommend them."

The Remove-master turned on his heel and strode away, his face pale with anger. The prodigal stood staring after him, and when he was gone he burst into a deep chuckle. There was apparently something in the situation that greatly amused the returned prodigal.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Birds of a Feather!

HARRY WHARTON could not help glancing keenly at the Remove-master when Mr. Brown came into the Form-room that afternoon to take the Lower Fourth.

The new master interested him and mystified him, more than ever.

Mr. Brown met his glance and coloured. He remembered that the captain of the Remove had seen his meeting with "Dandy Jim," and heard him call the young man by that peculiar name. Mr. Brown bit his lip for a moment and turned his eyes away from Wharton, and did not look at him again.

The new master was very thoughtful that morning, and there was a cloud upon his brow. The meeting with the prodigal had undoubtedly greatly disturbed him.

When lessons were over, Mr. Brown signed to Wharton

stay behind when the Remove marched out of the Form-room. Wharton stopped at the master's desk.

Mr. Brown coughed a little. Wharton knew what was coming, and he waited.

"Ahem! You saw me speak to Mr.—ahem!—Lambert in the 'Close this morning!'"

"Yes, sir."

"You heard me speak to him?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you mentioned the circumstance to anyone?"

"No, sir."

Mr. Brown looked relieved.

"I believe you are a boy of discretion, Wharton," he said.

"Although I have been less than two weeks in the school, I think I have formed a very just estimate of your character. I can trust you not to indulge in idle chatter that could only be disagreeable to Dr. Locke, if it should come to his ears, on the subject of a gentleman—ahem!—who is a guest under his roof."

"I understand, sir," said Harry. "I never intended to say anything about it, even to my own chums."

"Thank you, Wharton."

The captain of the Remove quitted the Form-room. His chums were waiting for him in the passage.

"What did Brown say?" asked Nugent.

"Only jawed to me," said Wharton, colouring a little.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Keeping secrets from your loving uncles!" said Bob Cherry reproachfully.

Wharton laughed a little constrainedly.

"It isn't a secret exactly, Bob, but I happened to—to become acquainted with something that isn't my business, that's all, and I don't want to jaw about it."

"Hear, hear!" said Bob. "And we don't want you to, old chap. 'Come on!' It isn't too dark to punt a footer about the 'Close."

And the Famous Five proceeded to punt the footer about, Wharton feeling very relieved at not being asked any more questions. When the chums came in, ruddy and healthy from their exercise, from the dusky Close, they almost ran into Mr. Lambert in the passage. The prodigal had sauntered along the passage from the Head's house, humming an air from an opera, in a careless mood. He gave the juniors a genial nod, and they returned his salute politely. Mr. Brown stepped out of his study, and paused as he saw the scapegrace.

"Good-evening, Mr. Brown!" said the young man genially.

Mr. Brown looked directly at him.

"I am going to see the Head," he said.

The prodigal nodded.

"Give him my kind regards," he said nonchalantly.

Mr. Brown turned sharply away. It was evident to all the Famous Five that there was a sharp antagonism between the two men. The Head's prodigal laughed, as if in great amusement, and turned to the juniors again.

"That's your new Form-master?" he said.

"Yes," said Harry shortly.

"How do you get on with him?"

"First-rate!"

"He keeps you up to the mark, what—teaches you things?" said the young man rather vaguely. "Quite up to his work—quite up to Quelch's form, what?"

"Certainly!" said Harry.

"By gum! He really knows the business? He isn't spooning you? I mean, he can actually do a Form-master's work?" asked Mr. Lambert.

"Of course he can!"

"Well, it beats me!" said the young man, with a whistle. "I guess there must be something in it, after all."

"Something in what?" asked Nugent.

"I guess that's not your business, kid," said the prodigal coolly. "Don't ask questions, and I won't tell you any Berlin journalism."

And the young man sauntered away to Loder's study in the Sixth-Form passage. There he was received quite cordially by Loder and Carne of the Sixth, the two black sheep of the upper school.

"Getting pretty thick with Loder," growled Johnny Bull.

"Birds of a feather," said Harry Wharton, with a curl of the lip.

"The featherfulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

And the Famous Five went up to No. 1 Study to tea. They were not surprised that the scapegrace had made the acquaintance of the black sheep of the Sixth. Considering his character, it was in Loder's study that he was most likely to find congenial company. But it would have been a

surprise to the Head of Greyfriars if he could have looked into Gerald Loder's study at that moment.

Loder had locked the door for security. Loder and Carne were smoking their usual cigarettes, and the scapegrace had a big cigar between his teeth. They were sitting at the table, and the prodigal nephew was dealing cards.

Loder and Carne had found a kindred spirit in the Head's guest, but they could hardly conceal their surprise at the Head having a guest who acted in this manner.

They had had a "little game" the previous evening, the prodigal carefully refraining from mentioning that his pockets were quite empty of cash. Loder and Carne prided themselves on their card-play, but the young man had cleaned them out of a sovereign apiece with perfect ease. He was giving them their revenge now, as they called it, or proceeding to replenish further his exchequer, as he would have called it. Certainly his luck was very good, but Loder could not detect any signs of cheating—and Loder knew something on that subject, too.

There was a tap at the door, and Courtney of the Sixth called in.

"Hallo! What are you sporting your oak for, Loder?"

"Sorry, Courtney; can't open the door. I'm developing photographs," called back Loder.

And Courtney went on his way.

The prodigal chuckled.

"Your deal, Loder! By the way, do you keep anything drinkable in the study?"

"Lemonade," said Loder.

"His new friend made a grimace.

"I'll have something better for this evening," said Loder, feeling that his prestige as a "sport" was suffering from the lack of refreshing liquor in his study.

"Good! I'll give you a look-in."

"I—I say," Carne could not help asking, "does the Head know—ahem!—I mean, surely the Head doesn't know you are—are—ahem—"

"Get it out!" said the prodigal calmly. "I savvy! No; the Head doesn't know. We may as well keep our friendship a little secret."

"But—but how is it you are staying with the Head?" asked Loder. "Blessed if I can make it out."

"Don't bother your head about it," said the prodigal cheerfully. "Your deal. You'll clean me out this time, I think."

But they didn't. It was Loder and Carne who were cleaned out, and when their new friend quitted the study he carried all their available cash with him. The two sports of the Sixth looked a little blue. Their new friend was a very entertaining companion, but it occurred to them that his friendship was likely to prove a somewhat expensive luxury.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Brown Speaks!

"COME in, Mr. Brown?" said the Head cordially.

The new master entered the Head's study with a subdued and hesitating manner that did not escape

Dr. Locke's attention. The old gentleman's manner was very kind and gracious; he wished to put the young master at his ease.

It had seemed to him that Mr. Brown had somewhat avoided him—somehow, he never came in his way, excepting when duty demanded. The Head attributed it to diffidence; and as he was highly satisfied with Mr. Quelch's substitute, he made it a point to treat him with very great courtesy.

"I do not see you so often as I could wish, Mr. Brown," said the Head kindly, as he waved his hand to a chair. "I hope you find yourself comfortable at Greyfriars?"

"Quite so, sir—in every way. I only hope that I have given you satisfaction," said the young master diffidently.

"Undoubtedly. Of course, I have observed your work with the Remove," said the Head. "But I had every confidence in you, from the strong recommendation Mr. Quelch gave me. For that reason, I have asked you no questions, and have not requested to see your credentials, because I have complete faith in Mr. Quelch's judgment. He has known you for a long time. I think!"

"Since I was a boy, sir."

"He has never mentioned you to me before the day he presented you to me here," said the Head.

"He has been very kind and generous to me, sir. This—this temporary appointment at Greyfriars means a great deal to me," said Mr. Brown. "But—but I did not come here to speak of myself. There is a matter I must mention to you, Dr. Locke."

The Head regarded him curiously. Mr. Brown was seated

ANSWERS

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 357.

Next Monday's Number of The "MAGNET" will be the usual price, 1d., and will contain a Splendid, Long, Complete Story, entitled:

'BILLY BUNTER'S UNCLE!' --- By --- Frank Richards.

with his back turned to the light, and his handsome face was a little in shadow.

"Nothing wrong with the Remove, I hope?"

"It is not a school matter, sir."

"No!" The Head's tone expressed his surprise. "What then?"

"I hope you will forgive me for speaking upon a subject that is not really my own business, sir," said Mr. Brown. "I feel it is my duty to do so, however; and if I am overstepping my duty, pray tell me so."

"Pray go on!" said the Head, courteously but wonderingly.

"It concerns a guest at present staying in your house, sir."

Dr. Locke's expression changed.

"Mr.—ahem!—Mr. Lambert?" he asked.

"That is the name he is called by here, sir."

The Head trembled.

"You—you do not know the man, surely, Mr. Brown?"

"I do, sir."

Dr. Locke half rose in his agitation.

"You—you know his real name?" he almost gasped.

"That I cannot say, sir; but I know the name by which he was known in California."

"And—and that name?"

"Leggett. He was also known by the nickname of Dandy Jim."

The Head breathed again.

"It is very curious that you should be acquainted with Mr. Lambert," he said, a weight taken off his mind. "I did not know that you had been in America."

"It has not been mentioned, sir; but, as a matter of fact, I have spent several years in California. At one time I was a gold-seeker in the mountains there—I lived a very rough life in the mining camps."

"Indeed! You have had quite an adventurous career, Mr. Brown," said the Head, with interest.

"I am very glad to have seen the end of it, sir. But, seeing this man in your house, and apparently in your confidence, I felt that I could not remain silent," said Mr. Brown. "It is an unpleasant task I have set myself, but I am quite willing to make my statement in the presence of Mr. Lambert, if you will send for him."

"That is not necessary," said the Head quickly. "I understand your motives, Mr. Brown, and I am obliged to you. My relations with this gentleman I cannot exactly explain to you, but—but I am anxious to know anything I can about him, especially anything to his credit."

"I am afraid I can tell you nothing to his credit, sir. He was my partner out there, and he robbed me!"

Dr. Locke became deadly pale.

"Robbed you?" he repeated.

"Yes. All that we had gained by a whole year of hard work, he stole, and fled in the night. And I was not the only victim. There are districts in California where he could not set foot without danger of being lynched!"

"Good heavens!"

"I felt bound to speak to you, sir, because it is quite evident to me that the man has deceived you, or you would not have admitted him to your house," said Mr. Brown quietly. "I told him of my intention."

"And—and what did he reply?"

"He bade me do as I pleased. I must seriously warn you, sir, that you are harbouring a dangerous character, and I cannot conceive any motive he can have for being here, excepting a dishonest one of some sort."

There was a short silence. Dr. Locke pressed his hand to his brow. It was throbbing feverishly.

"I have given you a shock, sir," muttered Mr. Brown. "If you have regarded this man as a friend, it is certainly very painful."

"It is not that."

"I concluded that he could only be an acquaintance, sir, since I was certain that you could not know his true character."

"Heaven help me! I know it but too well!" groaned the Head, letting his face fall into his hands.

Mr. Brown started to his feet. His own face was pale now.

"Dr. Locke! I—I do not understand. I did not intend to cause you pain. Surely this man is nothing to you—"

"You do not understand, Mr. Brown, of course," said the Head, raising his face, which was white and strained. "Of course, you do not know. How should you? I cannot explain."

"I do not ask it, sir; it does not concern me. But seeing a man whom I know to be a desperate character here, in your house, I was bound—"

"Yes, yes; I understand perfectly. You did your duty," said the Head hastily. "But every word you have uttered has been a dagger to my heart."

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Mr. Brown did not speak; he was utterly perplexed. Dr. Locke rose to his feet, slowly and heavily.

"I am much obliged to you, Mr. Brown," he said, in a subdued voice. "You have done—of your duty in making me acquainted with what you knew—of that man. But—but he has a claim upon me—a claim I cannot disregard—and I cannot deny my house to him—at least, so long as he conducts himself with decency. That is all I can say—and I need not ask you to say nothing of the matter outside this room."

"I shall be silent, sir, of course, if you wish it. Yet—"

The Remove master hesitated.

"Go on," said the Head faintly.

"Mr. Lambert, as he calls himself now, has made acquaintances among the senior boys here. He visits some of them in their studies. His influence cannot be for good. He has probably not mentioned this to you—"

"He has not."

"It is for you to decide, sir, whether it shall continue. I have done what I thought my duty in speaking to you; but if I had known it would be so painful to you I should certainly not have said a word. I could not foresee—"

"You need not reproach yourself," said the Head. "You have done what any honourable man must have done in your place, and you could not know that this man, who poses as my guest, is connected with me by ties which I cannot break. I shall take every care that he comes into no further contact with any of the boys here. Good heavens, I did not suspect that, and I was failing in my duty to the boys under my charge! You have placed me under an infinite obligation."

Dr. Locke shook hands with the young master, and Mr. Brown quitted the study. He went in a very troubled and perplexed frame of mind. When the door had closed upon him Dr. Locke sank into his chair with a groan. His dimmed eyes turned upon the portrait on the wall; the handsome, smiling face seemed to mock him.

"Profligate! Gambler! Drunkard! Thief!" muttered the Head. "My brother's son! Heaven help me!"

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Corn in Egypt!

"DIDDLED!" exclaimed Bob Cherry wrathfully.

Bob had just come into the School House, leaving his bike outside. His ruddy face was ruddier than usual with indignation.

"What's the trouble, Bob?"

The juniors gathered round curiously.

"Diddled, dished, and done!" growled Bob Cherry.

"But what—"

"We've been spoofed!"

"But who—what—"

"We're playing Rookwood to-morrow!" grunted Bob.

"Yes, if the climate lets us," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "But what's the matter with that? We're going to beat Rookwood, as usual!"

"As per usual!" said Johnny Bull.

Another snort from Bob.

"They're going to beat us!" he announced.

"Rats!"

"They are! And by a rotten trick!"

"Look here, stop blowing off steam, and tell us what you're driving at," exclaimed Squiff, taking Bob by the shoulder, and jamming him up against the wall. "Now, you blundering ass, explain!"

"Leggo, fathead! I've just seen them at practice!" growled Bob.

"Well, no law against a team practising, is there? They need it, too."

"Fathead!" howled Bob. "They're going to play a giddy Goliath against us. I came on them at practice, and spotted the whole game. They're going to wind up the term by beating us; they've been saying so for a long time."

"They can say so for donkeys' years, but they won't be able to do it," said Harry Wharton. "It's one of our easiest fixtures."

"Not now, not with their new centre-forward."

"Oh, they've got a new centre-forward, have they?" said Wharton carelessly. "Well, they've a right to get a whole new eleven if they like."

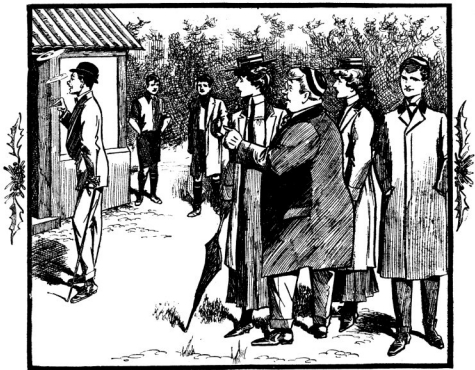
"Ass! It's Tucker!"

"Who's Tucker?" asked Squiff.

"Who's Tucker?" snorted Bob Cherry. "If you didn't come from the wilds of Australia you'd have heard of Tucker. He's a fellow of twenty-five, and he's played as an amateur for a League team."

"My hat!"

"He's an old Rookwood fellow, and they've got him to play," said Bob. "He's practising with them now. We're not stipulated about any age limit, and they're going to



"That's the fellow, Marjorie!" Bunter whispered dramatically. "Who is it?" "The ragged boulder you saw in Gosling's lodge the other day." (See Chapter 19.)

bring him on us to surprise us. Fancy a fellow like that coming here with a Fourth Form team! I suppose he takes it as a joke. It won't be a joke for us if we play them. A man like that will walk all over us."

"My hat!"

"Well, of all the swindles!"

"Refuse to play them if they don't take him out," said Johnny Bull. "Tain't a fair game playing a grown-up man in a junior team!"

"Refuse to play them, and have them swanking for ever and ever that we're funkng a match!" hooted Bob Cherry. "Tain't fair play, but I'd rather be licked."

"The lickfulness will be terrific," said Hurrese Singh seriously. "We cannot touch one esteemed side of the ludicrous Tucker."

"Dished!" said Bob, with a grunt. "Dished and done! The match is a goner, and we shall look silly idiots. We can't even raise an objection, because Wharton said to them once—I heard him—that he'd play them if they brought any fellow from Rookwood from the Second up to the Sixth."

"Well, so—so I did," said Harry. "They play rotten football, and I'd take their Sixth-Formers on with our eleven any day. Of course, I wasn't thinking of Old Boys—giddy League forwards."

"But if you raise an objection they'll chuck that up against you, all the same," said Nugent, with a shake of the head.

"I suppose they will," admitted Harry. "It was really a bit of swank, though I'd be willing to stand by what I said—in reason."

"But this isn't in reason," said Nugent warmly. "They're no right to do anything of the kind. If it's a joke on us I don't like that kind of a joke."

"And Marjorie and Clara are coming to see the match," said THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 357.

Next Monday's Number of The "MAGNET" will be the usual price, 1d., and will contain a Splendid, Long, Complete Story, entitled:

said Bob Cherry. "We arranged that when they were here to tea the other day. They'll come and see us licked, and we shall have to admit that we brought it on ourselves by—well, by swanking."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Clear off!" roared Bob. He was in no mood to be bothered just then by the Owl of the Remove. "Kick him, somebody!"

"Oh, really, Cherry, I've got a suggestion to make!"

"Bosh!"

"I've got an idea to help you out of this fix!"

"Go and boil it!"

"Oh, let him rip!" said Squiff pacifically. "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, you know!"

"But not porpoises!" growled Bob Cherry. "Still, let him rip! Get it over, Bunter!"

"I've got a jolly good suggestion to make," said Bunter. "They're springing Tucker on you—a chap who could wipe up the ground with all the players you've got in the Form eleven at present. Well, all you've got to do is to let a man stand out, and put in a tremendously good player in his place."

"Fathead!" howled Bob. "Where are we going to find one?"

"That's what I'm coming to. I suggest—"

"We might ask one of the Sixth to help us out," said Harry Wharton. "Wingate would do it under the circumstances. I think; but the first eleven are playing on Saturday. They're going over to Redclyffe. And all the good men in the Upper Forms are in the first eleven. We don't want their scrapings."

"No fear!"

"I wasn't thinking of the first eleven," said Bunter peevishly. "If you'd give me time to finish—"

"BILLY BUNTER'S UNCLE!" — By — Frank Richards.

"Oh, get on! Thinking of Coker of the Fifth!" asked Bob Cherry sarcastically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Certainly not! What you want is a first-class player—a good all-round man to take centre-forward. Wharton can play on the wing, or he can stand out."

"I'd stand out to make room for a better man you fat ass!" said Wharton. "But we can't find one. What have you got in your silly head!"

"I'm thinking of a chap who'd fill the bill," said Bunter; "that's all. A first-class player, too—one who'd make the Rookwood fellows open their eyes!"

"Who is it?" roared Bob Cherry.

Bunter blinked at him with great dignity.

"Me!" he replied.

For a moment or two the exasperated juniors glared at him speechless. Then Bob Cherry gasped:

"You! Play you in an emergency, because we want a better man than any we've got in the eleven."

"Exactly! At a time like this I think that all petty and personal jealousies should be put aside, and you should only think of the good of the team, and winning the match," said Bunter loftily.

"You—you—you—"

"Oh, kill him, somebody!"

"Here, I say, stop it! Oh, crumbs! Yarook! I was only trying to help you out of a fix! Yah! Oh!"

The infuriated footballers collared Bunter, and bumped him on the floor with a bump that almost made the floor shake. For the Owl of the Remore to put his claim forward at such a moment of anxiety and dismay was too much.

"Jump on him!" roared Squiff.

"You! Oh! Ow! Gerroff! I was only— Yarook!"

Billy Bunter leaped up and ran for it. He bolted down the passage, with the exasperated juniors after him. He dodged round the nearest corner, and then the pursuers came to a sudden halt, as their Form-master appeared round that corner. They stopped just in time to avoid a collision with Mr. Brown.

"Oh!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Ahem!" said Mr. Brown.

"S-s-s-sorry, sir!"

"There seems to be some excitement," remarked Mr. Brown, surveying the abashed juniors.

"Ahem! N-n-not at all, sir."

"No—the fact is that we're in a fix, sir," said Harry Wharton. "The fat duffer—ahem!—I mean Bunter, the silly ass—we're simply hung up over a foner match, sir, and that idiot—I mean Bunter—offered to play for us to get us out of the fix, sir, and—ah—so—so we—we got excited."

Mr. Brown laughed heartily.

"I am sorry to hear that you are in a fix," he said. "As you know, I take a great interest in football, and especially in the games played by my Form. Is it a matter that I could advise you about?"

The juniors exchanged glances.

"I—I don't know, sir," said Harry. "We'd be jolly glad to have some advice, if it would help us. We've been diddled—I mean, done—that is to say, snuffed—ahem!"

"Perhaps I can help you out," said Mr. Brown. "Tell me what is the matter?"

"We've got a fixture with Rookwood School for to-morrow, sir," said Harry. "They're a lot of slackers, as a rule, and we're accustomed to walking over them. They're no better form than young Tubb's lot, as a rule. Well, we—we may have swanked a bit—ahem!—but they swank, too, though they can't play for toffee, and—and the long and the short of it is that we said once we'd play, any kind of team, with any sort of chap in it, that they could bring here, and undertake to wipe 'em off the face of the earth!"

"Rather a big order," smiled Mr. Brown.

"Well, now they're springing a surprise on us," said Harry ruefully. "Bob's seen them at practice, and they've got Tucker. He's an amateur player, at least twenty-five years old, who's played in League matches, and they're going to bring him to-morrow. Of course, we can't touch him. He's better than the best man in our First Eleven, of course—better than old Wingate himself. It will be like a blessed Gulliver walking over a lot of blessed Lilliputians. And—and after what we've said, we can't very well raise an objection. So—so we're dished."

"The dishfulness is terrific, honoured sahib."

"Done to the wide!" groaned Bob Cherry.

Mr. Brown smiled.

"Certainly you seem to be in a tight corner," he remarked. "Perhaps Wingate or Courtney might help you out."

"The First Eleven's playing out to-morrow," said Harry.

Mr. Brown looked thoughtful.

"Are you at liberty to play anybody you choose?" he asked.

"Oh, yes! What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander," said Bob Cherry. "If he don't object to their

man, they couldn't object to any of ours, if we bagged a giddy International. But we can't."

"Suppose you should play a master?"

"A—master! The masters here ain't footballers!" said Bob dismally. "They are in some schools, but they're not here. But— Bob Cherry suddenly understood, and his face lighted up. "You, sir!"

"You, sir!" chorused the juniors.

"Corn in Egypt!" yelled Bob. "Oh, sir, that's awfully good of you!"

Mr. Brown smiled genially.

"If you think I should be of use to you," he said modestly.

"What ho!" said Wharton. "We've seen you play, sir, and you could play Tucker's head off. Oh, sir, if you'll play—"

"Count me in!" said Mr. Brown, laughing. "It will be rather an unusual experience to play with a junior team; but, under the circumstances—"

"Hoory!"

Mr. Brown walked away, smiling; and the juniors sent a thunderous cheer after him. It was, as Bob said, corn in Egypt!

"What a brick!" said Squiff. "What a splendid brick! And, oh, my infants—oh, my children, what a giddy surprise—packet for Rookwood to-morrow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

The Football Match!

MR. BROWN had been popular before; but now he had leaped at a bound into the most enthusiastic favour with his Form. Even Skinner was heard to admit that he was a jolly good sort. Indeed, though the juniors liked Mr. Quelch well enough, they began to think that the new master was an improvement on the old one. Mr. Quelch was a good sort in his way, but he couldn't play footer for toffee.

He would sometimes come and watch the matches, but the idea of the grave and severe gentleman kicking goals or passing the ball made the Removers smile. Mr. Brown was a different sort. He was young and strong, and full of vigour, he was keen on the great winter game, and the juniors had seen him play with the First Eleven, and knew that he was a splendid forward. And the honour of including Mr. Brown in the Form Eleven was tremendous.

On Saturday morning Harry Wharton & Co. were in the greatest spirits. The Rookwood fellows were coming over to surprise them with their League man, and a surprise was waiting for Rookwood which would take their breath away, and probably the breath of the League man too. The chums of the Remore chuckled joyfully at the prospect. They were about to "dish," instead of being "dished"; active instead of passive voice, as Bob Cherry put it.

The Rookwood fellows were, in fact, playing it rather "low down" on the Remore, and they fully deserved the surprise they were going to get.

At morning lessons the faces of the Remore footballers were bright and smiling. But they were not allowed to think about footer in the Form-room. At lessons Mr. Brown was adamant itself. Outside the Form-room he was a good-tempered young man, and very kind to the juniors; inside the Form-room he made it quite clear that that was a place for work, and not for play. Bob Cherry, whispering gleefully to Squiff that the Rookwood fellows were going to get it where the chicken got the chopper, was the recipient of fifty lines for talking in class; and after that the Rookwood match was left severely alone till lessons were over.

But fifty lines did not subdue Bob Cherry's cheery spirits, and he came out of the Form-room in high good-humour, and quite satisfied with Mr. Brown.

"Tipping weather!" he exclaimed, looking out into the Close. "Gold as a refrigerator—good! No rain—no wet—the climate is playing up remarkably well. Who's going over to Cliff House for Marjorie?"

"I say, you fellows, I'll go if you'll lend me a bike."

"Scat!" said Bob, lifting a heavy boot; and Billy Bunter snorted and rolled away, without repeating his offer.

There was a buzz at the Remore table at dinner. Kick-off was fixed for early in the afternoon, and so the Rookwood brake was expected soon after dinner. As soon as that meal was over, Bob Cherry and Nugent hurried off on their bicycles to fetch Marjorie and Clara. The Rookwood brake arrived before they had returned. Harry Wharton & Co. were on the football-ground, punting a ball about, when the visiting team arrived upon the scene.

The Remore had all gathered round the ground, and a good many other fellows too, who had heard of the expected surprise. The Rookwood eleven were a junior team, and did not look anything like the form of Greyfriars. Their

kipper, Smythe, was a somewhat lackadaisical young gentleman, who prefaced all his remarks with "Aw!" and evidently was blessed with an extremely good opinion of himself.

He looked upon football with a lofty, patronising eye, as if the game were really scarcely worth his noble consideration, which was perhaps a reason why the Rookwood team was generally licked. Indeed, the Greyfriars juniors had come to look upon the Rookwood match as a sort of standing joke.

But Smythe, if he could not play, was evidently a deep young gentleman in some respects. He was walking beside a thick-set, strongly-built young man of about twenty-five, with a good-looking smiling face. This was the celebrated Tucker, who had played as an amateur in a team in the Southern League. Mr. Tucker evidently looked upon his presence there as a joke, and all the Rookwood fellows were enjoying the joke.

Smythe shook hands languidly with Harry Wharton, giving him three fingers that felt like defunct fishes.

"Aw!" he remarked. "How do you do? Aw! Rippin' afternoon for a game—what? Let us introduce my new centre-forward, Tucker! Heard of Tucker?"

"Yes, rather," said Harry Wharton calmly. "Glad to meet you, Mr. Tucker. It's an honour to play against you."

"The honourfulness is terrific, my esteemed Tucker," said Huzree Singh, with a grin.

Mr. Tucker smiled.

"I understand that it's open to Smythe to play anybody he likes," he remarked. "I hear that there was an arrangement to that effect. Otherwise—"

"Yass, Wharton said so," yawned Smythe.

But if Master Smythe expected the Remove captain to be taken aback, he was quite disappointed. Harry Wharton & Co. were calm and smiling from their looks, indeed, it might have been supposed that they were quite accustomed to seeing League players arrive in the ranks of a junior team.

"Quite so," said Harry urbanely. "Any old thing! Smythe is welcome to play you, Mr. Tucker, and we're jolly glad to see you here."

"That's all right, then," said Tucker.

"Of course, the same applies to us," said Harry. "We can put in any man we like, as Rookwood are doing it. Anybody at Greyfriars, I mean?"

"Aw! yass, certainly, that's only fair," said Tucker, with a grin. "Put in the best man in your First Eleven if you like, or the whole shoot! Aw!"

"We're putting in our Form-master," said Harry casually.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a roar of laughter from the Rookwood fellows. It wasn't polite, but they could not help it. They were thinking, of course, of Mr. Queek, and the idea of that staid gentleman playing football struck them as funny.

"What's the joke?" asked Harry.

"Ha, ha, ha! Excuse us," said Smythe, wiping his eyes. "Put him in by Jove! Aw! We shall be honoured. You ain't afraid that he'll fall down dead suddenly—what?"

"Not at all."

"Not likely to collapse from heart failure in the first run—eh?"

"I think not."

"Got an ambulance ready in case of accidents?" grinned Smythe.

"Never thought of it."

"Aw! You should have thought of that," said Smythe, shaking his head seriously. "You can't be too careful with these respectable old gents. We should be awfully sorry—aw!—to be the cause of the sudden demise of a Form-master—aw!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, we'll risk it!" said Harry cheerfully. "Let me show you into your dressing-room."

The Rookwood team went chuckling into their dressing-rooms. Four cyclists wheeled their machines in at the school gates, and arrived on the football-ground. Marjorie and Clara were counsel sent, and rings were arranged round them, and Bob Cherry and Nugent rushed in to change. Penfold cut off to the house to tell Mr. Brown that they were ready, and the Form-master came out, with his overcoat on over his football "clothes."

A goodly crowd was gathered round Little Side by this time. Coker of the Fifth had come down to referee. All the Remove who were not in the team were round the field, and many fellows of the other Forms, curious to see that peculiar junior match in which a League player figured on one side, and a Form-master on the other. Billy Bunter stationed himself beside Miss Hazeldene, and explained to her sorrowfully that the Remove hadn't an earthly. This, it appeared, was partly owing to the fact that Rookwood were playing the team of Tucker, and partly to the other fact that the Removes were not playing Bunter. Whereat Miss Marjorie smiled, and Miss Clara said "Rats!"

"It's a giddy surprise for us, you know," Bob Cherry explained to Marjorie. "I spotted yesterday that they had

Tucker—but we're going to spring Brown on them! You should see Brown play! He's a corker!"

Mr. Brown came down to the pavilion, and raised his cap smilingly to the Cliff House girls. From the direction of the Head's house a young man with a cigar between his teeth lounged into view. He nodded familiarly to Mr. Brown.

"Playing footer, partner?" he asked.

The Remove-master nodded curtly.

"Yes," he said.

"By gum! You surprise me more and more," yawned the prodigal. "Playing a kid's game—you! My hat!"

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Brown.

And he turned away abruptly from the Head's guest. But it was not easy to hurt Dandy Jim's feelings, and he only chuckled.

"That's the fellow, Marjorie," Billy Bunter whispered dramatically.

"Who is it?"

"The ragged boulder you saw in Gosling's lodge the other day."

"He does not look much like him."

"It's the same man, though—the Head's taken him in, and looked after him. Queer, ain't it?" said Bunter.

"What do you think about it?"

"I don't think about it at all."

"Eh?"

"It isn't my business, you see," explained Marjorie sweetly.

"Here, really, you know—"

"Here they come!" said Miss Clara, as Smythe & Co. streamed out of the pavilion. And the footballers went into the field.

THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER.

Surprising the Surprisers!

SMYTHE blinked at Mr. Brown rather curiously as he lined up with the Removees. Mr. Brown was put at centre-forward, Wharton taking inside-left. The Rookwood skipper seemed surprised.

"Aw! Wharton, didn't you say your Form-master was playing?" he queried.

"Certainly," said Wharton. "This is our Form-master, Mr. Brown."

"I—I thought— New master, what?"

"Yes," said Harry, with a smile.

"Aw! Well, it won't make any difference," remarked Smythe, with a shrug of his narrow shoulders. "You're booked, anyway."

"That's what we're going to see," grinned Bob Cherry; and Huzree Singh murmured that the usefulness would be terrific.

Tucker had given Mr. Brown a quick glance. He was a better judge than the egregious Smythe, and he could see that the Form-master was a player.

The kick-off fell to Greyfriars, and the ball rolled at the beep of the whistle. Then there was a buzz of deep interest as the game started.

"Go it, Greyfriars! On the ball!" yelled the spectators.

"Play up, Brown!" chirruped Tubb of the Third, audaciously addressing the Remove-master in that style from the security of the crowd.

The game was fast from the start. The Rookwood centre-forward had the ball in a few minutes, and was away with it. The Rookwood fellows backed him up, in their slinking way, but with grinning faces. They had no doubt whatever that their great champion was going to make hay of the Removees.

So he would have done undoubtedly, but for the Remove's latest recruit. Tucker was a fine player, and in good form. But there was a surprise in store for him and for the Rookwooders.

The Rookwood forward line came sweeping down the field, and Tucker ran the ball through; but Bulstrode's goal stopped the kick, and Johnny Bull cleared. Even the League man was not to have it all his own way. Peter Todd, at centre-half, sent the ball to Mr. Brown. Then the players opened their eyes.

Mr. Brown was off with the ball like a shot. Tucker was not near enough to tackle him, and as for any of the Rookwooders stopping him, it would have been just about as useful for mice to have attempted to stop a particularly large and particularly ferocious cat. Mr. Brown struck through the Rookwood side like a knife through cheese, and simply "ambled" the leather into goal, under the nose of the help-loss goalie.

There was a roar from the crowd, of cheers mingled with laughter.

"Goal! Goal! Hurrah! Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Bravo, Brown!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "M-m-mum-ny hat!" stammered Smythe. "M-m-my only hat! Is that a disgusting International you've got there—
 —a—
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "One up in five minutes!" chuckled Vernon Smith.
 "Looks like our game—what?"
 "What—ho!"

The sides lined up again, and Rookwood kicked off. There was a keen tussle for the ball. The crowd looked on with the keenest interest. The tussle was, in fact, a personal affair between the centre-forwards on both sides; they were both so far and away above their teams in form. But while Mr. Brown was splendidly backed up by the Remove players, Tucker received a spiritless backing from his slackening side. Smythe & Co., in fact, were even in worse form than usual—they had counted on the match as a dead certainty with their powerful League ally, and had not troubled about it at all. They were run off their legs, and had bellows to mend. The Remove players were at the top of their form, and they showed it.
 When Tucker succeeded in getting through with the ball—coming alone down the field, for the Rookwood forwards could not keep the pace—he found Johnny Ball and Mark Linley steady as rocks at back, Bulstrode watchful in goal, and it was not easy for even the League man to beat them and score. While when Mr. Brown got the ball away, he simply walked over the Rookwood defence, and slammed it in without the slightest difficulty.

The spectators were soon roaring with laughter as they watched that extremely curious football match. Tucker had taken one goal—and Greyfriars had scored four by half-time, three of them taken by Mr. Brown, and one by Squiff, who was playing inside-right. A match between what were practically one-man sides was a new experience at Greyfriars, and it was watched hilariously.

At half-time the Rookwooders were looking considerably green. Their surprise had been sprung on the Remove; but it had not been a great success. The surprisers had been surprised.

The crowd thickened round the field for the second half. Nearly all Greyfriars had come there to watch the peculiar match. Even "Mr. Lambert" was looking on with keen interest now. Gosling, the porter, had come up from his lodge to look on. Mr. Prout, and Mr. Capper, and Mr. Twigg had come out to have a look. And they were all smiling.

Coker blew the whistle, and the second half started. If the Rookwood fellows had any anticipations of victory left, they must have been very sanguine. For it was evident that even their League man was outclassed by Mr. Brown—and their League man was their only visible means of support, so to speak.

Mr. Brown had a glimmer of amusement in his eyes as he played, and there was a flush in his tanned cheek. He played up faster than ever in the second half. In ten minutes he had slammed the ball in twice, Harry Wharton & Co. devoting themselves to defence, and keeping Tucker thoroughly bottled up.

"Goal! Goal! Ha, ha, ha! Pile 'em up!"
 "Make it a round dozen!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "My hooley 'at!" said Gosling, staring hard at the young master. "My hooley 'at!"

The old school-porter seemed keenly interested in Mr. Brown. He gazed at him, and then he turned his head and gazed at the prodigal, who was standing near him. Then he gazed at Mr. Brown again, and scratched his old head in a perplexed way. Strange thoughts seemed to be working in Gosling's mind. It was as if the sight of Mr. Brown on the football field had awakened some chord of memory.

"Looks like a win, what?" asked Bolsover major, giving the old porter a playful jab in the ribs with his elbow.
 "Yes, Master Bolsover," gasped Gosling—yes! And if it wasn't impossible, I should think—I should think—but, of course, it ain't possible. But then—look at the way he's running with the ball—there, the way he throws his 'ead back when he kicks! Ain't it just the same!"

Bolsover major stared at Gosling in blank astonishment.
 "You should let the gin alone when you're coming to see a footer match, Gossy," he remarked.

Gosling did not reply. He had been talking to himself rather than to Bolsover major. His eyes were fixed upon the young master, as if the sight of Mr. Brown had a mesmerising effect upon him.

"Goal!" roared the crowd. "Pile 'em up! Goal!"

It was another score from Mr. Brown. The Remove were THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 357.

seven to one now—a score that was a joke in itself. The crowd yelled with laughter.

Tucker made heroic efforts to save his side, or, at least, to diminish the margin of defeat. But even a League man could not play so effectually, leaving the scoring to Mr. Brown. The match became a sort of procession of goals.

"Goal again! Ha, ha, ha! Go it! Make it a baker's dozen!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Oh, dear!" gasped Miss Clara. "That's eight! And look at Smythe's face, Marjorie—do. Isn't it a picture!"
 Marjorie laughed.

Smythe's face was indeed a picture. He had hardly a run left in him, and he was limping about and blinking diemally. Coker looked up at the clock-tower as another goal was taken by the Remove centre-forward.

"Nine!"
 "Three minutes to go!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Time for one more!"

Bob was right. The tenth goal came just on the stroke of time. Coker blew the whistle. The Remove players came streaming off the field with laughing faces. Smythe & Co. crawled off, looking as if life were not worth living. But Tucker shook hands with the Remove-master in a hearty way.

"First-rate!" he said. "You're a better man than I am, Mr. Brown, and I'm glad to have played you. We came here to surprise those young bouncers; but it seems that the boot is on the other leg—what?"

"It really does seem so!" said Mr. Brown, laughing.
 Smythe & Co. refused to stay to tea. They were fed up with Greyfriars. They rolled away in their brake, a dismal and disconsolate team, aching all over from their exertions, and in the lowest possible spirits. And Bob Cherry remarked that it was extremely probable that they would not try to spring any more surprises upon the Greyfriars Remove.

THE TWENTY-SECOND CHAPTER.

"A Good Time!"

"SKUCE me, sir—"
 Mr. Brown, cheered to the echo by his enthusiastic Form, left the football-ground, and as he came towards the School House Gosling joined him. The old porter touched his hat, staring hard at the face of the Remove-master. Mr. Brown paused, and for a moment he looked slightly uneasy under the old man's scrutiny.

"What is it, Gosling?"
 "I've been a-watching of that there game, sir," said Gosling.

Mr. Brown smiled.
 "You take an interest in football, Gosling?"
 "Well, not as a rule, sir," said Gosling. "Tain't often I come down to see a match. But I 'card 'em larfin', so I come down this afternoon. And I see you playin'."

"I hope you were satisfied?" said Mr. Brown, smiling.
 "Which you reminded me of someone I'd seen playin' many a year ago," said Gosling, still with that strange, intent look on the young master's face. "It struck me half of a 'cap, sir."

"Indeed?"
 "Which when you first came to Greyfriars, sir, I couldn't 'elp noticin' you," went on Gosling. "A verry queer idea came into my 'ead then, sir. But what 'appened afterwards knocked it out again; because—because it was impossible."

"I'm afraid I don't quite understand, Gosling."
 And then when I see you playin' this afternoon, it come back again," said Gosling. "There's a way you throws your 'ead back a little, sir, in givin' a kick. It come to me strange and familiar, if you take my meanin', sir."

Mr. Brown started.
 "I don't think I do, Gosling," he said, somewhat curtly.
 "Please excuse me now; I must get in and change."

And Mr. Brown walked on quickly, without waiting for the old fellow to reply.

Gosling looked after him and sighed and shook his head sadly.

"Tain't possible, of course," he murmured. "Because—because it certainly ain't! But it was so like— It's verry skewrions!"

And Gosling went slowly back to his lodge, still deep in troubled thought.

Meanwhile, the Removes were rejoicing.
 The Rookwood surprise had been sprung upon them, and they had turned the tables upon the surprisers; and a score of ten goals to one made them hoarse with laughter.

The early winter dusk was falling when they came out after changing. The Famous Five were going home to tea



Harry Wharton followed the young man into the inn. A rubicund old gentleman was smoking his pipe within—the landlord of the Friar-dale Arms. "You have a gentleman named Brown staying with you, Mr. Williams?" asked Harry. The landlord made a gesture with his pipe. "There he is, my lad." (See Chapter 4.)

with Marjorie and Clara at Cliff House, and they had permission from their Form-master to stay out after the usual hour for locking up. They fetched their bicycles round in very cheerful spirits.

"I say, you fellows, wait while I get my bike," said Billy Bunter, as the little party wheeled their machines down to the gates.

"While you get whose bike?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Ahem! I'm going to borrow Smithy's."

"Have you asked Smithy?" grinned Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry, I suppose Smithy won't mind lending his bike to an old pal. Just you wait for me—"

"Bow-wow!" said Bob Cherry. And, having lighted their lamps, the little party rode off, leaving Bunter blinking wistfully in the gateway.

Gosling came down to close the gates.

"Hinside or hout, Master Bunter?" said Gosling.

"Hold on!" said Bunter. "I'm just going out with a bike. Keep the gate open a few minutes, Gossy!"

"Got a pass?" asked Gossy grimly.

"Ahem! Not exactly; but—"

"Then I ain't keepin' this 'ere gate open!" said Gosling.

"Wot I says is this 'ere, you clear hoff, Master Bunter!"

And Master Bunter cleared off, and Gosling closed the

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Next Monday's Number of The "MAGNET" will be the usual price, 1d., and will contain a Splendid, Long, Complete Story, entitled:

gates. He was about to insert the big key into the lock when there was a step behind him.

"Hold on, Gossy! I'm going out!"

"Mr. Percy—," said Gosling, hesitating.

The prodigal laughed.

"My respected uncle has not given you orders to keep me a prisoner, I suppose, Gossy?" he asked.

"No," said Gosling; "you come and go as you like, Mr. Percy. But—but you ain't up to any of the old games, are you, Mr. Percy?"

"Without a stiver in my pocket—what!" said the young man, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"Yes, that's true!" said Gosling slowly.

"You can't lend an old pal a quid, Gossy!"

"No, I can't, Mr. Percy."

"Well, let me out, and look sharp!" said the young man.

"What are you blinking at, Gosling? Drunk again!"

"You ain't playing football these days, Mr. Percy?" said Gosling quietly.

"Football? Why should I?"

"You used to a lot in the old days."

"I was a kid in the old days, Gossy. What the deuce are you staring at me like that for?" demanded the young man irritably, as Gosling peered curiously at his face in the gloom.

"Nothin'!" said Gosling, with a sigh; and he opened the

"BILLY BUNTER'S UNCLE!" — By — Frank Richards.

gate and let the young man through. "Wot time will you be back, Mr. Percy?"

"Oh, along with the milk in the morning, perhaps!"

"You've been raising money somewhere, Mr. Percy!" said Gosling suspiciously.

"Not your business, Gossy!"

And the young man swung away down the road, and Gosling closed the gates after him and locked them. The prodigal laughed as he went down the road.

Since Mr. Brown's interview with the Head Dr. Locke had spoken sharply and plainly to the prodigal. The young man was forbidden to speak a word to any of the Greyfriars boys, senior or junior; and the Head, with a gleam in his eyes, told him that if he disobeyed that injunction the gates of Greyfriars would close on him for ever.

But it did not trouble the scapegrace very much. He had already raised five pounds from Loder and his sporting friends—his acquaintance having in that short time proved very expensive to the black sheep of the Sixth. To the reckless no'er-do-well that sum was enough. He was accustomed to thinking only of the present, and leaving the future to take care of itself. His enforced sobriety and respectability at the school had got on his nerves, and once he found himself with money in his pocket he was determined to have a "burst," as he called it. And from Loder he had learned of the sporting set at the Cross Keys, and he knew that he would find a welcome there.

The adventurer, who had lived by his wits in many countries, had no doubt whatever about being able to "skin" the sharpers of a country town. They would be easy victims to his skill. Drink and gambling, and more money in his pocket—it was a very agreeable contrast to the sedate life he had lately been leading. It was only necessary to keep it secret from the Head; but he felt that it was worth the risk, for his present life had already grown intolerable to him.

The young man sauntered away down the lane in gay spirits, whistling a tune. He clinked in his pocket the coins that were to pay his footing at the Cross Keys.

That disreputable public-house, in a quiet room of which the "blades" of the Sixth were wont to gather when they ventured to break bounds for a "little game," stood on the outskirts of the village. The gleam of light from its dirty windows was very cheering to the prodigal, so long deprived of the company and the excitement that was congenial to him.

While Gosling was shaking his head sentimentally in his lodge, and Dr. Locke, with a somber brow, was thinking of the bitter disappointment the return of the prodigal had brought to him, the scapegrace was having what he would have described as a really good time.

In an ill-lighted room, the windows carefully covered with blinds, in an atmosphere tainted by tobacco-smoke and the fumes of spirits, he was seated at a table with three or four sporting gentlemen, with hawk-like faces, watery eyes, and generally dissipated and hangdog looks. There were cards and little piles of money on the table—grubby cards, dealt by dirty fingers—and the conversation was freely bespangled with oaths.

But the prodigal's face was lighted up with enjoyment, and the flush in his face, the feverish glitter in his eyes intensified as he refreshed himself from time to time from the glass at his elbow.

Luck was with him at first; and his new friends looked grim as his pile increased in size, and the voice of the lucky gamester was loud and vaunting. But as the liquor—with which his kind friends were careful to keep him well supplied—mounted to his head more and more, as his speech became thicker, and his eyes blearer, luck changed, and the country sharpers he had so confidently expected to skin began to do a little skinning themselves.

The prodigal's remedy for bad luck being more drink, it was not long before all his winnings were gone, and his little capital—extracted from Loder & Co.—followed it, while he blinked at the cards with dull and stupefied eyes.

And when, later in the evening, the last coin was gone, and the wretched victim of his own vices and the cunning of others had gone on playing with I O U's, which he was cheerfully prepared to sign to any amount, his friends found that they had other engagements, not being, as Mr. Cobb drily remarked, in business as collectors of waste-paper.

In the misty, gloomy December evening, the scapegrace, without a penny in his pockets, and with the fumes of drink whirling in his head, staggered out of the Cross Keys and took his homeward way to Greyfriars, lurching from side to side of the road, mumbling to himself, and at every roiling step narrowly escaping pitching into the ditch. And a disinterested observer might have wondered where the goodness of that really good time came in.

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THE TWENTY-THIRD CHAPTER.

Good Samaritans!

"JOLLY dark!" remarked Bob Cherry.

The chums of the Remove had had a good time—extremely unlike the prodigal's good time—at Cliff House. Marjorie and Clara were great hostesses. And Miss Penelope Primrose, the principal of Cliff House, had added an enormous cake to the entertainment, and tea in the girls' common-room had been a great success. And as the chums had a pass out of gates, they were not bound to get back early, and so had plenty of time to enjoy themselves. Round the well-spread table, by the cheery fire in the common-room, they chatted cheerfully, discussing their plans for the Christmas holidays, and a score of other things in the greatest of spirits. But everything had to come to an end at last, and at half-past eight it was time to go.

Outside the winter night had settled down gloomily. The juniors lighted their bicycle-lamps, and wheeled their machines down to the gate, Marjorie and Clara coming to the gate to say good-bye to them. The lane outside was dark and windy, and the sea was beating on the shingle with a sullen roar.

"Groo! It's cold!" said Nugent, as he wheeled his machine out and turned up his collar. "Good-bye, Marjorie! Good-bye, Clara!"

"The good-bye-farewell is terrific, my esteemed and venerable Marjorie."

And the chums of the Remove mounted and rode away in the dark, and Marjorie and Clara ran up the garden path into the house. Five cheery cyclists filled up the lane from side to side, riding in a row. They buzzed down the lane, and came out into the Friarale road, and wheeled on through the village. They passed the lighted windows of the Cross Keys, and noticed that Mr. Cobb standing at the door, without deigning to recognise his existence.

Then they rode on, out of the light, into the lane to Greyfriars.

Lamps were few and far between, and the road was very dark, save where the gleam of the lamps shone ahead.

The juniors jingled their bells occasionally, as a warning that they were coming, though the lights gleaming ahead were a sufficient warning. But suddenly ahead of them in the lane a figure lurched up in the radius of light from the lanterns—a figure that was staggering along heavily, evidently oblivious to the existence of cycles and cyclists.

They came upon him so suddenly that they had barely time to stop before running him down. Even as it was, Bob Cherry, who was a little ahead, only jammed on his brakes just as his front wheel knocked against the wayfarer.

It was not a hard knock, but it was sufficient to overturn the man he had run into, and there was a gasp and a fall. Bob jumped off his machine.

The man was sprawling in the mud.

"My hat!" exclaimed Bob. "The silly duffer, to wander about in the middle of the road like that! He must have seen our lights and heard our bells, the fathead! Get up, you silly idiot! You're in the way! You can do your mud-collecting after we've passed!"

The man sprawling across the lane grunted and moved a little. He turned a bleared and stupefied face towards the dismounted cyclists, and the light of the lamps shone upon it. The juniors uttered a cry of recognition.

"That rotter!"

It was the prodigal.

The intoxicated man raised himself on his elbow, in the clinging mud, and blinked at the light.

"Gerrooh!" he mumbled. "Wharrer you run into me for—eh? I'll have you arrested! Careless scoundrels—what? Grooh!—can't a g'n'l'man w-u-w-walk 'longer road 'thout being—hic, hic!—knock over by parck young scamps—Groo!"

"The Head's nephew!" muttered Wharton, his lip curling in utter disgust. "The—the beast!"

"Drunk as a lord!" said Johnny Bull.

"The drunkfulness of the esteemed beast seems to be—"

"Terrific!" said Bob Cherry. "What shall we do with the filthy brute? Pitch him into the ditch? It's full of water, and it might sober him."

"No, ass! Get him out of the road. A motor might come by and run over the silly brute!"

"Might be a good thing if it did!" growled Bob.

The juniors loaned their machines up against the hedge, and gathered round the sprawling drunkard. The miserable wretch had found it difficult to keep his feet before, and now that he was once down he was quite unable to rise unaided. He made an attempt, and rolled over again, and grunted dimly.

"I ain't drunk!" he said thickly. "Tain't that! But! This yer road won't keep still! That's wharrer marrer!"

"Silly cuckoo!" said Bob.

"Don't you call g'n'l man names, youngster!" mumbled the prodigal. "Punch head! See if don't! Lem's lone!" The juniors grasped him, and lifted him up, wriggling, and dragged him to the belt of grass beside the road. There they let him slide into a sitting posture. He sat, nodding his head from side to side in a solemn manner that would have been comical if the whole scene had not been so disgusting.

"Well, he's a beauty!" said Nugent. "The Head's nephew! My hat! If the Head could see him now!"

"He'll see him when he gets in, right enough," said Johnny Bull.

Harry Wharton's brow contracted. The thought of the Head's feelings, if the rasal came staggering into Greyfriars in that state, made him shudder. And the man was drunk enough to blurt out before all the fellows what had been so carefully kept secret—that he was the Head's nephew.

"My esteemed chums," murmured Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, "we must not let the venerable beast go back to Greyfriars and be beheld in that disgraceful state of condition! The shockfulness to our august headmaster would be terrific!"

"Just what I was thinking," said Harry.

"Bob Cherry rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"What's to be done?" he asked. "We've got to get in. Bed-time at half-past nine, you know, and the time's getting on. We can't stay here with him."

"Blessed if I know!"

The prodigal made an effort to rise.

"Goin' home!" he mumbled. "Help feller up! Give hand! Help feller home when he's bosky, like pal! Grooh!"

"You horrid beast!"

"Prodigal son—come home repentant!" mumbled the helpless blackguard. "Come home reform! Make old man open his money-bags—what?"

"He's a prodigal, right enough, but he isn't playing the game!" growled Johnny Bull.

"The respected Head would not be likely to kill the fat-headed calf for him," remarked Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh gravely.

The juniors grinned.

"Better to kill the fat-headed prodigal," said Bob Cherry. "Well, what's to be done? We can't stay here, and we can't very well leave the beast. He might walk under a motor-car in that state. And the Head wouldn't like that. Could we get him into the school without being seen?"

Wharton reflected.

"That's not a bad idea. We can see him home and give him to Gosling. Gosling is a good sort, and he'll keep him in his lodge for a bit, out of the Head's sight, and sober him up before he lets him go to the house. Gosling is a crusty old stick, but he will do that. You remember he was very concerned about the beast the other day. He knew him when he was a kid. Some of you wheel the bikes, and we'll walk it, and take this brute along."

It was evidently the best thing to be done. Common humanity made it impossible to leave him there. Light flakes of snow were beginning to fall in the darkness, and the prodigal was evidently incapable of getting home by himself.

"Get up!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, shaking him.

The young man had rolled in the scrubby grass, and was going to sleep.

"Eh? Wharrer you want?" mumbled the prodigal.

"Lemme lone!"

"We're going to see you home," said Bob. "Take his other beasty arm, Wharton. You fellows take the bikes." Wharton and Bob dragged the unfortunate votary of Bacchus to his feet between them. His legs seemed incapable of supporting him. He blinked dully from one to the other of the juniors.

"Set 'em up, boys!" he murmured. "It's my shout! That's my ace, you know! I guess I rake it in—what? Help ole pal home!"

He slid his arms round the juniors' necks, and hung on to them. His weight was considerable, but they managed to support it, and they marched him along the road. The other fellows followed, wheeling the machines. It was a new experience for Bob Cherry and Wharton, and not a pleasant one. The horrible fumes of liquor as the man breathed heavily upon them made them feel sick with disgust. But they remembered that they were doing it for the sake of the kind old Head, and they bore up manfully.

The prodigal zigzagged between them, and nearly dragged them over several times. Progress was slow. But the gates of Greyfriars came in sight at last.

It was well past nine o'clock, and at that hour, of course, all Greyfriars was indoors. There was little danger of the intoxicated wretch being seen by anyone but Gosling, unless he went up to the house.

The juniors stopped outside the gates, and Wharton rang the bell. The prodigal held on to the bars of the gate for support. The juniors, looking through the bars, could see the door of Gosling's lodge open, and the old porter came out. There was another figure within, as they could see by the shadow that fell from the lighted door.

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"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's somebody with Gosling!" muttered Bob Cherry.

"Gosy—Gosy! Come down and open the door, love! Forgotten your old pal, Gosy?"

"Shut up, you idiot!" whispered Wharton fiercely.

But the drunken man had changed to a quarrelsome mood.

"Who you callin' names?" he stammered. "Come 'n open gate, Gosy! This way!"

"My hey!" Gosling was heard to ejaculate.

Instead of coming down to the gate, he turned back hastily to close the door of the lodge. But it was too late.

A figure appeared in the lighted doorway—a figure the juniors knew only too well. It was the Head!

"What is that, Gosling?" called out Dr. Locke.

"N-u-nothin', sir!" stammered Gosling. "Only—only some of the young gentlemen come 'ome, sir!"

"I heard a voice," said the Head, coming out of the lodge.

The juniors gazed at one another in utter dismay. They could not have guessed, of course, that the Head was paying a visit to Gosling's lodge. They knew nothing of the fact that he had discovered his nephew's absence, and had come down in anxiety and uneasiness to ask the old man if he had seen him. With the best of intentions, they had brought the prodigal face to face with his uncle. There was a chance yet, and Wharton tried to detach the young man's hands from the gate.

"Come away," he whispered.

"Won't come away!"

"It's your uncle!"

The wretch gave a drunken chuckle.

"Uncle! That's good! Ha, ha! Hallo, uncle!"

Bob Cherry groaned.

"It's all up now!" he muttered.

It was evidently all up, for the Head had hurried down to the gate, and between the bars he stood looking at the man outside—the reeling, mud-spattered, dissipated blackguard, holding on to the gate to save himself from falling.

The juniors dared not speak. In that moment, it seemed to them that the kind face grew ten years older. A white, strained expression came over Dr. Locke's face.

"You!" he said huskily. "Like that?"

"Me!" chuckled the scapegrace. "Like this! Who cares?"

"Silence!"

The Head's voice averted the blackguard, intoxicated as he was.

"Let them in, Gosling!"

The gate opened.

THE TWENTY-FOURTH CHAPTER.

Cast Off!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. came in silently. They hardly dared to look at the Head. But he did not speak to them—he asked no questions. Gosling seized the reeling man, and dragged him from the gate, and helped him towards his lodge. The Head himself closed the gates again. Then he seemed to remember the juniors.

"Wharton!" he said quietly.

The Removites were wheeling their bikes away. They stopped.

"Yes, sir," said Harry.

"Where did you find this man?"

"In the lane, sir."

"And you brought him home?"

"We—we thought we had better, sir. He might have been run over, and it was beginning to snow, too. He couldn't look after himself."

"Quite right, Wharton!" The Head hesitated a moment.

"May I ask you to say nothing about this, my boys? It is a very unpleasant matter; and, of course, this man will leave my house immediately!"

"We shall say nothing, of course, sir."

"Thank you!"

The juniors went on their way. They put up their bicycles, and went into the School House in silence. They met Mr. Brown in the hall, and he glanced for a moment at their grave faces, but passed on. The juniors could not help wondering what was passing in the porter's lodge at that moment, and whether the Head knew or feared that they knew of the prodigal's relationship to him. He had not asked them whether the drunken man had made them his confidants.

In the lodge at that moment the Head was standing erect, with a stern, grave look upon his face, his eyes fixed upon a collapsed figure sprawling in an armchair.

Gosling was shuffling his feet uneasily. He knew that a

storm was about to burst, and his regard for "Mr. Percy" was still strong in his breast, and he would have averted it if he could.

Mr. Percy pulled himself a little more upright in the chair, and blinked at the stern face of the Head.

"Wharrer marrer?" he murmured drowsily.

The Head's lip curled bitterly.

"You are not in a fit state to listen to me now!" he said.

"Shober as judge!" asserted the delinquent. "Pile in, old fellow! Rack out—because a man's got a throat! I guess I'm sick of it, anyway! Can't stand life here! Pleasant Sunday Afternoons ain't in with this! Groo!"

"Dry up, Mr. Percy!" murmured Gosling.

"Sha'n't!" Mr. Percy staggered in his feet. Under the steady gaze of the Head some little soberness seemed to return to him. "I tell you I'm sick of it! Give me a lift, and let me go! I'll go!"

His legs gave way, and he sank into the chair again with a bump. He gave another blink, closed his eyes, and went to sleep.

Dr. Locke sat down, his eyes still upon the bleared face.

There was bitter pain in the doctor's look, as he gazed—pain and sorrow and deep anger and indignation. Gosling shuffled his feet more than ever.

"Which, sir!" he murmured. "Wot I says is this 'ere, sir—"

"Don't say anything for him, Gosling," said the Head quietly. "This is the end. This scene cannot be repeated at Greyfriars. Five boys have seen him in this state—a guest of their headmaster, reeling about in intoxication! What must they think? For aught I know to the contrary, he may even have told them who he is, and they may know that their headmaster's nephew is—like this!"

Gosling was silent.

"This cannot be repeated. To-morrow morning he will leave Greyfriars for ever! I shall wait here till he is sober, and speak to him. I will not let him starve, but from this place he shall go; and if he should ever dare to return, I will cast him off for ever!"

Gosling said no more. He read an iron determination in the usually kind face, and he only sighed.

The hours crept by. In the School House, the juniors had gone to their dormitories. The lights went out one by one in the senior studies, and then the masters' lights were one by one extinguished. Still, in the master's light the Head sat there, his face on the brutalised unconscious face of the sleeper. Still the wretched drunkard slept on. Unconscious of that fixed, steady stare, he slept the sleep of a brute, while long hours followed hour.

It was very late when at last he opened his eyes.

He started, and sat up in the chair, and shivered. The fetid heat of alcohol was gone from him, and his nerves were in a twitter. He blinked with bleary, heavy eyes at the stern face of the Head, and passed a trembling hand over his brow. He seemed to be trying to recollect himself.

"You have come to your senses, then?"

The Head's voice was like iron.

"Uncle!"

"Don't call me that! I no longer consider you my nephew! You are a disgrace that I cannot shake off, that is all!"

"Oh, my head!" muttered the young man, pressing his hand to his forehead. "I—I've been a fool, uncle! They—they pressed drink on me; they wanted my money. I can see that now. I—"

"Your money? Where did you obtain money?"

The wretched, shivering man did not reply.

"I have only a few words to say," said Dr. Locke coldly.

"This is the end! I will endure no more of this! If you had chosen to be commonly decent, my house should have been your home, and I would have enabled you to find an honourable profession. You are an irreclaimable blackguard! To-morrow morning you will leave this school!"

"Uncle! Give me one more chance!"

"You have had your chance, and thrown it away!" said the Head coldly. "I have made up my mind, and it is useless to seek to move me!"

Perhaps the scapegrace recognised that, for he changed his tone. A bitter sneer came over his face.

"Do you think I like the life you have arranged for me here?" he said savagely. "Better rags and freedom! But you are my uncle, and you must keep me from want, or—"

Dr. Locke raised his hand.

"No threats, or I will have you put out of the gates now, even at this hour and in a snow-storm!"

The rascal was silent.

"Listen to me! Because you are my brother's son, I will not let you starve. To-morrow morning I will give you a

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small sum for your immediate expenses, and you will leave Greyfriars. After that I shall instruct my solicitor to pay you a small sum weekly, sufficient to keep you from actual want. That will last so long as you do not come within fifty miles of Greyfriars. Break the compact, and I will leave you to your own resources—to sink all the more quickly into a drunkard's grave. That is all I have to say. You need not answer. I desire never to look upon your face again!"

Without a word more, or with another look at the wretched man, the Head quitted the lodge. The scapegrace remained silent for several minutes, while Gosling coughed and shuffled his feet. Then he burst into a bitter laugh.

"And that is my kind uncle's welcome to the repentant prodigal!" he exclaimed.

"You've nigh broke his 'eart, Mr. Percy," said old Gosling, with a sigh.

"Bah! The order of the boot and a pittance! And I am to go! The old fool!"

"Mr. Percy!"

"The old fool!" repeated the prodigal. "Does he think I want to stay here to lead the life of a saint—a martyr, rather. I shall be glad to go. Does he think I came home to play the repentant prodigal, the pet lamb? Bah! He staggered at his feet.

"Shall I 'cip you to your room, Mr. Percy?"

"No!"

Gosling opened the door, and the young man disappeared into the darkness of the Close. But Gosling did not re-enter his lodge again till he saw a light gleam out in Mr. Percy's room in the Head's house.

Then he went in, with a sigh.

THE TWENTY-FIFTH CHAPTER.

In the Dead of Night!

SILENCE and darkness lay upon the old school. Outside the snow was falling, steadily, thickly. Close and roofs, walls and trees, were thick with it. The paths had disappeared under the fleecy mantle. Pale stars glimmered on the sheet of white. Within the building there was deep darkness, no sound save the scamper of a rat behind the ancient wainscot.

But all Greyfriars was not sleeping.

In the dead silence of the night a faint footfall broke the stillness in the passage that led to the Head's study. It was faint, soft, the step of one accustomed to treading stealthily when there was need.

In the black darkness of the passage a hand groped over the door of the Head's study. The handle creaked slightly as it was turned. The door did not open.

There was a muttered oath in the darkness, a few minutes' delay, and then a click. The door opened, and a figure glided into the room, and the door was instantly closed again.

A gleam of light broke the darkness of the study.

A small electric-lamp had been turned on, and in the light, if there had been eyes to see, was revealed the man who was known in Greyfriars as Mr. Lambert, whom the Head knew as his prodigal nephew, and who in the far-off sierra of California was known as Dandy Jim.

He looked round the study in the light, with a smile upon his lips. All trace of his late intoxication was gone now, save the slight haziness of his eyes. He was the cool, collected, resolute, casual, nonchalant, and unscrupulous.

He glanced at the portrait on the wall, the handsome face that seemed to smile down in the light. He chuckled. Something in the portrait, or the contemplation of it, seemed to amuse him. But it was not to contemplate the portrait of the Head's nephew that he had come there. He crossed the study towards the iron safe that was let into the solid wall.

"Kicked out to-morrow!" he muttered grimly. "Kicked out, with a few pounds in my pocket, and a pound a week to keep me from starving! And hundreds within my reach!" He laughed noiselessly. "My kind uncle—ha, ha, ha!—will be surprised to learn that his dutiful nephew has departed in the night, and the next time he opens his safe he will be still more surprised. And I think that even the Roman uncle—ha, ha!—will hardly get the police on the track of his nephew, and cause a trial and a scandal that will be heard through the country, and will never be forgotten at Greyfriars. I am safe in that quarter."

He was at work while he muttered.

He had no fear of being interrupted. Who was there to interrupt him at that hour of the night? Who would dream of burglars on a wild and snowy night, of a thief within the walls of Greyfriars? The Head, if he were awake—and it was doubtful if he slept—would not think of this. This culminating villainy would come as a surprise to him. For rascal as he knew this man to be, he could not dream of the extent of his villainy. Robber he knew he had been, but

that he would rob here, that he was provided with the implements for such a robbery the Head could never have guessed. The thief worked quickly.

But half an hour had elapsed before the iron door of the safe swung open.

He grunted, and picked up the electric lamp and peered into the safe. His bleared face lighted up with greed.

His nimble fingers were quickly at work. Gold and notes and securities. He stayed only a moment to glance over them, but in that brief glance he knew that his loot was more than a thousand pounds. A thousand pounds! Enough to open before his eyes a dazzling vista of dissipation and reckless blackguardism. He crammed them into his pockets and closed the door of the safe, with a chuckle.

"What a haul! By gum, what a haul! And what a surprise for uncle! Ha, ha!"

His work was done. It had been easy, an easy task for Dandy Jim. He had now only to leave the scene of his crime, to take the overcoat he had left in the hall, to let himself quietly out of the house, and go. The falling snow would cover his footprints; he would disappear, and leave no trace. And the fear of deadly disgrace would keep the Head silent when he learned of that last and greatest crime. Dandy Jim's heart was light.

He extinguished the lamp and replaced it in his pocket. Then he stepped to the door of the study, and opened it to go.

In the gloomy passage a figure loomed up before him. A sudden blaze of light flooded the passage and the doorway. The electric light had been turned on. Dandy Jim started back, with a startled oath. In the doorway before him stood an athletic figure.

"You!" panted Dandy Jim.

"I!" said Mr. Brown.

It was the Remove-master.

There was a moment of terrible silence.

Dandy Jim's hand slid into his pocket. The Remove-master did not seem to observe it. His eyes, gleaming, were on the criminal's face.

"What have you been doing here?" he asked quietly.

Dandy Jim recovered himself.

"That is my business."

"And mine, too!"

"You—you have been spying on me!"

The Remove-master gave a slight shrug of the shoulders.

"I have been keeping you watched ever since I saw you here," he said coolly. "I know you, Dandy Jim! I have not forgotten how you robbed your partner, and fled in the night in the mountains of California—robbed a man who trusted you, and would have stood by you to the death then. I knew you were at your old game here; I knew that you must be. I warned the Head against you, as I told you I would!"

The prodigal sneered.

"Without much effect!" he said.

"Yes. For some reason I do not understand—that I cannot understand, though I have thought and thought—for some reason you appear to have an influence over Dr. Locke, and he would not drive you out. How you have tricked him into this I do not know. But I know that it must be some trick, some treacherous trick that is quite your own. But I know that, while you blinded him, you must be planning some villainy, otherwise you would not have remained here, leading a life I knew must be intolerable to you. And each night since I first saw you I have come down twice in the night to see that all was safe."

Dandy Jim gritted his teeth.

"I did not suspect that. I—"

"Twice each night, to make sure that a scoundrel, accepting the hospitality of an unsuspecting old gentleman, was not taking advantage of his confidence to rob him!" said the young master. "I foresaw that this would come, and it was my duty to guard against it. I have caught you in the act!"

"You are making a little mistake. I came down to speak to the doctor. I thought he was still up," said the prodigal. "I—I have had a little scene with him this evening, and I wanted to—"

The young master made a contemptuous gesture.

"That is enough, Dandy Jim. What is the use of lying to me?"

"What do you think I have done, then?" said Dandy Jim between his teeth.

"You have robbed Dr. Locke!"

"You think—"

"I know! I saw your light under the door. You turned it off, and were coming out, which shows that your work was done."

"I have no time to bandy words with you. Let me pass!" "You poked the lock of this door," said Mr. Brown, without moving. "It is always locked of a night, and yet you entered. It is not the only lock you have picked. You have rifled the safe!"

"Let me pass!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 357.

Next Monday's Number of The "MAGNET" will be the usual price, 10c., and will contain a splendid, long, complete story, entitled:

THE "MAGNET" LIBRARY. ONE PENNY.

Mr. Brown stretched out his hand to the switch of the electric light within the study, and turned it on. The room was filled with light. He looked across to the safe. The iron door was ajar, and the traces of the cracksmen's work were only too evident about the broken lock.

Dandy Jim followed his glance.

"That is enough," said Mr. Brown, still very quietly.

"Put your plunder on the table, Dandy Jim."

"Will you let me pass?"

"No!"

"You remember me in the old days," said Dandy Jim in a menacing tone. "I was not a safe man to corner. For your own sake, I ask you to step aside and let me pass!"

"And I refuse! You have robbed Dr. Locke, and you shall not take a single shilling of your loot from this room!" said Mr. Brown steadily.

Dandy Jim's hand, hidden in his pocket, was clenched upon something; and the Form-master knew what it was. He smiled contemptuously.

"We are not in California now, Dandy Jim," he said. "I advise you to keep your revolver where it is!"

"For the last time!" said Dandy Jim hoarsely.

The Form-master made no reply; but he strode upon him. Dandy Jim's hand whipped out of his pocket and there was a gleam of steel in the electric light. The young master sprang forward at the same moment.

Crack!

In the silent night the explosion was deafening. But even as the desperate scoundrel pulled the trigger, Mr. Brown's fist smote him, and he reeled back, and the bullet missed by an inch.

The Form-master felt the wind of it as it passed, and it struck a picture on the wall, and was buried in the wall behind. "Dandy Jim reeled and fell, and the next moment the weapon was struck from his hand, and the two men were struggling furiously for the mastery."

THE TWENTY-SIXTH CHAPTER.

The False and the True!

"GOOD heavens! What—what is this!"

Tramp—tramp—tramp.

The two men were fighting like tigers.

Dr. Locke, fully dressed, his face pale with want of sleep, stood in the doorway, gazing in upon the scene.

He seemed transfixed with horror.

The doctor had not been to bed. Sleepless, the old man had sat gazing into the dying fire in his library, while silence and slumber reigned round him. Stern and cold as he had shown himself in his last interview with the prodigal, that last interview had almost broken his heart. He could not think of sleep. In the silence of the night he had watched and suffered alone.

It was the report of the pistol that had brought him to the scene.

He stood gazing into the study, overwhelmed with horror.

But the struggle was not long. The athletic Form-master forced down the scoundrel, whose muscles and nerves were flabby from dissipation. Dandy Jim panted under him on the floor of the study. He resisted still, but slowly and surely the Form-master overcame his resistance, till the rascal lay panting and helpless beneath him. Then he dragged the wrists together, and held them in one hand with an iron grip.

He drew out his handkerchief with the other, twisted it, and bound Dandy Jim's wrists firmly together. The rascal watched him with burning eyes, like a snake. He was panting, exhausted; he could resist no more.

The Form-master rose to his feet, leaving his enemy panting on the floor. In the struggle, Dandy Jim's sleeve had been torn back, and the burn on his arm was revealed to view. It caught the eyes of the Form-master, who started for a moment.

Dandy Jim staggered to his feet. Mr. Brown closed the door of the study, after a glance along the passage. The Head had tottered to a chair. The house was silent; the sound of the pistol-shot had not reached to the bed-rooms.

Dandy Jim, his hands bound, a helpless prisoner now, stood with a defiant scowl upon his face. He was baffled, he was a prisoner; but with the Head, at least, he had a card yet to play.

Dr. Locke's face was like marble.

He had seen the revolver lying on the carpet, the bullet-hole in the picture, and he understood.

Mr. Brown turned to him quietly and respectfully.

"I fear this is a shock to you, sir," said the young master quietly; "but in the morning you would have discovered that he had robbed you. You could not have been spared the shock."

"Robbed me?" repeated the Head faintly.
 "He has broken into the safe."
 "Good heavens!"
 "Since speaking to you, sir, I have felt it to be my duty to see that he did no mischief in your house. I caught him here, and he—"

"He fired upon you?" said the Head dully.
 Mr. Brown nodded.
 "It is nothing, sir. Why this man should influence you so strongly I cannot understand."
 "You cannot—Heaven help me!—and I cannot explain!" muttered the Head.
 "If you choose to protect him still, sir, you may rely upon me," said the young master. "I am here in your employ, and at your orders. I will take his plunder from him, and you can deal with him as you choose."
 "He has attempted your life—"
 "Let that be forgotten."

Dandy Jim gritted his teeth as the young master, calmly and methodically, removed the foot of the safe from his pockets.

Dr. Locke looked on with dull eyes. Mr. Brown quietly returned the gold, the notes, and the papers to the safe, and closed the door. Dandy Jim watched him with glittering eyes.

"Your property is no longer secure there, sir," said Mr. Brown. "The lock is broken."

Dr. Locke nodded, without speaking.
 Mr. Brown regarded him with a strange, anxious glance. He could not understand the anguish that was written in every line of the old gentleman's face.

"I am at your orders, sir," said Mr. Brown, after a long pause. "What is to be done with this man?"
 The Head groaned.

"In common justice he should go to prison. He has committed a theft; he has attempted murder. Let him go to his punishment."

Dandy Jim panted.
 "Remember!" he exclaimed.
 "Silence, scoundrel!" said the Remove-master. "It is not for you to speak!"

"But—but I cannot send him to prison!" moaned the Head. "I cannot face the shame of it—the bitter shame! Heaven help me! I cannot tell you what this man is to me, Mr. Brown—I am ashamed to tell you—but I cannot punish him as he deserves!"

"Let me go!" muttered Dandy Jim. "I will go at once! I will swear to leave England! I will not return!"

"Silence!"
 "Dr. Locke"—Dandy Jim spoke feverishly—"let me go! Order that hound to let me go!"

"He must go!" said the Head heavily. "I could not face it! He knows that! He knows that if he had robbed me, I should have taken no step, Heaven forgive him!"

"Dr. Locke, are you certain that—that this man's hold upon you is so strong?" exclaimed the Remove-master. "Think! He is clever and cunning; he has deceived you in some manner. What can he be to you?"

"Do as Dr. Locke tells you!" hissed Dandy Jim. "I will go."

The young master did not heed him.
 "Think of it, sir. If you say that this man is to go, I will set him free. Yet I am certain that he has somehow deceived you, to cause you to regard a desperate adventurer and criminal like this—"

"He must go! I could not endure the shame of it! I—"

The Head's voice failed him. He broke off, and covered his face with his hands, and a sob shook him from head to foot. Tears were trickling thickly through his fingers.

Mr. Brown looked at him in amazement.
 His own face was working strangely. The grief of the kind old man seemed to pierce him to the heart.

The Head sobbed. He seemed to be utterly overcome with grief. The young master strode towards him.

"I—I cannot bear this!" he panted. "I—I must speak! Uncle—uncle! What is it? Let me help you!"

The Head started violently.
 "Uncle! Who is speaking?"

"Uncle!" exclaimed the young master, his voice breaking. "Uncle, I cannot keep the secret now—I must speak! You did not know me. I hoped to be able to win your esteem, perhaps your affection, before I spoke; but now I must speak. I cannot bear to see you like this, and remain silent! Uncle, do you not know me? Have I changed so much, then? Look at me, and look at the portrait on the wall!"

The Head gazed at him like a man in a dream, and pressed his hand to his aching brow.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 357.

Dandy Jim muttered a fierce oath. The game was up now with a vengeance!

"You—you—Am I dreaming?" said the Head dazedly.
 "You—who are you who call yourself my nephew?"

"I am Percy Locke," said Mr. Brown. "I am your nephew—I, who gave you trouble enough in the old days, and who has come back a changed man—as I hoped to prove to you, by faithful conduct, if I had been given time. But now—"

"You are mad, or I am mad," said the Head hoarsely, as he gazed upon the young man's face, pale with emotion.

"You—you—That man is my nephew!"
 He raised a trembling hand, and pointed to Dandy Jim.

The young master almost staggered.
 "That man—Dandy Jim! Your nephew?"

He swung round upon the defeated schemer.
 "Dandy Jim! Scoundrel! Is that the secret, then? Is that why you are here? Villain, you have taken my name and my place, and deceived my uncle—"

Dandy Jim laughed hoarsely.
 "The game's up!" he said. "Fool that you were not to tumble at it played the game for all it was worth, and I should have played it successfully to the end but for you! Doubly fool! When you were telling me, out in the camp there in the sierra, all the story of your life, I was thinking it out while I listened to you! You told me of your life—your boyish scrapes. You never knew why I was so curious—why I wanted to know all, even to the words your uncle spoke, even to the tricks you played as a schoolboy! Thrice fool! And you said that you would never return, and the way seemed clear to me! And you have spoiled it by this—by turning chicken-hearted at the end, and coming home a repentant fool!"

He ground his teeth. "Why did I not lay you out with a bullet out there in the sierra? That would have made all safe!"

Mr. Brown did not interrupt the savage tirade. Dr. Locke listened with dilated eyes.

"The game's up!" he repeated. "It was a well-planned game. There was every chance, but the cards have gone against me, and I guess I am game to the end. Send for the police!"

Dr. Locke drew a deep, sobbing breath.

"Heaven be praised for this!" he said, in a trembling voice. "That man—that scoundrel—is not my nephew! Yet he offered me what seemed proof, even to the scar I remembered so well!"

Mr. Brown drew up his sleeve, and showed a scar on his arm.

"It was easy for the rascal to imitate that," he said, "and that story was one of the many he heard from me under our tent out there in the sierra. I did not suspect what thoughts were in his rascally mind; he was my comrade then. And I was reckless and bitter then. I never intended to return. I might have gone from bad to worse, but—"

"—he passed—" thank Heaven I pulled up in time!"

"My boy!"

"Uncle! For three years now I have worked; for three years there has been no reproach against me. I came here. I saw Mr. Queeb; he had not forgotten me."

"He knew!" exclaimed the Head.
 "He knew! He was not pleased to see me, but I soon proved to him that I was not the reckless scapegrace he had known here eight years ago. I told him all—that I wanted to prove to you, under your own eyes, that I had become a man of whom you need not be ashamed. He believed me and trusted me. He gave me my chance; he went away, and he induced you to let me take his place here for the rest of the term. In the fortnight I have been here, uncle, you have been satisfied with me. I did not intend to speak. I wished to give you a better and longer proof, but this scoundrel has forced my hand."

"I think him for that," said the Head. "I think him from my heart. And I never knew—I never suspected!"

"There was one who suspected," said the young man, with a smile. "Gosling suspected. I think he would soon have known me, too. I understand now what he said that puzzled me before. Gosling knows this villain has come here as your nephew."

"He knows."
 "But for that I think Gosling would have known me by this time. I should have bound him to secrecy till the time came to speak. Now I have failed, for I cannot ask you to trust me yet."

"My boy!" Dr. Locke, his face bright and happy, grasped both his nephew's hands. "My dearest boy! Not a word more. If you had known how my heart was aching you would have spoken before. If you had known how I longed to see your face, to hear your voice, you would not have stayed away from me. But now—now you are home again. I thank Heaven for this!"

"And that rascal," said the young man, with a gesture

towards the sullen schemer, "he has no hold upon you now, now that his lie is exposed."

"None! But—" "Then he shall go where he has deserved to go for a long time!"

Dandy Jim shrugged his shoulders. "Quite a touching scene!" he sneered. "But a little boring to a mere spectator. May I be spared the rest of it?" Dr. Locke looked at him steadily.

"You have done me great wrong," he said. "You have made me suffer more than you can understand. But I am too happy now to care to remember that." He turned to his nephew. "Percy, let him go. It is Christmastide, and we should forgive those who have injured us. Let him go."

Dandy Jim's expression changed as the young master, without a word, released him from his bonds. Percy Locke, so long known at Greyfriars as Mr. Brown, threw open the door.

"Go!" he said. He paused a moment, and then, taking a banknote from his pocket, he crushed it into the rascal's hands. "You need not starve; you need not be driven to steal. But go!"

Dandy Jim stopped through the doorway. Then he turned. The mocking defiance had gone out of his face.

"I will go," he said. "And—and I guess I'm not used to this kind of palaver, but—but I'm grateful. And I guess I shan't forget this, and if it's any comfort to you to know it I'm going to try a new game from this night. What one black sheep has done another can do, I guess, and I'm going to try. I will enlist and fight for my King and country!"

And with that he turned and went. A door closed, and the darkness of the December night swallowed up Dandy Jim. The impostor was gone for ever. And Dr. Locke turned to his nephew, his face bright and happy, as if he had not been for many a long day.

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Fatted Calf!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Bow-wow!"

"It's news!"

"Rats!"

"But it's really news this time!" howled Billy Bunter. "I've just heard it! I never knew the Head had a nephew!"

"What?"

Harry Wharton & Co. were all attention now. The Removites were in the common-room in the morning, looking at the snowy Close from the window, when Billy Bunter burst in with his news. Bunter was simply brimming with it. Seldom or never had the Owl of the Remove had such news to startle his Form-fellows, with.

"It's simply a corker!" went on Bunter excitedly. "The Head's nephew—"

"What do you know about the Head's nephew?" growled Bob Cherry, with a natural foreboding that the Paid Fry of Greyfriars had "spotted" the secret of the prodigal at last.

"More than you do!" said Bunter triumphantly. "He's been away for years!"

"B-r-r-r!"

"And now he's come back!"

"Rats!"

"And I've seen him; you've all seen him, and never knew it!" howled Bunter.

"Bosh!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Gannion!"

"But it's true!" yelled Bunter. "Brown—old Brown—Mr. Brown—Brown's the Head's nephew!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fie it on!"

"It's true!" shrieked the Owl of the Remove. "His real name's Percy Locke, and he came here as Brown—goodness knows why—but it's out now!"

"Quite out!" grinned Nugent. "Tell us another! That one's out!"

NEXT MONDAY, The "Magnet" LIBRARY, ONE PENNY.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But it's true!"

"Rats!"

"I tell you—"

"Bow-wow!"

Billy Bunter's voice was like unto a voice crying in the wilderness. A roar of laughter greeted his statement, and nobody believed a word of it.

But there was a surprise in store for the Greyfriars fellows.

For Bunter's amazing statement was true.

The next day Mr. Quelch came back to Greyfriars. Mr. Brown no longer required his place.

And Mr. Brown—no longer Mr. Brown—was known and recognised as Percy Locke, the Head's nephew.

It was a nine days' wonder.

Harry Wharton & Co., quite flabbergasted, as Bob Cherry expressed it, rushed to Gosling for information. "Mr. Lambert," the prodigal, had disappeared. Nobody had seen him go, but he was gone. The juniors found Gosling with a smiling face. The crusty old porter had dropped all his crustiness. Whether it was the influence of approaching Christmas, or some other reason, Gosling seemed to have grown years younger, and his wrinkled old face wore a perpetual grin of satisfaction.

"What does it mean, Gossy?" demanded Harry Wharton. "Didn't you tell us that that bowy bounder was the Head's nephew, and make us promise to keep it dark?"

Gosling nodded.

"Which Mr. Percy 'ave told me all about it now," said Gosling. "He wanted to prove to the 'Ead that he 'ad reformed, which I always knew he would do so, and he come back 'ere to work and show steady, you know, with the 'elp of Mr. Quelch to put 'im in the place, which he might have told me, for wot I says is this 'ere that I always believed in Mr. Percy, and said that he 'ad an 'eart of gold."

"My only hat!" said Harry Wharton. "So that bowy bounder was spoofing, and wasn't the prodigal nephew at all!"

"Which that is so?"

"And Brown—our Brown—old Brown—Mr. Brown—he's the genuine article!"

"Which he is?"

"Well, my hat! It's jolly good news, anyway!"

"The goodness of the esteemed news is terrific. Let us go and wish him a merryful and venerable Christmas!" suggested Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Good wheeze!"

The Famous Five rushed away to Mr. Brown's study and gave him a cheer, and when the Head's nephew looked out, with Mr. Quelch looking over his shoulder, the juniors gave him another cheer, and wished him a merry, merry Christmas with tremendous heartiness, and Mr. Brown—the Remove was never likely to call him anything but Mr. Brown—smiled and nodded genially. And Hurree Janset Ram Singh had another valuable suggestion to make.

"The real and esteemed genuine prodigal has returned!" came Hurree's remark. "On such occasions it is the proper paper to kill the fat-headed calf. I suggestfully propose a feed in the study, with the esteemed prodigal as the honoured guest!"

Bob Cherry slapped him on the back.

"Blessed if I know where Inky gets these ripping ideas from!" he exclaimed. "Passed unanimously, without opposition, and nunc. con. Hear, hear!"

"Mr. Brown" kindly accepted the invitation to that feed, and a great many fellows came, and Marjorie and Clara from Cliff House, and even Billy Bunter was allowed to squeeze in. It was a tremendous celebration; the juniors had killed the fatted calf with a vengeance, and with general satisfaction they celebrated the return of the prodigal!



THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 357.
Next Monday's numbers of The "MAGNET" will be the usual price, 1d., and will contain a splendid, long, complete story, entitled: "BILLY BUNTER'S UNCLE!" — By — Frank Richards.

A SPECIAL WAR SERIAL!

START TO-DAY!

A WORLD AT STAKE!

A Stirring Story of the Supreme Struggle between the
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The youth of Britain has nobly responded to the call of King and Country, and Kitchener's Army, made up of enthusiastic and patriotic young fellows who have eagerly offered their services, often at great sacrifice to themselves, proves what Britons will do when the need comes. Our illustration shows a squad of these patriots mustered on the parade-ground.

READ THIS FIRST.

Thorpe and Dick Thornhill, brothers, and constructors of the wonderful airship named the Falcon, play a prominent part in the great war with Germany on land and sea. A fierce attack is made by the enemy upon the airship's works at Chepperton, where Dick gallantly holds his own against overwhelming numbers. Matters become desperate, and Dick is even driven to hoist the white flag of surrender, when his brother comes on the scene in the Night Hawk, and the aliens are repulsed. Meanwhile, little Tom Evans, a great friend of Dick Thornhill, is on board the Thrasher, contributing his share towards freeing his country from the Germans' iron hand. His commander entrusts him with some important documents, which he is to convey to Lord Roberts by swimming ashore. Tom endeavours to break through the

German lines, and, taking refuge in some farm buildings, is horrified to see a large force of the enemy enter. He knows that if he is detected in their midst it will mean death; but whether shall he flee? From every side comes the shuffling of feet, and hoarse, guttural voices of command.

(Now go on with the story.)

A Clever Ruse.

The approach of a company of German sappers to loophole an adjacent wall forced him to move; and, creeping under the shadow of the laurels, he at last reached an outbuilding, through which he scurried, to find himself in a snag, walled-in kitchen-garden, the walls of which were covered with well-kept peach, apricot, and apple-trees.

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Presently he stumbled against something in the darkness. What it was he did not then know, but a stinging sensation on his hand, and another on his cheek, told him that he had taken liberties with a hive of bees.

"Hang you, you unparliamentary little beggars, drop it!" he muttered, slapping his face, on which he could feel something crawling. "I'm not a German!" Oh! he continued, the ejaculation being called forth by a third sting.

Then he hastened away towards the west wall, for in that direction lay the road he must follow if he would carry out his errand.

It was an easy matter to climb the wall, for, as we have said, its surface was covered with trees, and it was the strong trunk of an apple-tree that Tom chose.

Cautiously he passed from branch to branch, until at last his head arose above the top of the wall, and he peered down.

The next moment he ducked quickly, for a battalion of Germans had taken up their position immediately below him, ready to defend the farm in case of attack.

"Either the German brutes, they're allus in the way!" cried Tom to himself. "Oh, lor', there's more coming into the garden!" he added, as the tramp of feet fell on his ears. He was hemmed in.

At that moment, as though to remind him of their presence, a bee which had crawled up the boy's arm, drove his sting deep into Tom's flesh.

It answered its purpose well, for it showed him a weapon with which, perhaps, he might put the Germans to flight.

"I'd as lief monkey with a live shell," he muttered; "but it's that or nothing. Courage, Tom, lad, what's a sting or two, so long as you ain't selfish, and let others share 'em with you?"

Dropping from the wall, he removed his ragged coat, and made his way to the stand on which stood several skeps of bees. Passing his coat swiftly under the nearest hive, he carried it back to the wall, and, despite the weight of the hive, climbed to the top.

With difficulty repressing a moan of pain, for the bees were getting to their work on his unprotected face and hands, he hurled the hive at a nearby officer who was issuing low, hurried orders to his men.

The hive was, as we have said, a heavy one; but it was well aimed, and alighted bottom downwards upon the German's black helmet.

A guttural groan of astonishment and alarm burst from the portly warrior's lips. The next moment he was dancing about, shrieking aloud in agony, and trying in vain to rid himself of the encumbrance which had fallen, apparently from the sky, on his head.

But in vain. The spike of his helmet had gone through the straw covering, holding it firm, whilst the honey ran down his face and neck, carrying with it a mass of clinging bees.

A score of soldiers rushed to their captain's rescue, but with cries of pain and fear they sprang back quicker than they had advanced.

The bee is a little creature, but by no means a despicable foe. And so the Germans found out.

Enraged at this unwarrantable interference on their queen and home, the bees flew forth in all directions. They smothered the Germans standing near, and, opening out in skirmishing order, carried dismay and terror amongst the two regiments who occupied the farm.

Gladly would Tom have remained stretched upon the wall to enjoy the stirring scene, but now was his opportunity, and, slipping down, he plunged unseen, or, at least, unnoticed, through the slapping, shrieking, swearing Germans, until at last he reached the Colchester road.

From the Jaws of Death.

For about a mile he rushed at full speed, then, with his fists pressed against his breast, continued at a gentle but swift jog-trot until just out the darkness appeared a cavalry vedette, and a voice rang out in the night air:

"Halt! Who goes there?"

"General Tom Evans, with despatches for Lord Roberts," returned Tom laughingly.

"Approach, General Tom Evans," returned the soldier, peering into the darkness, as he held his short rifle ready to fire in case of treachery.

There was a note of surprise and suspicion in his tone, as well there might be; for he could not call to mind a general of that name in the British Service.

"Now, then, are you coming forward, sir?" he added quickly, "or must I raise the alarm?"

"It's all right, sentry, don't worry yourself, I'm through!" cried a voice some distance behind him, for whilst the sentry had been looking some feet above the ground for a mounted officer, Tom, crouching near the hedge, had slipped by him.

But more haste, less speed. The next moment Tom lumbered into the midst of a picket, of which the sentry had been but the vedette.

At first the officer in charge seemed inclined to regard him with suspicion; but after wriggling about as though a number

of the bees were still employed upon his little body, Tom produced the despatch to Lord Roberts.

Ten minutes later, mounted behind a trooper, he was galloping as though they were riding for their lives in the direction of Colchester.

Presently from the darkness appeared the blazing headlights of a motor-car.

The trooper reined in his horse, and peered at the approaching vehicle. As he did so, Tom noticed a small Union Jack fastened to a short flagstaff immediately between the two lights.

"That's Lord Roberts himself. We're in luck, if we can stop him," said the man.

"Fire off your gun," suggested Tom.

"And rouse the whole blooming British Army—not much!" was the reply. "However, we will stand in the middle of the road, and risk being smashed to mince-meat," he added grimly.

But they were not smashed; the driver's keen eyes saw the vedette in the centre of the road, and came to a standstill.

"What is it, my man?" asked the veteran, peering at the strangely assorted couple.

Tom slipped from his perch behind the soldier.

"Despatches from Commander Hawkins, of the Thrasher, sir. Taken from the depot vessel Stuttgart."

This was all Greek to Lord Roberts. Probably he had never heard of such a vessel, but he was not the man to ask useless questions. Taking the oilskin-covered parcel from the boy, he stood in the full glare of the car's acetylene light, and read it.

It was a striking scene, and one which Tom, in after years, often thought of. The little form of the general, the two officers who accompanied him, leaning as eagerly forward as etiquette would permit, the stalwart form of the trooper, a bloodstained handkerchief tied round his head in lieu of a helmet, for he had been wounded during the skirmish of the previous day, all combined to make a picture that the little arab never forgot.

As Lord Roberts perused the document his eyes sparkled angrily, his face grew pale and drawn, and his mouth closed with a sudden determined snap.

"How is it that you were entrusted with these papers, my lad?" he said at last, regarding Tom with a keen, searching glance.

"I know the country, sir," was the reply; "besides, I was anxious to rejoin Master Dick, so, as Commander Hawkins wanted a messenger, he sent me."

"And how did you get through the German Army?" asked the Commander-in-Chief.

"Why, lor' bless yer, it was as easy as skinning taters!" returned Tom, in nowise abashed by the exalted company in which he found himself. "Howsoever, I reckon I left my mark behind me. There's a company of 'em in Chapperton Marshes, and a couple o' regiments a-fighting bees; but, beg pardon, sir, it'd make a cat laugh." And the boy, leaning against the motor-car, roared again with laughter.

Lord Roberts smiled.

"Well, get in the motor-car. I must return to Colchester at once. You can tell me your adventures on the way."

Willingly Tom obeyed, and despite the heavy intelligence that the papers revealed—intelligence that the force he had before him was not the only German Army despatched to England, but that another, known as the Northern Army, was already on its way, whether bound he could not tell, for the despatch which betrayed the presence of these unsuspected foes was evidently but the continuation of former correspondence, Lord Roberts and his side-by-side-camp laughed heartily as Tom related, with a true cockney sense of humour, the fight between the Germans and the bees.

Lord Roberts had not forgotten Tom's reference to Master Dick, and as the car rattled through the busy streets of Colchester, he asked him who the Master Dick was he was so anxious to find.

"Why, Mr. Dick Thornhill, of course, sir," returned Tom, as though there was only one Thornhill in the world. "The gent as invented the flying ships."

Lord Roberts looked very grave.

"I have had news for you," he said. "I fear your master is either dead or a prisoner in the hands of the Germans."

"Don't say that, sir! For Heaven's sake, don't tell me Master Dick is dead!" Tom almost sobbed.

"I hope not, my boy. All I know is that when the British retreated, he was left in the Chapperton works."

"Stop the car, sir. Please stop the car. I am going back!"

"What, to Chapperton, my boy? It is impossible," said Lord Roberts kindly.

"Impossible or not, sir, I'm going. Master Dick wouldn't

leave me in danger, I know, and I won't leave him!" declared Tom stoutly. Then, as a block in the street brought the motor to a sudden halt, Tom sprang from the car, and, paying no attention to Lord Roberts's orders to stop, was soon lost amongst the crowd.

Thinking only of his master, a prisoner, perhaps wounded, in the hands of the Germans, Tom, tired though he was, turned his head doggedly towards the village through which he had that night forced his way with so much difficulty.

All the rest of that night he trudged on, helped on his way during part of the journey by a kindly Dragoon orderly, who overtook him, and, hearing his tale, took him up behind his saddle.

But Tom was not made of iron, and want of sleep began to tell upon him. Still he persevered, until, with the first grey streaks of light, he had wriggled through the foremost German lines.

Twice he sank by the wayside, twice his unconquerable will forced him to continue his journey; but the third time he thought that, perhaps, if he closed his eyes for a few minutes he would feel better fitted to continue his journey, and ere he had well laid himself down he was fast asleep.

He woke two hours later, to find the sun high in the heavens, and himself surrounded by a number of blue-coated German soldiers.

With a cry of alarm he sprang to his feet; but a rope was thrown over his shoulders, and, more asleep than awake, he was hauled unceremoniously to where a lance stuck in the ground before a tent proclaimed the headquarters of a German general.

His heart almost broken with exhaustion, despair, and disappointment, it is little to be wondered at that his tiny frame was shaken with sobs, and large tears rolled down his cheek as he realised that now he could not hope to share the good or evil fortunes of his master.

"Ach, don't cry, little boy!" whispered one of his guards in broken English, patting Tom kindly on the head. "You will not be hurt. You are only being taken before the general to be asked a few questions."

But it was not fear that had brought the tears to Tom's eyes, although a few minutes later a cold chill of dread swept through his veins, when the German general emerged from his tent, accompanied by an officer whom he recognised at the one he had led astray the previous night, still plastered from head to foot with the mud of the marsh. The recognition was mutual. With an angry glare at the boy the officer turned to his superior, and said something so quickly that Tom could not follow his words; but he heard the general's reply, who, little thinking that he was understood, replied in German:

"Ah, it is so, Herr Captain! Then I leave him in your hands. Get out of him any information he may have to impart, then shoot him!"

Tom knew that Lord Roberts was by this time fully informed, and the British Army were now confident of victory; therefore he declared that the British troops were defeated, the Territorials throwing down their arms and hastening to their homes, and the British Army at Colchester was in a state of panic.

"Remember, brat, if this isn't true, you will be shot!" thundered the German general, fixing his eye upon the boy as though he would read the innermost secrets of his heart.

Tom's face was perfectly cherubic as he turned his blue eyes upwards to the flashing orbs of the German.

"Of course it is true, sir," he said. "Do you think I dare tell you a story?"

"You would be an idiot if you did!" retorted the general, with an unpleasant laugh.

"And a cowardly rascal if I didn't," thought Tom to himself.

At last the examination was over. And Tom, who was looking anxiously about him, could scarcely repress a smile as he saw orderly after orderly dash to right and left, bearing the news he had just invented to the different commanders in the German Army.

"And now, you little British rat, come along with me! You look tired, and need a rest. Sergeant Gotch, follow with a firing-party. The wall of yonder farmhouse will do. There will be no need to dig a grave for this puppy!"

Poor Tom was deadly pale. He knew but too well what the German captain's words meant, and for whom that firing-party was provided.

But, for all that, he had a Briton's heart in his tiny body, and marched between his captors with a proudly raised head and a firm upper lip.

Frorely the building was reached, and, with a few last excitedly uttered words, the captain ordered him to stand with his back against the wall.

Tom looked into the vengeful, hate-laden face of the officer, and saw no mercy there. It is true the German soldiers had

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the grace to appear ashamed of their errand, but well he knew that they could do nothing but obey orders.

Then he looked up at the blue, clear, unclouded sky, and the bright summer sun he would never see again. He was young to die; and yet, boy though he was, he realised that, if death was inevitable, the grim tyrant could not come in a nobler shape.

"Now, sergeant, hurry up!" came the harsh, guttural voice of the captain, as his subordinate moved slowly about his unpleasant duty. "You'll be all day shooting this brat!"

Thus adjured, the sergeant drew up his men within twelve paces of the tiny, rugged figure; then, taking out his handkerchief, was about to fasten it round Tom's eyes, when the youngster thrust him aside, crying:

"Here, drop it, cocky! I aren't so frightened o' you Germans that I can't look at yer, ugly as y' are!"

The sergeant hesitated; then, without a word, turned on his heels, and took his position in the rear of his men. A look of satisfied vengeance on his face, the German captain drew his sword.

"Ready!" he cried, holding it above his head.

Tom looked with steady, defiant gaze into the tiny round muzzles of the twelve gleaming rifle-barrels.

"Present!"

Tom clasped his little fists, and, shutting his eyes, tried to shout a defiant "God save the King!" but the words would not come.

"Fi—"

A loud, reverberating roar filled his ears: a gust of wind swept over his ice-cold forehead; but no sudden pang convulsed his frame. He opened his eyes, and could scarcely believe his senses.

The German firing-party no longer menaced him with their threatening arms, for they lay stretched on the ground, whilst on every side a mob of white-faced, frightened soldiery were staring, not at him, not at their fallen comrades, but skywards.

At that moment a dark shadow fell over him; he looked upwards.

"The Night Hawk! Master Thorpe—Master Thorpe, I am here!" he cried.

Then his much-tried form could bear no more, and he fell senseless to the ground, just as one of the long tentacles of the hawk's flying-ship swept towards him, and, seizing him by his clothes, lifted him from the ground.

Then the Night Hawk soared swiftly upwards, and was out of range ere the astonished Germans could do more than send a hail of rifle-bullets hurtling harmlessly through the air after him, which did no more than patter harmlessly against the airship's gleaming hull.

When consciousness returned to the little street arched he looked up, to find the kindly face of Thorpe Thornhill bending over him.

"Heaven bless yer, sir! You came just in the nick o' time! Did yer see it all! I didn't funk, did I, sir?" were Tom's first words.

"Funk my lad? Not you! You stood your ground like the little hero you are!" "I ever I am in the same predicament. Heaven grant that I may meet my fate as boldly!" returned Thornhill, his voice thick with emotion.

"But where are we, sir? Where are you going?"

"We are immediately over the German Army, Tom, and on our way to see Master Dick at Chepperton," returned Thorpe.

"The Germans haven't killed him, then, sir?"

"Not quite, Tom, as you will soon see, for yonder are the works," said Thornhill.

And the next moment the Night Hawk headed straight for the airship works.

As he hovered over Chepperton, Thorpe found the Germans drawn up at a respectful distance from the works. A hum of mingled astonishment and alarm reached their ears from the startled Germans marching inland as they flew swiftly at a medium altitude through the air.

Presently Thorpe's face lightened, as, muffled by the distance, rose what sounded more like a gentle roar than anything, but which he recognised to be a loud British cheer, and he knew that his brother and his men were still holding the works.

Almost at the same time the Germans who were left to hold in check the little garrison of the airship works woke to life, and as, in ever-decreasing circles, Thorpe Thornhill's airship descended towards the roof of the works, they were assailed by a perfect torrent of rifle-bullets, showing that they had come within range of their foe.

Thorpe put on the order for the Night Hawk to rise above the point of fire. He must teach the Germans yet another lesson, for it would be impossible to leave the shelter of the conning-tower in such a hail of bullets.

Slowly the Night Hawk circled round the German cordon,



Some of the incidents of warfare are almost too tragic to recount. A couple of Hussars, serving with the British Expeditionary Force, bravely volunteered to ride to a small town on the Belgian frontier for signalling purposes. Shortly after they left their regiment a perfect tornado of shot and shell was heard, the thunder of the enemy's guns being almost deafening in its violence. The two gallant British heroes evidently experienced their last ride, for, although they miraculously performed what they set out to do, no news of them has since reached the headquarters of the Allies.

her quick-firers hurling death into their frightened ranks at the very moment they were about to charge the works.

In vain the German officers strove to force their men on. Struck down by the fire of the defenders, decimated by the guns of the Night Hawk, they wavered, and shrieks of terror burst from their pallid lips, as, throwing down their arms, they fled in all directions, careless of whether they went, so long as they got out of range of those awful guns.

Hurling a well-planted shell into the midst of a Bavarian battalion, which was hastening to their comrades' assistance, as a gentle hint that it would be unhealthy for them to advance further, Thorpe Thornhill flew to his works, and alighted on the roof just as Dick Thornhill emerged from the skylight.

Once more the brothers clasped hands.

"Hallo! Back again, old boy!" said Dick Thornhill.
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 357.

Next Monday's Number of The "MAGNET" will be the usual price, 1d., and will contain a Splendid, Long, Complete Story, entitled:

"By Jove! And Tom Evans, too! My dear little chap, I am delighted to see you again!"

"I'm all right now, Master Dick; but, lor', I have had excitement—tons of it!" laughed Tom, shaking his young master's extended hand.

Suddenly Dick sprang forward, caught his brother round the waist, and rolled with him down the sloping roof to the gutter, as, with a loud, whistling shriek, a shell, evidently aimed at the airship, skimmed the works.

"Hallo! I thought I'd settled those brutes' guns! Ta-ta! Back in a minute!" called Thorpe, scrambling up the roof and rushing up the steps leading to the skylight, for a terrible fear had entered his head lest the Night Hawk had been wrecked, and bitterly he regretted having left her even for a moment.

As he appeared on the roof a second shell whizzed by so close that its wind caused him to stagger and almost fall,

"BILLY BUNTER'S UNCLE!" — By —
Frank Richards.

but, fortunately, skimming the works by a hair's-breadth and bursting harmlessly in some fields beyond.

Seeing his young commander hastening towards the Night Hawk, Pat Denver dropped a rope-ladder over the side, to which Thorpe clung, shouting for the airship to ascend as he did so.

Up like a rocket shot the Night Hawk; but, quick though she was, it was barely in time, for from some hedgegrove a thousand yards away a battalion of Germans opened fire upon her.

A bullet ploughed a long groove along Thorpe's arm, fortunately only scraping the skin, although a feeling as though a red-hot iron had been drawn down his flesh almost forced him to release his hold. However, he set his teeth, and had barely recommenced his climb towards the airship's ball, when he heard a sudden snap just above his head, and, looking up, he was horrified to find that an unfortunate bullet had cut one side of the rope-ladder, and but a single twisted silken strand was between himself and a fearful death, for the mounting air-ship had already reached an altitude from which the swarming Germans looked like so many ants.

The Germans' Defeat!

That glance below well-nigh proved fatal to the young inventor, for he turned giddy, and had not his arm been twisted through the rings of the ladder, that moment would have been his last.

"Pat, help! I am falling!" he gasped, as he snatched wildly at the swaying cord.

The Irishman looked down.

"Be jabs, it's an angel the master is! He's a-flying on nothing!" he cried to his alarmed comrades.

The next moment he had swarmed down the ladder, and Thorpe Thornhill felt the strong arm of his faithful Irish friend passed round him.

"Hold tight, Pat! I'll be all right in a minute!" he cried cheerily.

Then, after a desperate struggle, he managed to draw himself up until his feet rested on the step above the gap in the ladder, and for the first time he felt himself safe. Not daring to look down again, he clambered on to the airship's deck, and, flinging himself on to a couch in his cabin, lay, too agitated after his fearful experience to move or speak.

Presently a sound reached his ears which brought him swiftly to his feet—the dull, sullen roar of distant artillery. Staggering to the side, he looked down.

Far away, in the direction of the wooded hills surrounding Colchester, arose a thin, vapoury mist, showing that the battle which would decide the fate of Britain had already commenced.

A second explosion, closer and louder, but intermixed with the sharper clang of smaller artillery, attracted his attention to what was going on immediately beneath him. He was just in time to see a huge hole torn in the slated roof of the airship works by yet another shell.

A quick order, and the airship darted like an eagle upon its prey towards a German gun, which was doing its utmost to level the Chepperton works with the ground.

Thorpe Thornhill raised his hand and touched the push of an electric bell. There was an answering ring from below, and an aerial torpedo was launched with unerring aim earthwards, hurling gun and gunners to destruction.

Then, dropping to within a hundred feet of the earth, her hull environed with a belt of fire, the Night Hawk swept over the besiegers, until, stricken with sudden panic, they turned and fled in the direction of Harwich, from whence came the reverberations of distant firing—at whom, or by whom, Thornhill could not say.

Their foes routed, the Night Hawk dropped once more alongside the works.

"Who'd on! Dick, for all you're worth! I'll get back as soon as I can! I wanted Colchester way!" cried Thornhill breathlessly.

And the next minute Dick was watching the airship speeding swiftly away westward.

In the meantime, a fierce battle was raging between fifty thousand British troops under Lord Roberts, and two hundred thousand Germans, ostensibly under General von Eckeburg, but in reality under a tall, well-set-up, military-looking man, who, stepping from a motor-car, which had been landed from one of the German transports, mounted a magnificent charger, but still retained a pair of enormous motoring goggles, and, warm though the day was, was swathed from head to foot in a long, military riding-cloak.

Who this mysterious commander was no one knew, but the belief rapidly gained ground amongst the British troops that their foes were led by the German Emperor in person.

The British position was admirably chosen, for their left

flank rested on the River Stour, and their right was covered by the broad tidal waters of the Colne.

What the kopjes had been to the Boers, the small, highly-cultivated fields of the eastern counties were now to the defending British. Every bank formed a ready-made rampart, every ditch a field-work, from which the Germans again and again recoiled, beaten back by the steady fire of Regulars, Territorials, and Imperial Yeomanry.

Fain would we tell how the Irish Guards defended Hamlyn's Farm; how the Rifles held on to Lingham Moor until but a fourth of their number remained to receive, with fixed bayonets, the charging Germans. But this has been told again and again by pens more competent to deal with the subject.

Lord Roberts knew his men—he knew of what they were capable—but from the first he had not deceived himself. He did not hope for victory, but only that, by a heroic defence, he would so cripple the invaders that, even though victorious, they dare not continue the advance.

On the other hand, the Germans, despite their overwhelming numbers, were fighting with a consciousness that already their plans had miscarried; that victory, no matter how close fought, could leave but little lasting good behind it. Willingly would their mysterious leader have retreated on Harwich, and, holding that seaport to the last, gradually have withdrawn his men. But a war started is like a cannon-ball rolled downhill—no one can tell whither it will lead. It must continue its course to the end.

Without a declaration of war, the German Emperor had made an unjustifiable attack upon a friendly nation, and he must abide by the consequences.

The Battle of Colchester commenced with the rising of the sun, was in full swing by eight o'clock, and from that hour until three in the afternoon the British line was subjected to a storm of shot and shell, which tore up the ten-mile front it occupied, so that for a year later it looked as though the whole country had been turned by a gigantic plough. Every foot of that wide expanse of country is now sacred soil, for it has been watered by the blood of Britain's best and bravest.

What men could do our soldiers did that day—and, and more! No other troops in the world could have withstood for seven hours the attack of that iron fighting-machine known as the German Army, with the odds four to one against the defenders.

Heavy though the British loss, that of the Germans was tenfold. But the latter could afford it; the former could not. It is true, trains were bringing reinforcements to Lord Roberts from all parts of the country, but few would reach Colchester in time to take part in the battle.

This Lord Roberts realised, and had given orders that the majority should remain to hold the line he had originally intended to defend at Chelmsford.

At exactly ten minutes past three, the German artillery shook the heavens and the air was rendered hideous by the shrieking shells and contaminated by the suffocating fumes of high explosives.

The British fell by squads, but none thought of retreat. If they were doomed to death, they would die in a manner which would make defeat more glorious than victory.

"Amunition, for Britain's sake—amunition!" was the cry constantly rising above the stifled groans of the wounded and the roar of battle.

From a slight elevation in the centre of the British line, Lord Roberts surveyed the scene. His head was bowed, his wrinkled face overcast with a great sorrow. For the first time in his victorious career, he had met defeat, and the knowledge was bitter to his proud, patriotic spirit.

Long ago he had called up his last reserve, so had no fresh troops to cover the retreat of the war-worn heroes who had fought that day as nobly as though they knew success, and not disaster, must attend their arms.

His eyes wandered towards where a tree-dotted park surrounding a venerable, old-time ruin formed the key of his position. It stood like some mighty Pharos, boldly defying the baffled Germans, for it was manned by the Guards' Brigade.

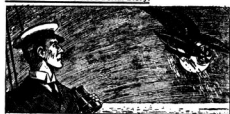
He turned to an aide-de-camp, and, opening his notebook, scribbled on a page:

"The Guards must hold out to the last man. It is our only chance to save the Army. Good-bye, Masterton."

This he folded up and handed to an aide-de-camp to carry to Lord Percival Masterton, who commanded the Guards.

Suddenly his dimmed eyes brightened, his bowed head was raised, his whole form quivered beneath an almost overpowering excitement.

(Another magnificent long instalment in next Monday's issue of THE MAGNET LIBRARY. Usual size and usual price, 1d.)



THE UNCONQUERABLE.

A Magnificent Story of Thrilling Adventure
By SIDNEY DREW.

The Unexpected Waterfall.

"Dey wants beanses, Chingy. Yo' tink we ables to gives dem beanses, Chingy, hunk?"

"You never can tell, dear heart," said his Highness, lighting a cigarette. "They've gone fishing, I think. Let us repose and ponder!"

Presently the dog came bounding up. Gan-Waga dug for worms with his knife, and, taking Ching-Lung's rough fishing-tackle, he went further along the stream in quest of more trout. Having finished his cigarette, Ching-Lung took off his boots and stockings.

"What fo' yo' doings dats, hunk, Chingy? Yo' wants me to drive the troutses down, hunk?"

Ching-Lung had not been idle during the Eskimo's absence. The stream was low, and little water passed over the fall. Ching-Lung had built a stout dam of loose stones across, and had puddled it with clay and grass, leaving one opening in the centre.

"What I want you to do is to go down there and look for a pick or a spade," said Ching-Lung. "We are going to cultivate beans."

"But I not likees beans, Chingy!"

"Do what I tell you, or I'll give you some whether you like them or not, Gan! They're sure to have some tools with them."

Gan descended, and after a search found a rusty-pointed spade used for digging out rabbits. He slung it over his shoulder by a cord, and climbed up.

"The very identical agricultural implement required!" said Ching-Lung. "Now, let me advise you to take a little healthy exercise. Begin a foot from the bank of the limpid pool, and dig a channel hitherward. Having a bone in my arm, I'll look on a trifle."

"Dey comings back, hunk?" asked Gan-Waga eagerly.

"To tea," answered Ching-Lung, "and beans."

A look of almost delicious happiness overspread the Eskimo's face. He leaned on the spade to laugh wildly, and then dug and dug until the perspiration dripped from his brow. The wealth of the Bank of England would not have tempted Gan-Waga to work at such a pace. The spade had lost all its rust, and was shining like silver when he threw it from him, and sat down panting and exhausted. Ching-Lung completed the trench, which extended from the edge of the stream to the top of the shaft which did duty as a chimney.

"Beanses—butterfuls, butterfuls beanses!" murmured Gan, as he dozed off, leaving Chingy to watch. "Ooh, gives dem beanses, Chingy, do!"

The merry mariners had become acquainted with Hendrik and Hans on their former visit to Scarran, and fine lusty fellows they were, although they did grow their hair long. They returned from fishing, the donkey carrying a pannier of fish on one side and a pannier of good things from the yacht on the other. Their lusty voices came up the shaft and mingled with the blue smoke as a fire was lighted.

"Hallo! The Eskimo's set sail, souze me!" cried Prout. "He's found out his moorings warn't firm. We'll leave the cookin' to you, Shorts, and just lend a helpin' 'and. Fancy him dowsin' you w' that tater-wash! Har, har! I'm thinkin' Hans, the prince will want to go after them big cod to-night w' us. He's a rare lad for sport—bless him!"

"I doas't think!" murmured Ching-Lung, winking at Gan-Waga's dog.

"Bedad, Oi axed Misher Rupert for lave, and towid him whor, so Oi expect to find his Highness waiting," said Barry O'Roney. "You table wants stretchin' for all this company, Henry, me bhoys, so we'll just spread the cloth on the flare. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 357.

Next Monday's Number of "The MAGNET" will be the usual price, 1d., and will contain a Splendid, Long, Complete Story, entitled:

NEXT
MONDAY.

The "Magnet"
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ONE
PENNY.

Good luck to the man who packed the basket! Here's a plum-cake the size of a dure-mat! Was ut plovers' eggs, Hans? Oi love 'em! Into the pot wid the speckled darlins! Arrah, here's a poise to make your mouths water, lads!"

"Water is correct," murmured Ching-Lung; "only the Wagtail prefers to call it beans."

He roused Gan-Waga with a gentle kick. Gan took up a stone and fitted it into the gap of the dam, and pressed grass, pebbles, and clay round it. The water began to rise slowly, and Gan was kept busy with the spade closing up the leaks.

"Kettle's boiling, Shorts!" sang out Prout from the cave. "Sit down, boys, and, by honey, we'll have a tea fit for a king!"

"Fish fresh from the say is a swate dish for tay, and Oi don't care who haves ut as long as Shorts cook!" remarked Barry, dropping into poetry. "Get me a knife, and Oi'll carve the bread-and-butter! Bedad, Henry, ye don't haves to sarch far for an appetite on Scarran Oisland!"

Ching-Lung almost relented. They had finished with the fire, and had extinguished it by inverting a large iron pot over it. Both Gan and the dog sniffed the air. The faint aroma that rose from the shaft made them both feel hungry. The water crept higher and higher.

"Shaf! I not dink dot was such ein vine choke we blay, on der Egipto," said Herr Schwartz. "I know dot ud was mine own fault dot I get in der way. No madder, I am moosid happy choost now! Dunder! I not know such peaceful vish swim an dis!"

"No, no, no!" said Ching-Lung. "Not yet, Ganny!"

But Gan-Waga could wait no longer. The water was lapping the top of the dam. He drove in the spade.

"Beanses—butterfuls beanses, Chingy!" he gurgled. "Oh, we gives dems glorious lodufels beanses, Chingy! Ohmi, ohmi!"

He pressed up the turf that separated the channel they had dug from the stream. The dam would not have borne the pressure of the water. The water rushed into the channel, and poured over the brim of the shaft. The deluge gave no warning of its approach. Down in the cave eight men were enjoying themselves as they squatted round the tablecloth spread on the floor.

"Though ut's nothing stronger than tay, bhoys," said Barry, raising his teacup. "Oi ax ye all to drink the health of our old friend Henry! Tay, wather, or champagne, our wishes are kind and hearty, Henry, bhoys; may ye never doic till they shoot ye!"

"A speech! A speech, souze me!" cried Madlock.

Hendrik rose, and bowed.

"Shentlemans," he began, "I vas not a-shamed even dot mine health she vas drunk mit water. I haf lif on der water! und der goot vish we eat she come from der water. Der troof she is dot I gannot haf too much water any dimes at—"

Hendrik was sadly mistaken. If he did not get too much water at that moment, he must have been fonder of it than a shark. It came in a hissing, roaring cascade, and washed him headlong into the arms of Prout. Plates, cups, ham, loaves, pies, cakes, tablecloth, knives and forks, and human beings were mixed together as if an avalanche had fallen upon them.

HIDEOUS shrieks arose. With fragments of litter twisted round their necks, and clinging lovingly to their hair, eight saturated and wild-eyed men rushed for the entrance. They stuck there for a moment, but the torrent kindly washed them out.

"Hallo!" shouted a voice. "Anybody want to borrow a macintosh or an umbrella?"

"Ho, hoo, hoo! Do borrows a macinbrellas and a butterfuls umptoshes, Oh, haves a macinbrellas and a butterfuls umptoshes, please!" chirped a second voice. "I tink him rain souze, Yah! Yo' gotts wetted down deres, hunk! Ohmi, ohmi! Beanses, Chingy beanes! I tink him musts be watercress, not beanes, Chingy! Ho, ho, ho, hoo, hoo-oh! Ohmi, ohmi!"

Two faces were gazing down at them over the edge of the cliff—faces wreathed in joyous smiles.

Prout made a rush for Hendrik's gun, and the faces faded away, but a sweet and pleading voice still rang like mellow music through that stern and wild ravine.

"Oh, do borrows a macinbrellers and an umptosh!" it entreated. "Yo' catches cold in de necks if yo' don'ts. Oh please do let us lends yo' a macinbrellers and an umptosh, Don'ts get yo' poor feets wet. We begs of yo' to accepts de loans of a macinbreller and an umptosh!"

Then all was still, save for the wild "Hee-ee-haws!" of the amused donkey, and the hoarse breathing of eight blood-thirsty men.

(Continued on page iv of cover.)



WHOM TO WRITE TO :
EDITOR,
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OUR TWO COMPANION PAPERS
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The Editor is always pleased to hear from his Chums, at home or abroad.

AT LAST! THE SECRET OUT!

I am now enabled to give the announcement made on this page last week definite form. It would not surprise me to know that several of my chums had already fathomed the nature of the secret, which I hope—may, I am sure—will come as an agreeable and welcome surprise to all.

In response to the many hundreds of letters urging me to induce Mr. Richards to write an extra long school story in "Boys' Friend" Library form, I have put forth all my powers of persuasion, and as a result the popular "Magnet" author has penned the finest story it has ever been my pleasure to read; and the enormity of this statement will be fully realised when I say that in the course of my editorial career I have read many thousands.

Now, as to the story itself, I will not attempt to outline the plot and the many exciting incidents contained therein. Everything will be duly appreciated by my chums when the yarn appears. But I might observe, in passing, that Ponsombly & Co., the unscrupulous rivals of the boys of Greyfriars, loom very largely in the story, which is entitled:

"THE BOY WITHOUT A NAME!"

This will be the first book of its kind ever published dealing with the boys of Highcliffe and Greyfriars, and that it will prove a great success I feel assured. But this is a matter in which my readers have a very large say; and you will do your Editor a real good turn by commending the story, when read, to all your chums of both sexes.

Mr. Richards has fulfilled his task at great sacrifice to himself, for he has given up a much-needed holiday in order that the long-felt wish of myriads of Magnetites might be gratified. The finest tribute you can pay him, therefore, is to extol his latest production—even though it means going out of your way to do so—to all and sundry. And then, when this great yarn has attained the success it deserves, I may be able to induce its author to write another threepenny book on the same lines. Who knows?

Of Mr. Frank Richards himself, let the record stand in these pages, as the highest praise man can have, that he is the best writer of boys' books now living.

One word more. Let me urge you here and now to make sure of obtaining this story. The national crisis has rendered it impossible for a very large number of copies to be published, and I should not be at all surprised were the demand to far exceed the supply. Do not be among the disappointed ones, but make a note to-day of the following particulars:

"BOYS' FRIEND" 3d. LIBRARY, No. 230.

"THE BOY WITHOUT A NAME!"

ON SALE NEW YEAR'S DAY, 1915!

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

F. H.—I am greatly indebted to you for your loyal support. Very best wishes.

Frank Barker (Manchester).—The new volume commenced on September 29th.

F. R. (Southampton).—You should have no difficulty in purchasing a Bent's-made mouth-organ at any shop where musical instruments are sold.

A. Tulkher (Exeter).—I know of no place where you can get the article you require.

"Two Girl Readers" (Chatham).—The characters you mention are all between fourteen and fifteen years of age. Very pleased to get your letter.

The Editor

A MESSAGE TO ALL MAGNETITES.

With this, our bumper Christmas Double Number of the good old "Magnet" Library, I have the utmost pleasure in wishing all Magnetites the wide world over a very happy Christmas and a feast of good cheer.

Merry indeed would be our Christmas if at the same time the sword could be sheathed and peace proclaimed. No one is more painfully aware than myself that the coming Yuletide will fall a long way short of its predecessors in the matter of rousing fun and hearty frolic. War is casting its shadow over all our hearts—over yours and mine. The thoughts of most of us must invariably turn to our brave brothers and comrades who, entrenched in a strange land, are fighting shoulder to shoulder in a great and righteous cause.

As our Christmas fireside there will, I know, be many a vacant chair, whose former occupant is far away, proving to the world that the spirit, the pluck, the power to endure have not gone out of our race. Theirs, indeed, cannot be a merry Christmas. At the same time, these heroic fellows will not be lacking in tokens of good cheer from those in the Old Country. Generous givers have sprung up on every side, and inestimable comforts, in the form of blankets and "smokes," are being daily despatched to the front. It is the earnest wish of us all that this ghastly war, rendered far ghastlier by the British barbarities of a dishonourable foe, may come to a speedy conclusion. May Justice and Right hasten the time when the Hun shall be brought face to face with his day of reckoning!

So far as our Christmas Number is concerned, no effort has been spared in securing the best budget of good, wholesome reading matter obtainable. I make no secret of the fact that my readers may account themselves fortunate in being able to secure such a splendid issue, since many of our periodicals have had to forego their usual Double Number on account of the war.

The production of our Christmas Number has only been accomplished by many days and nights—of untiring energy and thought; but if it is the means of brightening an otherwise gloomy hearth, and causing a happy diversion from the eternal topic which dwells in the minds of all, I shall feel satisfied that such labour has not been in vain.

Once again, then, my loyal chums, I wish you, from my heart, a most happy and enjoyable Christmas.

FOR NEXT MONDAY:

"BUNTER'S UNCLE!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.

In next Monday's grand, long, complete tale of the chums of Greyfriars, Billy Bunter proves to be a very important person indeed. He has claim to having an uncle among the British wounded, and a paragraph in the daily press supports his astonishing statement. The Owl of the Remove, an adept at the art of making hay while the sun shines, proceeds to relieve his schoolfellows of their superfluous cash, in order, as he explains, that the wounded warrior may be provided with sundry comforts. Unfortunately, however, a sad hitch occurs, and things are made extremely warm for the youthful Annias when the amazed and indignant Removites learn that

"BUNTER'S UNCLE"

only exists in the fat junior's fertile imagination.

AT LAST!

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FRANK RICHARDS.

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THE UNCONQUERABLE!

(Continued from page 43.)

"There She Spouts!"—Eggs Going Begging—Gan-Waga Turns Up—The Secret of the Box—The Leviathan.

Ching-Lung waited until sunset, but as none of his guests put in an appearance, he told Captain Kennedy to wait anchor.

They were all free agents except Herr Schwartz, whose services he had borrowed for the time being from Ferrers Lord. It was not safe even for a powerful yacht like the *Fatality* to lie too near the cliffs, for Scarran Island was notorious for sudden squalls and dangerous inshore currents.

When the Northern Lights began to dance in the sky, the calm sea was aglow with shimmering phosphorescence.

Chan-Song-Pu had been appointed cook, and Gan was in the galley enjoying himself, for Chan was not so rigidly about his tibits as the famous Herr Schwartz. The warmth of the stove, made the Eskimo beat a retreat. Then he remembered the eggs he had taken from the cave, which, more by good luck than judgment, he had brought home unbroken.

"What I do wid dese tings?" he muttered. "I too much full to eats dems. I puts dems in Barry Looney's bed, only Barry Looney he nots come hithers till mornings. I tink I letters puts dems in Chan's bed, and dems I knows where dey are. Hoo, hoo, hoo, hoo!"

"There she spouts! Whine-ho! There she blows!"

Gan-Waga was making for the companion with the eggs in his hands, when he heard the shout, and it electrified him.

A whale! To Gan-Waga a whale meant blubber—yards and bushels and barrels of it! You cannot go into a shop in England and buy a pennyworth of blubber, as you can a pennyworth of shrimps or winkles, for it is a dainty they do not keep in stock. Gan had been practically brought up on this delightful dainty, but he had neither seen nor tasted an inch of it for years.

"There she spouts! Whine oh! There she blows!"

Blubber! He could get eggs any day, but blubber only came his way once in the long, weary ages. Gan put the eggs down hurriedly. In fact, he flung them from him. It was not his fault that Ching-Lung bobbed up just in time to meet most of them.

Ching-Lung stopped four with his eyes, two with his nose, three with his chin, and as he recalled before the egg welcome several more descended from the upper regions, not being old enough to fly—and broke upon his head with a succession of plumps!

Gan-Waga was on the bridge, his eyes like saucers, straining his gaze over the shining sea.

"Dere she blows! Whales, whales!" he shouted.

"Lowers de boats, and bring de harpoons!" Ching! A whales, a whales!"

"Throw it down, Kennedy!" cried Ching-Lung. "Yank the horror over."

Gan-Waga dimly remembered being grasped by the waist-band and the back of the neck. He yelled as he fell over the weather-screen, and he yelled again as he hit the deck below. The shock knocked the breath out of him. Then he saw shooting-stars and comets, and yelled again. The yells were jerked out of him by the application of a rope's-end, and Ching-Lung was using the rope.

"Next time (biff) you sling eggs at me (swat, swat), you'll first wring their (biff) necks!" said Ching-Lung. "When you (biff, biff) want to give me any (biff, biff) eggs, Gan, kindly (swat, swat) pick out (biff, biff) fresh 'uns. I like (biff) chickens (biff), but I like 'em (biff) with feathers on. You chicks are (swat, swat) far too young!" It hurts me to have to (biff, biff, biff) do this, but I hope it hurts you more!"

Ching-Lung brought the rope down with a force that made it hum, and finished the performance with a kick. His felt slippers did no damage, and the damage caused by the rope, though excruciatingly painful, was not fatal.

Captain Kennedy looked down, and laughed.

"Serve you jolly well right!" he said. "Ha, ha! You want a dose like that three times a day to do you any good?"

Gan-Waga scrambled to his feet. Had the skies fallen he could not have been more astounded. He rubbed himself and groaned.

"Who—who dits dats, hunk?" he gasped. "Tells me who had 'nuff rascals do dats?"

"Well, I yanked you over," grinned Kennedy. "Must obey 'er chief, you know; and the boss did the res!"

"Yo 'means dat my Chingy he hits me?" asked Gan-Waga. "Yo 'means to tells me my Chingy hits me?"

"If I told you anybody else did, it would be about time I consulted an oculist about my eyesight!" giggled the captain.

"Yo a fat, awful, grinning, had 'nuff nasty, silly, dread-fuf, uglinesses!" hissed the Eskimo. "I hateses yo!"

Captain Kennedy's grin expanded. He watched Gan-Waga creep away with his lips very wide apart.

The moon was throwing a silver pathway across the sea, and in the centre of the pathway a brown sail appeared. The sail was furled, showing only a black streak against the silver cliffs.

Presently Ching-Lung came up, having washed, and changed his clothes.

"What's that ahead, Mike?"

"Somebody fishing, sir—the boys, I expect," answered the captain. "They came off the island, anyhow."

"Where's Gan?"

"Hopped it, sir."

"A sore!" said Ching-Lung. "Hook her down outside that boat, Mike, and we'll see what sport they're having!"

Then Ching-Lung thought it was time to see what had become of the Eskimo. He was not in the bath-room, and he was not in the saloon.

The prince called out an order in Chinese.

In an instant Chan-Song-Pu and a dozen more Chinamen were searching the ship.

"A-oo-ew!" shouted, Schwartz! "Hi! Gan! Where are you, my butterfals one? Schwartz! Gan, Gan!"

Ching-Lung called out and whistled in vain both for the dog and his master, and the searchers also searched in vain. Dog and Eskimo had vanished.

"You've done it this time, Ching!" said Rupert Thurston, thoroughly alarmed. "What on earth made you hit him, of all people? You know how fond he is of you. He'd think nothing of taking a hiding from anybody else. But from you! I tell you plainly, Ching, I'm frightened!"

"I'm not!" said Ching-Lung. "Poor old Gan! I'm not frightened at all, Rupert. I didn't like his eggs, so I had to assert my authority. Shall have to take off my hat, and humbly apologise. If he hadn't taken his tyke, I might have been scared. He'll turn up. There goes the anchor! I'm sorry I hit him; but when you're partners in the joke department, you ought to spare each other. Don't look frightened! I know Gan better than you will ever know him, if you live another century. He'll turn up smiling all over."

The *Fatality* swung round to her cable about two hundred yards to port of the anchored sailing-boat.

"Got the bait, Chan?" asked Ching-Lung.

"Oh! ri, of ri, of ri!" replied Chan-Song-Pu.

"Then lower away!"

Ching-Lung took the oars, and each time they rose clear of the water they shed drops of silver. The sea was one glow of phosphorescence.

"Aloy! Are we any good here?" shouted Ching-Lung.

"Nesin; you was better below us, sir!" answered the voice of Hendrik. "You vas on rock, and you lose der anchor dere!"

Ching-Lung allowed the boat to drift down, and the anchor went overboard with a gentle splash. Rupert Thurston had put his sea-rod together, but Ching-Lung preferred a hand-line. Down sank the leads.

"By Jove, we're among them!" said Thurston, as the rod was almost jerked out of his hands. "Get the gaff ready, Chan!"

They had found the big eel, and the fish were as hungry as wolves. Thurston quickly discarded his rod for a hand-line. It was haul and haul and haul again. Then monster came up shining like silver, and flapped and grunted in the lurch, and laid his tail Chan-Song-Pu laid about him with a stretcher, and brought pesce and queso. Then ten minutes passed away, and there was never a pull.

"Doing anything over there?" bawled Ching-Lung.

"Bedad, no good at all, sir," bawled Barry O'Roonoy, "bar losing tackle! There's sharks about, sor!" We've got nearly a hundred fish, but we shan't get any more now, odd Henxy thinks, so we're goin' to do a gentle shift!"

"You don't want to borrow a macinbella or a umptresses, do you?" laughed the prince. "I hope you didn't get very wet when the water-pipe burst? Drag up your mud-hook, Chan-Song-Pu; the fishing is over for the night!"

"Look, Ching—look!" said Rupert Thurston quickly.

"What can that be?"

Ching-Lung saw four dim points of light on the surface of the water. There was a strong tide, and the strange lights seemed to be drifting rapidly to the north. Not a ripple broke the surface of the sea, except where it surged round the distant rocks in sluggish waves.

"Souse me!" said Mr. Benjamin Madlock, who had also caught sight of the lights. "What's that yonder, boys? Is it a dog?"

"Troth, ut looks mighty loike a Willum of the Wisp," said Barry O'Roonoy, "or a bunch of corpse-candles! Or is it a shark 'gim' round wid a lamp to find the fishes! Ching's pring afther ut, Oi see," he added. "Now, boys, all together! Make a race of ut!"

(Another splendid instalment of this grand serial next Monday. Order in advance.)

