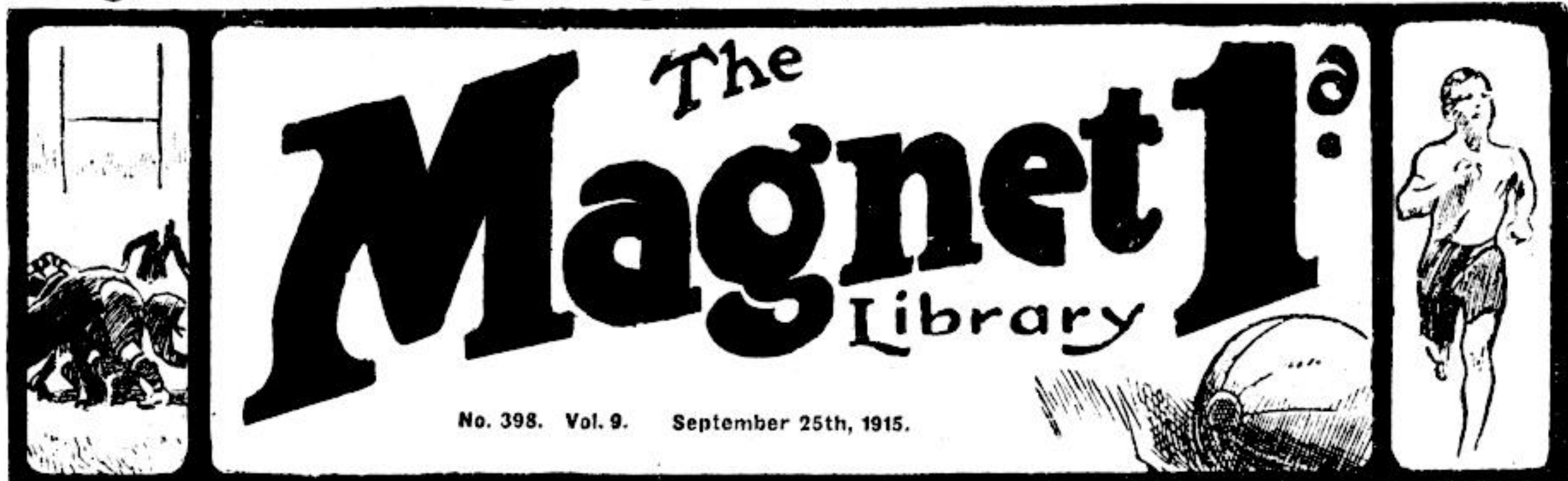


A LANCASHIRE LAD'S LUCK!

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars.



The click of the typewriter ceased suddenly in the study, and the door was torn open. Mr. Quelch looked out with a frowning brow. He frowned still more at the sight of the smashed crockery on the floor. "Really, Susan— Why—why—what— Bless my soul!" "Help!" shrieked the terrified Susan. "Save me!" (A Screamingly Funny Scene in the Magnificent Long, Complete School Tale Inside.)

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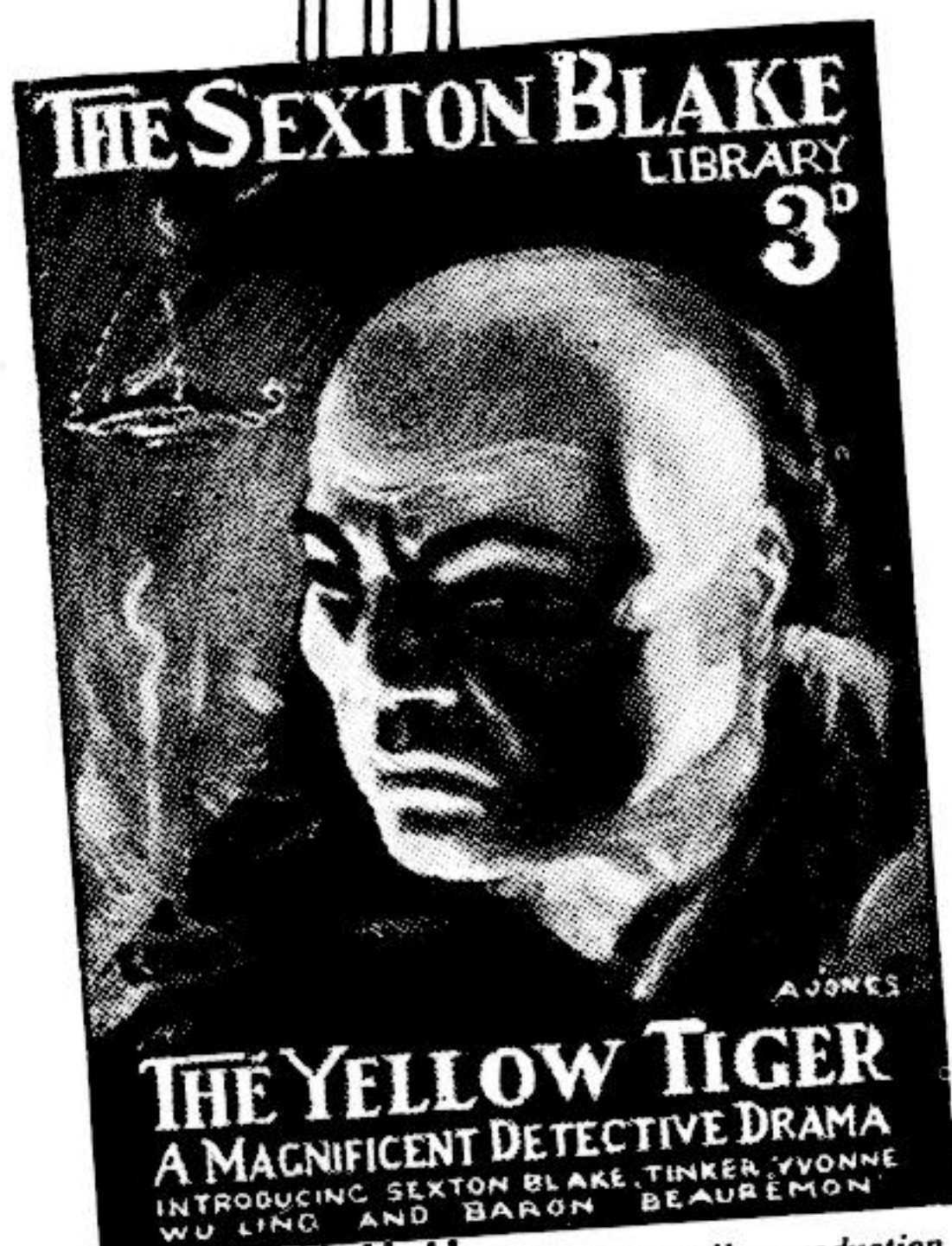
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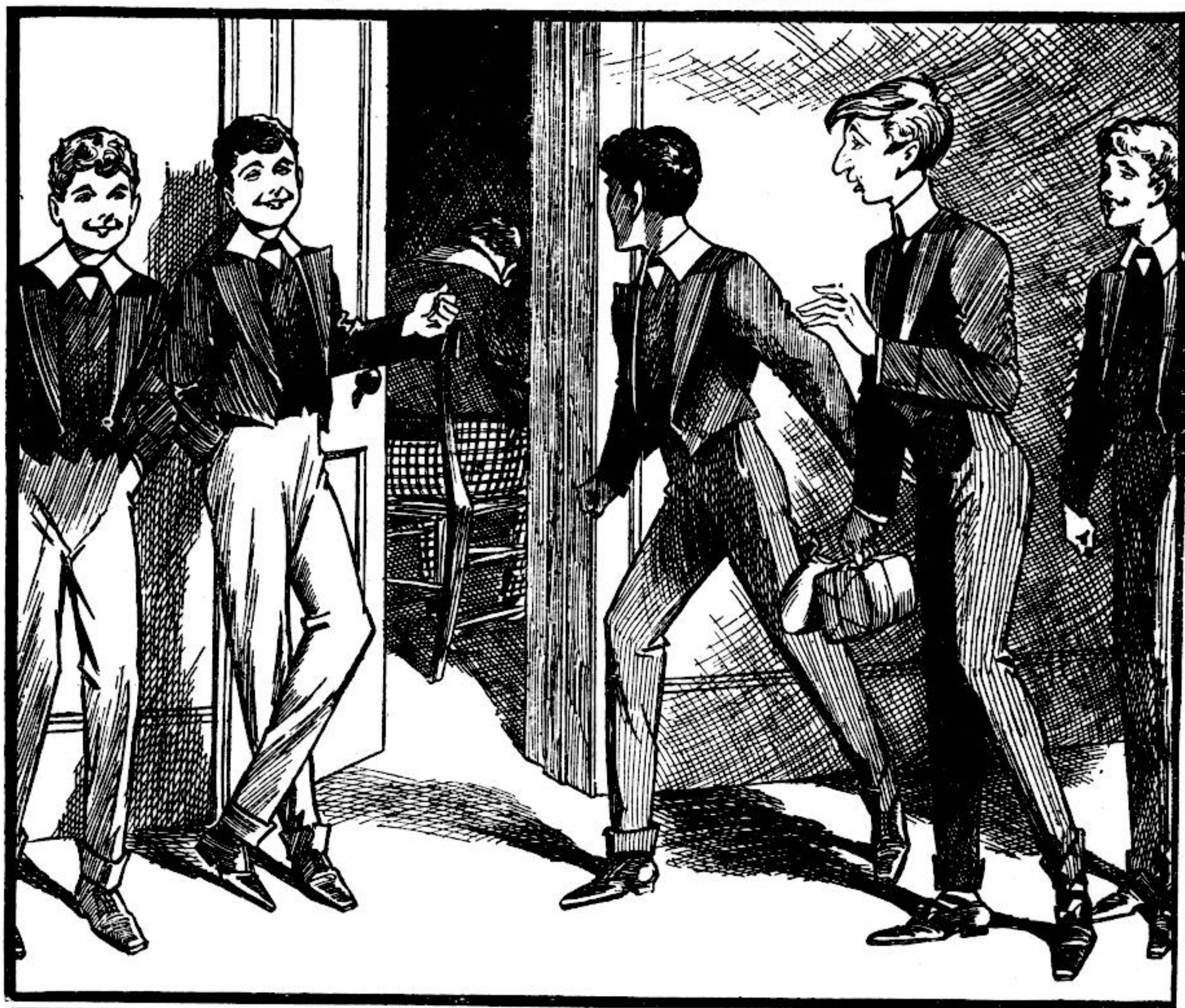
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A LANCASHIRE LAD'S LUCK!

A New, Long, Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
at Greyfriars School.

By FRANK RICHARDS.



Peter Todd almost dropped his parcel, with the jump he gave, as Bunter's voice was heard once more. "Ha, ha! With my trusty blade dyed deep in Hunnish gore—Lemme see—what's next? Trusty blade is good. With my trusty blade—" "What's the matter with him?" gasped Peter. (See Chapter 1.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter—Author!

"**H**A, ha! Base Hun, I have thee in my clutch!" Five juniors, in the Remove passage at Greyfriars, simply jumped as they heard that exclamation.

Harry Wharton & Co., of the Remove, had just arrived at the door of No. 7 Study.

No. 7 Study belonged to Peter Todd, who had the high

honour of sharing it with Billy Bunter. Peter had asked the Famous Five to tea. And they had come.

Peter, as it happened, was not yet there; he was still busy in the tuckshop. But Billy Bunter was there.

And it was the voice of William George Bunter that uttered that astounding exclamation.

Harry Wharton & Co. paused at the doorway and looked in, in great astonishment. Billy Bunter was seated at the table, and he had his back to the door. He did not see the five juniors.

His voice went on:

"Die, dog!"

The five juniors looked at one another. Bob Cherry tapped his forehead significantly.

"Potty!" murmured Nugent.

"Mad as an esteemed hatter!" said Hurree Singh.

"What the deuce is the matter with him?" muttered Wharton, in wonder. "Listen!"

"Perish, villain!" Bunter's voice went on. "Ha, ha! Vengeance at last! Die like a dog!"

"Better buzz off and get a strait-jacket for him," said Johnny Bull.

On went Bunter:

"He drew his gleaming, glittering, flashing sabre, and, with a scornful laugh, jammed it into the cringing, trembling, shaking, cowardly Hun. A deep, awful, dreadful, and fearful groan resounded o'er the battlefield."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "That Hun must have felt a sudden pain."

"I fancy that will take the cake!" Bunter went on, chuckling. "'Tain't many chaps who have a gift for descriptive writing like that!"

"Hallo, here we are again!" said Peter Todd, as he came along the passage with a bundle under his arm. "Why—what—my hat!"

Peter almost dropped his parcel, with the jump he gave, as Bunter's voice was heard once more.

"Ha, ha! With my trusty blade dyed deep in Hunnish gore—lemme see, what's next? Trusty blade is good. With my trusty blade——"

"What the thunder is the matter with him?" gasped Peter. "Is it sunstroke? Bunter with a trusty blade—my word!"

Peter Todd strode into the study and grasped his study-mate by the back of the neck, and jerked him out of his chair.

"Ow!" roared Bunter. "Leggo, you idiot!"

"What are you babbling about?" demanded Peter. "What do you mean with your silly trusty blade and Hunnish gore?"

"Yow-wow! Leggo!"

"I'm not going to let go till I know whether you're mad or not," said Peter cheerfully. "Now, are you potty?"

"Yow-ow! No! I'm writing!" yelled Bunter.

"Writing?"

"Yes, fathead! I'm writing a story!" howled Bunter.

"Great Scott!"

Peter released the fat junior in utter astonishment. Billy Bunter was many kinds of an ass; but he had never appeared in the role of an author before. The Owl of the Remove set his glasses straight on his fat little nose, and blinked wrathfully at Peter and the grinning juniors in the doorway.

"You can get out!" he snorted. "I can't be interrupted in my literary work! I'm writing a first-rate story for the story-competition in the 'Weekly World,' and it means five guineas for this study when it goes in."

"How do you know?"

"The prize is five guineas, fathead!"

"And how do you know you will get the prize?"

"It's to be given for the best short story sent in," explained Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at!" growled Bunter. "I wish you'd get out. I'm just in the vein now—getting on rippingly. Don't move those papers, you ass—you'll mix up my story!"

"We want the table for tea, my son," said Peter Todd. "You mustn't start these things at tea-time!"

"Lemmy papers alone!" roared Bunter. "I haven't half done the story yet. And I'm jolly well not going to be interrupted! It's pretty hard lines if a literary chap can't have a little peace in his own study! Go and have tea in Hall!"

"Bow-wow!"

"Let's have a look at the story!" grinned Bob Cherry. "From what we've heard, it must be a ripper."

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"I'll read out the beginning, if you like," said Bunter. "It begins stunningly. Just listen to this:

"The shades of night were falling fast——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! I've heard something like that before!" said Bob Cherry.

"Rot! That is a new and original line, and I can tell you it took a lot of thought," said Bunter. "I'm rather pleased with that line. Just listen, and don't jaw!"

"The shades of night were falling fast, and the silence lay silently upon the sleeping camp, while the German guns thundered and roared with a terrific din. Captain Fearless stood in his dug-out in the trenches in Flanders, watching for the vile foe. 'Aha!' he muttered, his eyes flashing, his lip curling scornfully, his nostrils dilating, his hands clenching, and his breath coming quick and fast. 'Aha! They come!' There! What do you fellows think of that?"

The fellows did not state what they thought of it. They roared. Billy Bunter blinked at them in surprise and indignation.

"You silly asses!" he shouted. "This isn't a comic story. That's one of the most tragic parts!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, I expected jealousy," said Bunter. "That's why my stuff is kept out of the 'Herald'—because I can write, and you fellows can't! You'll sing a different tune when this comes out in the 'Weekly World,' and I get a cheque for five guineas. Jolly lucky I came across Linley's copy of the paper and got on to this! What are you cackling at, you silly idiots?"

"Look!" gasped Peter, picking up one of the sheets covered with Bunter's sprawling handwriting. "Only look!"

The juniors looked, and yelled again. Spelling was not one of Bunter's strong points. Certainly, there have been many literary men who could not spell for "nuts." Bunter was one more of them.

"'Mercy!' cride the shrincking Hunn, as he fel uppon his neeze. 'Spair my life!' Captain Feerless razed his gleeming blaid, and the Hunn's head roled in the dust. 'Ha!' cride our hearo. 'Revvenge!'"

The roar of No. 7 Study could be heard at the end of the Remove passage. Bob Cherry sank into the armchair, and kicked up his heels, almost in hysterics.

"Ha, cried our hero!" gasped Wharton. "Oh, my hat!"

"Revenge!" shrieked Bob Cherry. "Ha, ha, ha! Hold me, somebody!"

Skinner of the Remove looked into the study.

"What's the little joke—or is it hysterics?" he asked.

"Revenge!" yelled Bob Cherry. "The Hun's head rolled in the dust! Ha, ha, ha!"

"What the thunder——"

"It's my story!" snorted Bunter. "These silly asses don't understand descriptive writing. You look at that, Skinner, old chap!"

Skinner looked. Then he staggered into the passage, yelling:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Peter Todd wiped away his tears.

"Don't, Bunt," he said, in a feeble voice. "It's not fair on us, and it's not fair on the editor. The poor chap couldn't have known what he was letting himself in for when he offered that prize!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter collected up his literary works with a snort of contempt. It was said of old that a prophet is without honour in his own country. An author is seldom fully appreciated in the family circle. Bunter was not really surprised that the Remove fellows failed to understand the value of his literary work. It is quite a common thing for a genius to be misunderstood.

"I'll tell you what," said Bunter—"I think you're a set of cackling fatheads! I was going to stand a ripping feed out of that prize. Now I won't! Yah!"

And with that Parthian shot Billy Bunter retreated from the study, taking his literary works with him. He left the chums of the Remove almost weeping.



The juniors stared at Wun Lung as he groped in his loose garment, and produced a folded typewritten manuscript. Mark Linley caught at it. "That's my story!" he exclaimed, in great relief. "You young boulder, what have you taken it out of the envelope for, and where's the letter?" (See Chapter 9.)

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Looking After Ma ky!

H ALLO, hallo, hallo! Swotting again!" Bob Cherry asked the question as he came into his study after tea. His study-mate, Mark Linley, was seated at the table, with a pen in his hand, a sheet of impot paper before him, and a deep wrinkle in his brow. Mark did not look up as Bob came in, apparently being too deep in thought. So Bob clapped him on the shoulder, and bawled the question in his ear in stentorian tones.

Then the Lancashire junior jumped.

"Oh, you startled me, Bob, you ass! Look at my paper!"

A shower of blots had been scattered over the paper.

"Never mind," said Bob cheerily. "Serve you right for swotting. What are you always grinding away for when other fellows are taking it easy? You've got into the bad habit of working."

Mark smiled.

"Well, you know I used to work before I came to school," he remarked. "I was a half-timer when I was a kid."

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"CHAMPION OF THE OPPRESSED!"

"You're a whole-timer now," grunted Bob. "What is it this time? A giddy essay for the Head's prize?"

"Oh, no!"

"Latin composition for the silver medal?" groaned Bob.

"No, no!"

"You're not going in for the Greek poem, I hope?"

"Not at all," said Mark, laughing.

"Oh, good!" said Bob. "I'm glad you draw a line somewhere. Chuck it away now and come down to the cricket."

"Excuse me, old chap——"

"I won't excuse you," said Bob. "You're not going to swot."

"But it's not swotting this time," said Mark. "I'm writing a story."

"Wha-a-at!"

"Trying to, perhaps I should say," said Mark Linley. "I'm going to do my best, anyway. It's jolly hard work—harder than Latin composition, though it may look easier. I'm going in for the literary competition in the 'Weekly World.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob.

Mark's face clouded a little as Bob's stentorian laugh rang through No. 13 Study.

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"You think it's like my check, I suppose?" he asked. "Perhaps it is. I don't suppose I can write. But there's no harm in trying, is there?"

"Fathead!" said Bob. "I'm not laughing at that. You've got a giddy rival; that's what tickled me."

"A rival!" said Mark.

"Yes; Bunter's going in, too."

Mark smiled.

"Oh, Bunter! Well, if Bunter goes in, there's no reason why I shouldn't," he said. "Of course, I don't expect to bag the prize. But if I get honourable mention that will be encouraging, and I might have better luck another time."

"Shouldn't wonder if you bag it," said Bob. "I'd bet ninepence to fourpence that Bunter won't. His spelling will give the editor a fit. What subject are you on—the war, like Bunter?"

"Oh, no! Wouldn't be much good my writing a war story at my age," said Mark. "I don't know anything about the war, excepting what I've read. A chap ought to know his subject before he starts writing. I'm trying a story of factory life in Lancashire. I know all about that; I've been through it."

"What a giddy genius you are, Marky, old man!" said Bob admiringly. "You've got a lot of sense. Now, if I'd tried I should very likely have plumped for something high-falutin, like Bunter. I suppose a chap can write better if he knows his subject."

Mark laughed.

"Well, he ought to be able to," he said. "It's about the only thing I know well, and if I can't make that interesting I can't make anything."

"Oh, you'll do it!" said Bob, with conviction. "You can do jolly nearly anything that needs brains. What are you going to do with the guineas?"

"Get them first, if I can," said Mark, laughing again. "No good dividing the skin before the bear is caught. But if I get it I shall send half of it home—they can do with an extra quid or two there—and then get some things I want, and stand a study feed with the rest. Five guineas would be a lot of money for a chap like me—not that I expect to get it."

"Well, if you're not cocksure about it you're more likely to have a chance," said Bob Cherry sagely. "It's the cocksure bounders who never get there, you know. Go in and win, old son, and I'm going to help you."

"Thanks!" said Mark, smiling.

"Not in a literary way," grinned Bob. "That's not in my line. I'm going to help you by seeing that you're not disturbed in the study. I'll get off to the cricket, and you can grind at it. I'll keep Inky out of the study, and young Wun Lung, too. You can have the study to yourself. Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's young pigtail!"

Wun Lung, the Chinese junior, came in with his soft step. Bob Cherry pointed to the door autocratically.

"Travel!" he said.

Wun Lung looked surprised.

"Me come in," he said.

"No; you goe out!" grinned Bob.

"Me wantee takee nappee in armchair."

"Takee nappee in dorm," said Bob. "Marky's going to swot, and he's going to have the study to himself. Savvy?"

"No savvy. Me come in."

"Hold on, Bob," said Mark. "I don't want the study to myself, and I've no right to it, anyway. Draw it mild."

"Rats!" said Bob. "You do. I know what literary work means. Authors don't have to be interrupted; it stops the flow of genius. I heard of an author who brained somebody with a typewriter because he came in to ask him to a party. Buzz off, pigtail!"

"No buzzee off!"

"Bob, old chap—" protested Mark.

"Bow-wow!" said Bob. "Where's my pocket-knife? I'm going to cut off Wun Lung's pigtail. Ah, here it is!"

The pocket-knife was there, but Wun Lung was not. The little Chinese had vanished down the passage.

"Dash it all, Bob—"

"You leave it to me," said Bob. "I'm going to look after you. Authors have to be looked after; they're

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rather a cracky lot, you know. Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Inky now!"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh came in.

"Come down to the cricket, Inky," said Bob.

The Nabob of Bhanipur shook his dusky head.

"I have lines to do for the esteemed Quelchy," he replied. "For the nextful hour I shall be busy linefully."

"No, you won't!" said Bob. "You're coming down to the cricket. Marky has become an author, and he can't be disturbed."

"Look here—" began Mark, half laughing and half vexed.

"Leave it to your uncle," said Bob. "Come on, Inky!"

"But my lines—"

"Blow your lines!"

"The blowfulness would be the pleasurable performance, my esteemed chum, but the august Quelchy cannot be disregardfully neglected. My lines—"

Bob Cherry picked up his bat.

"Where will you have it, Inky?" he inquired pleasantly.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh dodged into the passage.

"On secondful thoughts, I will do my esteemed lines in the Form-room," he said.

"Don't!" said Mark. "For goodness' sake, Bob—"

"Oh, ring off!" said Bob. "Haven't I told you I'm looking after you? Blessed if here isn't Bunter now!"

A pair of large spectacles gleamed in at the doorway as Hurree Singh departed. Billy Bunter had arrived.

"I say, you fellows—"

"No, you don't!" said Bob positively.

"Eh? I don't what?"

"You don't say! You travel off! Good-bye! Marky can't be disturbed. Marky has become a literary man, and he is going to stagger humanity as an author. Owls are not allowed in the study. Clear!"

"Look here, I want to borrow Linley's 'Weekly World!'" roared Bunter. "I want to read up the rules of the competition."

"Here it is," said Mark. "Bring it back when you've done with it, Bunter."

"I don't see what you want with an old paper," said Bunter. "I'd rather keep it by me, as I'm entering the literary competition."

"But I am entering it, too," said Mark.

"What!" Bunter blinked wrathfully at the Lancashire lad. "You—you're entering it? Do you mean to say you've got the nerve to go in after my prize, Linley?"

"Why should I not? The competition is open to everybody."

"That's all very well," growled Bunter. "But it was my idea to go in for that story competition, and it's jolly mean of you to try to cut me out."

Mark stared.

"But I did not know you were entering, Bunter, till Bob just told me. I have been at work on my story for days now."

"Oh, rats! I say it's mean!" said Bunter. "Not that you've got a ghost of a chance. What on earth do you know about story-writing. Why, you must be a conceited ass—a chap who worked in a factory, too! My hat! I never heard of such nerve. The best thing you can do is to drop the idea at once. That's my advice."

"Thanks!" said Mark quietly. "When I want your advice I'll ask you for it, Bunter."

"Look here, I'm not standing this!" shouted Bunter wrathfully. "I'm not going to have a cad after my prize!"

"Better language, please!" said Mark, with a gleam in his eyes.

"Well, a fellow is a cad to try and bag another fellow's prize," said Bunter. "I started my story to-day. I thought of it when I saw your paper this afternoon."

"I started mine last week."

"Oh, rats! Not that you've got a chance—an ignorant fellow like you!" said Bunter, with withering contempt. "Lot you know about writing. Still, I'm not going to have you wedging in after my prize. I tell you plainly that I'm not going to stand it. Disgusting, I call it. Yow-ow! Leggo my ear, Bob Cherry, you beast!"

"Marky mustn't be disturbed," explained Bob Cherry, as he tightened his grip on Bunter's fat ear. "Come along with me, Bunt! Marky must be left in peace and quiet. You worry him. Come along!"

"Yaroooh! Leggo! I won't!"

"Well, your ear's coming," said Bob. "You can suit yourself about coming along with it."

Bob Cherry started down the passage, still with a vice-like grip fastened on Bunter's ear. Bunter's ear accompanied him, and, needless to say, Bunter accompanied the ear.

They disappeared down the passage to the tune of a loud chuckle from Bob, and a fiendish howl from Billy Bunter. Mark smiled, and sat down to his work again.

His pen travelled slowly over the paper. He did not write with the facility of William George Bunter, but it is barely possible that the result was a little better.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. A Screaming Joke!

"I SAY, Wib!"

Wibley of the Remove was in his study, which he shared with Rake. Wibley was very busy, and Rake was sitting on the table watching him when Billy Bunter blinked in.

Wibley's occupation was peculiar.

He was making up his face before the glass, and had made himself look about seventy years old; and as he was still wearing his Etons and broad collar, the effect was very peculiar. That aged face on a boy of fifteen was striking.

"Blessed if I know how you do it," Rake was remarking. "What's the little game this time?"

Wibley grinned at his reflection in the glass.

"Only practice," he said. "This is for our next comedy. The Remove Dramatic Society doesn't perform half often enough really. The fellows waste too much time on cricket and things."

Wibley was the leading light of that great society. There was no doubt that he was a born actor, and his powers of impersonation were marvellous. If Wibley had had his way, the Remove Dramatic Society would have been "at it" incessantly. But Harry Wharton & Co., though they were keen on amateur theatricals, were equally keen on other things; and so Wib's dramatic proclivities never really had full play.

Billy Bunter gave a startled blink as Wibley turned his made-up face from the glass.

"Ow!" said Bunter. "What a chivvy! I suppose that's you, Wib?"

"It is I," said Wibley, "and nothing to lend. Good-bye!"

"Same here," said Rake. "Not lending anything again till after the war. Farewell!"

"I haven't come here to borrow anything, you fat-heads!" growled Bunter. "As a matter of fact, I expect to be in funds again shortly—five guineas or so. I say, Wib, I've got a jolly good wheeze."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at, you ass?"

"I've heard about the story competition," chuckled Wibley. "'Ha!' cried our hero. 'Revenge at last!' Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Rake. "The Hun's head rolled in the dust! Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter blinked at them wrathfully. He could not see anything funny in that tragic and thrilling incident of his short story.

"Look here, you don't understand authorship," he said. "That's splendid descriptive writing. You wouldn't understand—you're not literary. 'Tain't that I've come to speak about—not likely to consult you chaps on literary matters. I've got a ripping wheeze—a regular shriek."

"Go and bury it!" said Wibley.

"You could do it, Wib, because you're so jolly clever at making up," urged Bunter.

Wibley looked round again from the glass. He was touched upon his special weakness.

"Well, you can run on," he said. "What is it?"

"That fellow Linley—that factory bounder, you know—has wedged in to cut me out in the story competition," said Bunter. "It's jolly mean, isn't it?"

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"CHAMPION OF THE OPPRESSED!"

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"Open to everybody, isn't it?" said Rake.

"Yes, but it's mean, all the same. I should be above anything of that kind," said Bunter loftily.

"But Linley started before you did, anyway," said Rake. "I saw him at it last Saturday."

"I don't want to argue about it," said Bunter. "It's mean—beastly mean! I think he ought to be stopped. I was thinking of licking him—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! Still, licking him wouldn't be much good. I've thought of something better than that. I want you to help me, Wib—you're so jolly clever at disguises and making up and that rot. Suppose Linley's father should come here—"

"Well, suppose he should?" said Wibley, with a stare.

"Must be an awful bounder, you know, Linley's pater," said Bunter confidentially.

"I don't see why."

"Oh, rot! He works for his living," said Bunter.

"So does my pater."

"I mean, he does real work," growled Bunter. "Hang it, you know what I mean! My idea is that he's a frightful outsider. I know Linley keeps him jolly dark. He never comes to Greyfriars as our paters do."

"Linley's people are poor," said Rake, "and the railway fare must be pretty stiff from Lancashire to Kent."

"That's probably why he doesn't come," said Wibley.

"What are you getting at, Bunter? Don't start with that stump for a minute, Rake." Dick Rake had picked up a cricket-stump. "Let the fat beast explain."

"Well, my idea is that you should make up as Linley's pater," said Bunter eagerly—"make up as a fearfully rough rotter, you know, with cord trousers and things, unshaven, and tipsy, and so on—and come here claiming to be Mark Linley's father. That would show him up. You see, he would deny that you were his pater, and the fellows would all think he was ashamed of his father. It would be a screaming joke."

"Would it?" said Wibley.

"Would it?" said Rake.

If the Owl of the Remove had not been very short-sighted, he might have taken alarm at the expressions on the faces of the two juniors. Their expressions were, in fact, growing almost terrific. But Billy Bunter did not observe them, and he rattled on cheerfully:

"You see, it would be no end of a lark, and it would show that cad up. And you could do it, Wib—you could impersonate anybody."

"I could do it easily enough," assented Wibley.

"Well, then, you'll do it?"

"No, I won't do it," said Wibley deliberately. "It may be your idea of a screaming joke, to play a dirty trick on one of the best chaps in the Remove, but it isn't exactly my idea of a screaming joke. Still, I'm always ready for a joke, so far as that goes. Collar him, Rake, old chap!"

"You bet!" chuckled Rake.

Billy Bunter realised at last that he was in danger, and he backed towards the door; but Dick Rake slammed the door, and put his back against it. Bunter dodged round the table in alarm.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Take him by the ears!" said Wibley. "I'll make him up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow!" roared Bunter, as Rake's strong hands closed on him. "Leggo! Look here, I was only joking, you know."

"So are we!" said Wibley, grinning. "We're tremendous jokers in this study. Hold the fat beast tight!"

"I've got him!" said Rake.

"Yaroooh! Leggo!"

Rake tightened his grasp on the fat junior. Billy Bunter was helpless in his strong hands. Then Wibley, with a cheery grin, started to work with his grease-paints. Billy Bunter's eyes glared through his spectacles, and he wriggled furiously.

"Groo-hoo! Leave off, you beast! Yow-ow!"

"Keep your mouth shut!"

"I won't! I—yooop! Ugh! Groooh! Huh!"

"You'll get some more in it if you don't keep it shut!" said Wibley.

"Guggggggggg!"

Billy Bunter kept his mouth shut after that. Wibley proceeded to paint his fat face nearly all the colours of the rainbow.

Billy Bunter's aspect was soon quite extraordinary. Streaks of red and white and black covered his fat face from forehead to chin, giving him a curiously zebra-like look. A large blue spot on the tip of his fat little nose and a blue circle round each eye added to the effect.

"There!" said Wibley, stepping back and surveying his handiwork. "That's about right. Now kick him out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Dick Rake opened the door, and propelled Bunter into the passage. The Owl of the Remove shook his fist into the study.

"You rotters!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm going straight to Mr. Quelch!" roared Bunter.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Rake. "Quelchy will have a fit! Ha, ha, ha!"

"You wait till Quelchy sees it!" shrieked Bunter. "Yah!"

And the highly-coloured Owl of the Remove rolled away furiously down the passage.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Has No Luck!

"GREAT SCOTT!"

Vernon-Smith and Skinner were coming out of their study as Bunter came along towards the stairs. They stopped, and stared at the extraordinary vision.

"What the—who the——" gasped Skinner.

"Bunter!" shrieked the Bounder. "What the thunder——"

"It's that beast Wibley!" howled Bunter. "I'm going to show this to Mr. Quelch. He'll get a flogging. Grooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The roar of laughter brought Harry Wharton & Co. out of No. 1 Study. They yelled at the sight of Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Where did you get that face?" shrieked Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter glared at them—a highly-coloured glare—and rushed on to the stairs. He was fully determined to report his wrongs to the Form-master.

"I'm going to Quelchy!" he stuttered. "I'm going to show him this. I'll show that beast Wibley——"

"Hold on!" said Harry Wharton. "Don't sneak!"

"Do you think I'm going to be painted up like this?" yelled Bunter.

"Oh, what a face!" shouted Bolsover major, looking out of his study. "What a chivvy! Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter snorted, and sped down the stairs.

"Looks like a row for Wib!" gasped Bob Cherry. "What on earth has he done it for? Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter rolled down the stairs at top speed. He was on the point of bursting with wrath and indignation. He rushed for Mr. Quelch's study.

The master of the Remove was in his study, and the click of his typewriter showed that he was busy. Mr. Quelch was a literary gentleman in his spare moments. His tea was being brought to him in his study. Even the prosaic Form-master sometimes fell into that bad literary habit of neglecting meals for work. Susan, the maid, had just arrived at his study door with a large tray, when Billy Bunter came bolting along the passage.

Susan gave one wild and horrified glance at the red and black and white-barred countenance, and with a shriek of terror jumped back.

Crash!

The tray went to the floor, and there was a wild smash of crockery and eggs.

"Help!" shrieked Susan, collapsing against the wall.

"Well, you thundering idiot!" gasped Bunter.

The click of the typewriter ceased suddenly in the study, and the door was torn open. Mr. Quelch looked

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out with a frowning brow. He frowned still more at the sight of the smashed crockery on the floor.

"Really, Susan—— Why—why—what—— Bless my soul!"

"Help!" shrieked the terrified Susan. "Save me!"

And the hysterical maid fairly flung herself into Mr. Quelch's arms, and clung round his neck.

"Goodness gracious!" ejaculated the Form-master, astounded and shocked. "Susan—girl—release me! How dare you! This is most—most—most improper! I shall speak to the matron. Release me!" roared Mr. Quelch.

"Save me!" babbled Susan.

"What is the matter with the girl? Is she mad?" gasped Mr. Quelch. Then his eyes fell upon Bunter, and he gave a violent start. "What—what—what is that?"

"If you please, sir——"

"Bunter!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, recognising the voice, though not the face; it would have been difficult to recognise the face under its coat of many colours. "Boy, are you mad? How dare you paint your face and frighten the maids in this way!"

"I haven't—I didn't—I wasn't——"

"Susan, release me instantly!" shrieked Mr. Quelch. "If you do not immediately remove your arms from my neck, I shall ask the matron to discharge you. There is nothing to be afraid of. This is simply a boy painted in a ridiculous manner."

"Oh, dear!" moaned Susan, backing away at last, reassured. "It—it was a 'orrid vision. I was so frightened——"

"There is nothing to frighten you. You are a ridiculous girl," said the Form-master crossly. "Your conduct is most—most embarrassing. Bunter, you are the cause of this damage. Come into my study instantly!"

Mr. Quelch rustled back into the study, and picked up his stoutest cane. Billy Bunter came in, in a very gingerly manner. He had come there specially to see Mr. Quelch, and to report to him his manifold wrongs and injuries. But just then he would have preferred to postpone the interview.

"So," thundered Mr. Quelch, his eye almost piercing Bunter like a gimlet—"so you have chosen to paint yourself in this insane manner, and terrify the maids. I suppose that is your idea of a practical joke, Bunter. I will impress upon you that such practical jokes are not permitted. Hold out your hand!"

"But I—I—I——"

"Your hand at once!"

"But, sir, I didn't——"

Mr. Quelch lost patience; he had very little patience at his command at that moment. He seized Bunter by the collar as the fat junior did not hold out his hand, and laid the cane across his plump shoulders.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yow, yow, yow!" roared Bunter

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

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

"Silence!" shouted Mr. Quelch, whacking away. "You utterly ridiculous boy!" Whack, whack! "You absurd boy!" Whack! "How dare you——" Whack, whack! "I shall give you a most severe lesson!" Whack, whack, whack! "You will not perpetrate"—whack, whack, whack—"any more of these ridiculous practical jokes, Bunter!" Whack, whack, whack! "If you do, your punishment"—whack, whack!—"will be more severe next time!" Whack, whack, whack!

"Yaroooooop!"

"Now go! Not a word! Go!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Ah, you are not yet sufficiently punished!" Whack, whack! "Bunter, I shall make an example!" Whack, whack!

Billy Bunter fled.

Mr. Quelch, breathing very hard, laid down his cane, and closed the study door after the fleeing Owl. Then, with a heightened colour, he sat down to his typewriter again.

The Owl of the Remove fairly squirmed down the passage. He had not succeeded in telling the Remove master that it was Wibley who had painted him, and

that he had merely come to the study to report Wib's iniquities. He did not feel inclined to return and have another try. Mr. Quelch did not appear to be in a sufficiently reasonable mood.

Bunter fled down the passage, and collapsed on the oak settee in the hall, and groaned. He was surrounded at once by grinning juniors.

"Where did he get that face?" demanded Temple of the Fourth. "Did you go to see Quelch with that face, Bunter?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I could hear the whacks from the stairs," chuckled Dabney. "You must have been an ass to spring that on Quelch, Bunter."

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Better take it away and hide it. Here comes Capper!" said Micky Desmond.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Mr. Capper, the master of the Fourth, stopped as he sighted Bunter, and stared at him, his glasses nearly falling off in his surprise.

"What is that?" he ejaculated. "Who—who is that?"

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

"Is it some—some clown from a circus?" exclaimed Mr. Capper. "What is that ridiculous noise he is making?"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Bless my soul! Temple, kindly call the porter, and request him to remove this disreputable person from the precincts of the school at once!" said Mr. Capper majestically.

Temple of the Fourth almost choked.

"It—it's Bunter, sir!"

"Bunter!" exclaimed Mr. Capper. "Bunter of the Remove! Bless my soul! If you were in my Form, Bunter, I should cane you most severely for this ridiculous masquerade. I shall report the matter to Mr. Quelch. Go away at once—go and clean your face instantly!"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

Mr. Capper took hold of Bunter's fat ear with a finger and thumb like a pair of steel pincers.

"Come with me, you dirty, ridiculous boy!"

"Yaroooh!"

Mr. Capper, with that pincer-like grip on Bunter's ear, led him to a bath-room.

"Now, clean yourself, Bunter, and if you dare to appear in public like that again I will chastise you, though I'm not your Form-master! You are a disgrace to the school!"

"I didn't—I wasn't—I never——"

Slam!

Mr. Capper closed the door and retired with dignity. For a quarter of an hour deep groans were heard from the bath-room, followed at last by a sound of splashing water.

When Billy Bunter emerged into public view again he was looking his usual self, so far as his complexion went; but he was not feeling his usual self. He spent the remainder of the evening groaning, and he noted with burning indignation that he did not receive any sympathy whatever from his Form-fellows. Indeed, Bob Cherry hurled a cushion at him when he groaned too loudly, and he retreated from the common-room—and then Peter Todd drove him heartlessly from the study with the intimation that he could groan in the passage if he liked. Which was all the sympathy Bunter received—and perhaps all that he deserved!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Fishy Tries His Hand!

"I GUESS I'm on to this!"

That remark was made by Fisher T. Fish, the Yankee junior, when he heard of the story competition.

The remark was greeted by a general chuckle from the fellows who heard it.

Fisher T. Fish had tried many parts in his time, and he had generally succeeded in failing at all of them. Many and various had been Fishy's schemes for making money, some of them not quite above suspicion; but there was one thing to be said for Fishy—he was a stickler. Incessant failures did not discourage him; he remained as satisfied with himself as ever. And after

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one failure, he would proceed with undiminished confidence to another.

Funds were low with Fisher T. Fish just now. He had several schemes in his astute head, but no cash in his pockets; not an uncommon state of affairs with Fishy. Indeed, Fishy resembled the gentleman celebrated by the poet:

"The man who likes to scheme and dream,
Whose life is never sunny,
He always has some little scheme,
But never any money."

Naturally, the prospect of getting five guineas for a few squirts of ink, as he expressed it, was a very pleasing one to Fishy. As for his abilities as an author, he was not troubled with any doubts on that subject. Fishy was one of those innumerable persons who "could write if they had time."

He determined to find time. He had two rivals for the prize in the Greyfriars Remove; and probably some thousands more among the general public. But that did not worry Fishy very much. He announced that he was going to show the fellows how they wrote "over there"—in the great Yew-nited States. He declared that the snappy, catchy, descriptive sort of writing was what was wanted; he was assured that something in the real American style would make the editor of the "Weekly World" sit up and take notice.

So in No. 14 Study, which Fishy shared with Johnny Bull and Squiff, there was a great scratching of pens and smearing of impot paper.

Bunter had chosen the war as his subject—doubtless being a great authority thereon. Mark Linley had chosen factory life, which he certainly knew something about. Fisher T. Fish pondered on the subject, and decided upon a topic that was after his own heart—the story of a Yankee speculator who put up the price of wheat, and raked in the dollars from half-starved fellow-citizens. That sweet and estimable character was the hero of the story, who lived happy ever after. Fishy was delighted with his subject; he simply gloated over it.

He borrowed Mark Linley's paper to read up the rules—Fishy did not believe in wasting one of his own pennies. He read up the rules, and started to work. And one afternoon, when the Famous Five came in to tea with Squiff, Fisher T. Fish offered to read out some of his lucubrations, just to show them what real good descriptive writing was like. Mark Linley was a member of the tea-party, and he held up his hand.

"Remember, there's a rival present, Fishy," he remarked. "Suppose I should borrow the ripping descriptive style——"

Fishy sniffed.

"I guess you couldn't do it," he replied. "It takes a real American to write in the snappy, sniffy, get-you-by-the-neck style. The art of writing, sir, is unknown outside the Yew-nited States. Listen to this!"

The juniors listened with interest. Their acquaintance with modern American literature was limited, and they were curious to know what it was like.

Fisher T. Fish cleared his throat and read:

"Jonathan P. Shucks was some speculator——"

"Some speculator?" remarked Wharton.

"Yep!"

"Wouldn't it sound better to say 'Jonathan P. Shucks was a speculator?'"

Fisher T. Fish looked tired.

"When we say 'some,' we mean a lot. Some speculator means a top-hole, high-rolling galoot in that line."

"Oh, I see! Go on!"

"Jonathan P. Shucks was some speculator," restarted Fisher T. Fish. "When he was in line for a big grab——"

"Great pip!" ejaculated the juniors.

"What on earth does that mean?" asked Mark.

Fish snorted with contempt.

"Don't you understand English? 'In line' means on the way, or having a good chance. A 'big grab' means a whopping bargain."

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry
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"Oh! You'll have to send a glossary along with that story," said Bob Cherry, with a shake of the head; "the editor mayn't be able to speak American."

"When he was in line for a big grab," resumed Fisher Fish, unheeding, "he would hustle from the word 'go.' Whatever galoot might get left, J. P. Shucks got there all the time, and clicked. At sundown one day in the fall, J. P. Shucks boarded the up-town trolley."

"Oh, my hat!"

"He smiled some. There was a gilt-edged stunt humming in his cabeza."

"Wha-a-at!"

The Removites gazed at Fisher T. Fish in great wonder, almost in awe. What that extraordinary sentence might possibly mean they had no idea. Truly, the language of the Yew-nited States was a wonderful language.

"You don't understand that?" sneered Fisher T. Fish. "You're supposed to learn English at this hyer school, too! A gilt-edged stunt is what you'd call a first-chop wheeze."

"Oh! And what is a cabeza?"

"Head, you duffer!"

"Oh, good!" said Bob Cherry. "We're getting on! What was the gilt-edged stunt that was humming in his—ha, ha!—cabeza?"

Fisher T. Fish grunted, and read on:

"Corn was down. Galoots in the know opined that corn would stay down. The bears were on the rampage in the pit. But J. P. Shucks knew something. J. P. S. was all there, right on the mark. J. P. S. had it all cut and dried to catch the market on the hop. As the trolley meandered up-town J. P. Shucks smiled some."

"Mercy!"

"I guess——"

"Don't!"

"You slabsided fatheads!" shouted Fisher T. Fish. "You don't understand real literature! Let me get on the part where J. P. Shucks rings in a cold deal on the other galoots!"

"This beats Bunter's war story!" said Bob Cherry, gasping. "Don't, Fishy! A little American literature goes a dashed long way!"

"I guess you're some fathead!" said Fish, rising, with a snort. "If this isn't jealousy, it's sheer dunderheadedness! I reckon I won't waste any more of this on you! Nope!"

"Thanks, old chap!"

"The thankfulness is awful, my esteemed Fishy!"

The irritated author retired from the study and slammed the door. The chums of the Remove never heard the remainder of that ripping story. They grinned and went on with their tea.

After tea, Mark Linley somewhat shyly read out his Lancashire story. It was listened to much more respectfully than Fisher T. Fish's ripping yarn. Bob Cherry remained awake to the finish, which was a testimonial in itself.

"Jolly good!" said Harry Wharton, when Mark came to the end. "Blessed if I thought you could do it, Marky!"

"It's from understanding the subject," said Bob sagely. "Awfully clever of Marky to think of writing about something he understands! Authors don't always do that!"

Mark laughed.

"Now, I've got to borrow Quelch's machine and type it out," he remarked. "Then it goes in to-morrow. I don't suppose it will bag anything, but there's a chance. It's worth trying."

And Mark departed to ask Mr. Quelch's permission to use his typewriter—a permission that was cheerfully accorded. But Mark had to wait for the machine, for Fisher T. Fish had been before him, and he was clicking away at a great rate. The story of J. P. Shucks was being

typed for the benefit of the editor of the "Weekly World," and the satisfied grin on Fishy's face showed that he had no doubt whatever about the impression it would make on that gentleman.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Nothing Doing!

"ROTTER favouritism!"

Thus William George Bunter.

Bunter was airing his grievances in the common-room. His little round eyes were glinting with wrath through his big glasses.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the trouble?" asked Bob Cherry, as the Famous Five came in together.

"Quelch's beastly favouritism!" growled Bunter. "Sickening, I call it. He's let Linley and Fishy type their silly rot on his machine."

"Well, why shouldn't he?" asked Wharton. "It's jolly good-natured of Quelch to let fellows use his typewriter!"

"He won't let me use it!" hooted Bunter.

"Hence this tearfulness!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But what is the esteemed Quelch's reason for the refusefulness?"

Bunter grunted angrily.

"Just because I used his rotten typer before, and there was an accident," he said. "Of course, that's only an excuse—it's rank favouritism! It wasn't my fault. I was eating a jam-tart while I was typing, and somehow the keys got jammed together, and two or three of 'em broke off. Perhaps I jerked at them a bit too hard to separate them—rotten American machine, you know, breaks at a touch. And he won't let me use it again. He says it cost him fifteen shillings to have it mended. And I can't use it any more."

"Go hon!"

"And those two silly asses have typed their silly rot on it," said Bunter indignantly. "One of the rules of the competition is that the stories must be typewritten. So what am I going to do?"

"Echo answers what?" said Bob Cherry.

"I've got my war-story finished," said Bunter; "quite finished, and it's simply ripping. It's got to be typed. What's to be done with it?"

"Put it in the fire," suggested Squiff.

"Why, you silly ass——"

"There's only one thing to be done," resumed Bunter, blinking at them. "I shall have to get it typed in Court-field. There's a man there advertises in the local paper—bob a page, I think."

"Well, that solves the difficulty," said Wharton.

"I happen to be short of tin. I'm expecting a postal-order, but it mayn't come before the last date for sending in the story. Lend me five bob, Wharton?"

"Only tuppence left."

"Lend me five bob, Inky——"

"Ask me another, my esteemed fathead!"

"I say, Bob——"

"You can say Bob till you're black in the face," grinned Bob Cherry; "but you're not getting five shillings out of me, my tulip. You haven't an earthly with that silly rot. Chuck it away, and don't play the giddy ox!"

"It's pretty bad taste to display your jealousy like that, Cherry. I say, Franky, old man, you're not a mean beast like Cherry——"

"I am!" said Frank Nugent promptly. "Quite! More, in fact!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Johnny, old son——"

"If you call me 'Johnny, old son,' I'll give you a thick ear!" growled Johnny Bull.

"I decline to borrow anything of you fellows," said Bunter with a sniff. "You can go and eat coke!"

And Billy Bunter rolled away in search of someone to lend him five shillings. He asked Skinner, who roared with laughter. Bunter explained that he was not joking; but Skinner persisted that he was, and roared. Bunter gave it up, and tried Snoop, who offered him a thick ear. A thick ear was utterly useless for Bunter's purpose, so he left Snoop, and looked for Vernon-Smith. He ran the Bounder down in his study.

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Bunter tiptoed into the study, and blinked cautiously at Wun Lung, who seemed to be sleeping soundly. It was safe enough, and his fingers closed on the envelope. (See Chapter 7.)

"I say, Smithy, you've got lots of oof," began Bunter. The Bounder nodded. "Lots!" he agreed. "And lots of sense to look after it! Good-bye!"

"I want five bob——"
"No objection to that. You can want five pounds if you like," said the Bounder pleasantly. "There's the door!"
"Look here, you mean beast——"

Vernon-Smith reached for a bat, and the Owl of the Remove took a hurried departure. He stopped in the Remove passage to think it out.

It was a serious matter. Here was an author of unusual abilities, with a really ripping story on hand, simply stumped for want of a few shillings. Five guineas were to be had almost for the asking. Never had Bunter so fully sympathised with Brutus' scorn for those who "look such rascal counters from their friends."

But Bunter's fat face brightened up suddenly. "There's Newland!" he murmured.

And the fat junior started for Newland's study. He found the Jewish junior there, at work on lines. Newland looked up inquiringly, and shook his head as soon as he saw that it was Bunter.

"Nothing doing!" he remarked.
"Look here, Newland!" said Bunter. "I'm going to THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 398.

make a business proposition to you. You're a Jew, you know."

"I know," assented Newland cheerfully.
"Well, I'm going to get five guineas for my story——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"There's nothing to cackle at. The story is ripping, and the editor will jump at it—simply jump! Well, it will cost me a few shillings to have it typed. Old Quelch won't let me use his typer."

"Shows his sense," remarked Newland. "You muck up everything that's lent you, whether it's a typer, or a bike, or anything else. You ought to learn to be a bit more careful with other people's property."

"I didn't come here for a lecture!" hooted Bunter.
"You're welcome to it, all the same. Now, if you'll buzz off, I'll get on with my lines."

"I'm in need of five bob."
"You generally are," grinned Newland.

"This is something special. I don't want you to lend me five bob—I know you wouldn't, being a Jew——"

"Hasn't anybody else refused to hand you five bob?" asked Newland.

"Yes; a lot of rotters!"
"Then what has my being a Jew to do with it?"

"Well, nothing, I suppose," admitted Bunter. "But, look here; I want five bob, and I'll agree to pay you

interest on it—out of my prize. I'll pay you back ten when I get the five guineas—that will be a hundred per cent. interest. Now, as you're a Jew, you ought to jump at that."

Bunter's impression of Jews must have been a mistaken one, for Newland did not jump at it. He jumped at Bunter.

"Here, hold on!" roared Bunter, in surprise and indignation, as Newland grasped him by the collar. "Warrer you at! Oh, crikey!"

Shake! Shake! Shake!

"Yaroooh!"

"That's for offering me interest on a loan!" said Newland. "And that's for being a cheeky cad!"

The second "that" was a shove from Newland's boot, and Bunter departed from the study with great suddenness. He sat down in the passage, and roared, and the door slammed after him.

"Groooh!" spluttered Bunter. "Beast! Yow-ow!" Bunter picked himself up, and shook a fat fist at the door. "Yowp! I've a jolly good mind to go in and lick him, but—but I won't waste any time on him. Yow-ow."

It was perhaps fortunate for Bunter that he decided not to waste any time in licking Monty Newland. The results of that licking would have been very painful—for Bunter.

The fat junior limped away to No. 13 Study. Mark Linley was there, and he frowned a little as Bunter came in.

"I suppose you know how Quelchy's treating me, Linley," said Bunter. "Rotten beastly favouritism, isn't it?"

"I don't think so," said Mark quietly. "You damaged the typewriter from sheer carelessness, and you can't expect to be allowed to use it again."

"Oh, I expected you to say that, of course," sneered Bunter. "I call it rotten favouritism!"

"Well, don't call it so to me," said Mark. "I won't hear it!"

"You've jolly well bagged my idea of trying after that five guineas," said Bunter discontentedly. "Look here, you ought to get this story typed for me. Suppose you go to Quelchy, and say you've had an accident with your manuscript—it's fallen into the fire, or something—"

"But I haven't," said Mark, in surprise.

"You can say you have, you know," said Bunter, who had evidently taken rather after Ananias than after George Washington, "and ask him to let you type it again. Then you can get the machine and type my story for me—see?"

Mark's lip curled.

"I should certainly not be likely to go to Mr. Quelch and tell him a lie," he said.

"Jolly particular in our factory, ain't we?" snorted Bunter. "You mean you won't do it, I suppose. You've bagged my idea—"

"Oh, dry up!"

"And if you get the prize it will be a swindle; not that you've got any chance of getting it—"

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said Mark, very patiently. "I'll ask Mr. Quelch's permission to use the machine again, and type the story for you, if he will let me."

"Oh, good!" said Bunter. "Of course, it's the very least you can do, considering."

"Well, I'll do it, whether it's the least I can do or not," said Mark.

"Mind, no larks," said Bunter suspiciously.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean none of your tricks," said Bunter. "Putting in things, and leaving out things, to spoil the story, I mean."

Mark flushed.

"If you think I could be capable of that, Bunter, you had better not trust the story into my hands."

"Oh, I shall read it over jolly carefully afterwards, I can tell you!" said Bunter. "I shall have an eye on you. Here's the story."

Mark Linley took the story, and came very near to throwing it at Bunter's head. The Owl's way of asking and receiving a favour was very curious. But the Lancashire lad restrained his temper.

"Very well, leave it here," he said shortly.

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OUR COMPANION THE BOYS' FRIEND, "THE GEM" LIBRARY, Every Monday, Every Wednesday,

"You won't bone any of the good things in it?" asked Bunter suspiciously.

"Oh, you silly ass! No, I won't."

"Oh, all right! When I get the prize, I'll pay you for typing it," said Bunter.

"I don't want that."

"I shall insist," said Bunter loftily. "I don't want to accept any favours from you, of course, considering what you are, and what I am. I shall certainly insist upon paying you for it."

Mark Linley's hand wandered towards a cricket-stump. But he withdrew it. Bunter was not worth licking.

"You'd better take it away," said Mark. "For goodness' sake get out of my study, and take your howling rot with you! I'm fed up!"

And he shoved the manuscript into Bunter's fat hands, and bundled him out of the study, and slammed the door after him. Billy Bunter stood in the passage, with his precious manuscript in his hands, breathing wrath.

"Beast!"

And Bunter rolled away disconsolate.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter is Tempted!

"SIX jam-tarts, twopenny ones!"

"Yes, Master Bunter."

"And a two-bob cake."

"Yes."

"Lemme see," said Billy Bunter, reflectively. "I'll have some tongue, and some tomatoes."

Mrs. Mimble passed the goods across the counter in the little shop, and fixed a significant eye on Bunter. Mrs. Mimble had fulfilled the order, but unless hard cash was forthcoming, she did not intend to part with the goods. She knew Bunter of old. Bunter was always ready to give lavish orders in the tuckshop, but not quite so ready to make prompt payment for the same.

Bunter put a fat hand into his pocket and hesitated. He blinked in his most persuasive way at Mrs. Mimble.

"I suppose you don't mind letting this stand over till next week?" he suggested.

Mrs. Mimble gave a sniff, and began to draw back the supplies to the safe side of the counter.

"Hold on!" said Bunter. "I'll explain exactly how it is."

"You needn't trouble, Master Bunter," said the good dame, with asperity. "I know exactly how it is. I think you are an unscrupulous boy, Master Bunter."

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Bunter indignantly. "You see, it's a special case this time. Next week I'm getting five guineas in a lump."

Sniff!

"Not a postal-order," said Bunter hastily. Mrs. Mimble had heard of his postal-order before. "Not at all! Nothing of the sort! It's a prize—a prize in a literary competition, you know. Now, Mrs. Mimble, you're a sensible woman—"

Sniff!

"All that's necessary is for me to get my story typed," said Bunter. "I'm taking you into my confidence, ma'am."

Sniff!

"Mauleverer's lent me five bob to pay the typer man, and I'm going to get it done and send it along. To-day's the last day for it," explained Bunter. "Must get it done to-day, or it can't go in in time. You understand?"

"I am busy this afternoon, Master Bunter."

"Don't go away while I'm talking to you, Mrs. Mimble, please! Gimme those things I've ordered. Now, you see for yourself that if I hand you this five bob I can't get my story typed, and then I lose the five guineas. I'm sure you don't want to be inconsiderate, Mrs. Mimble."

Sniff!

"So, now you know exactly how it is, I'm sure you'll let this little account stand over till next week," said Bunter persuasively.

"Good-afternoon, Master Bunter!"

Billy Bunter almost groaned. He was hungry—his usual state. It was an hour since dinner, so it was high time for a "snack." He had screwed five shillings out

of good-natured Lord Mauleverer to pay for the type-writing of his famous war story. But, almost unconsciously, his steps had led him into the school shop as soon as he had money in his pocket.

His mind swayed undecidedly between the feed he had already ordered and the typing of his story, which was to be followed by a certain five guineas. A bird in hand was worth two in the bush, certainly, and there was a bare possible chance that he mightn't get the prize, after all. The editor might be an ass, and insensible to real literary merit.

Mrs. Mimble sniffed once more, very emphatically, and went back into her little parlour. Bunter rolled disconsolately to the door.

He had almost made up his mind to go to Courtfield and seek the typist who was to type his war story.

But in the doorway he halted, and then he rolled back. The temptation was too strong. He rapped on the counter with his fat knuckles.

"Mrs. Mimble!"

"Please don't bother, Master Bunter," came back Mrs. Mimble's voice.

"Look here, I'm waiting to be served!" howled Bunter indignantly. "If this is the way you treat your customers, ma'am, I shall transfer my custom to Uncle Clegg."

Sniff—from the parlour. However, Mrs. Mimble came back into the shop as Bunter rattled five shillings on the counter.

The goods were handed over, and the five shillings dropped into the till. The die was cast.

Billy Bunter tucked his purchases under his arm and scuttled out of the shop. In a few minutes he was safe in Study No. 7, enjoying his feed. He was going strong, and looking very shiny, when Peter Todd came in for his bat.

Peter stared at the Owl of the Remove.

"Hallo! In funds again?" he demanded.

"Mauly lent me five bob for the typer," said Bunter. "I was simply famished, and I had to have a snack. I'm afraid my health would have suffered otherwise. I say, Toddy, I suppose you've got five bob you could lend me for—"

"Catch me!" said Peter.

"I say, old chap, if I don't get it typed to-day it will be too late," said Bunter. "It will be one up for this study when I bag the prize, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Peter.

"I suppose you don't want it to go to that factory bounder— Yooooooh! Wharrer you at?" yelled Bunter, as Peter picked up one of his jam-tarts and dabbed it on his fat little nose.

Peter took his bat, and went out grinning, leaving Bunter furiously scraping jam and crumbs from his fat face.

"Yow! Beast!"

The Owl of the Remove shook his fist after Peter, and went on with his feed. It was finished all too soon. The tongue, and the tomatoes, and the cake, and the tarts were gone from his gaze like a beautiful dream. Billy Bunter finished the last crumb, and unfastened the lowest button of his waistcoat.

Then he reflected.

The five shillings was gone, and the great war story was still untyped. And it was the last day for sending in his manuscript. What was to be done, or, to put it more correctly, who was to be done.

Lord Mauleverer had gone out for the afternoon—it was a half-holiday. There was no getting at the school-boy earl again before call-over, when it would be too late. Harry Wharton & Co. were playing cricket, and Bunter had nothing but a bumping to expect if he interrupted the game. The fat junior left No. 7, and wandered up and down the Remove passage looking for a victim. Wibley was in his study practising make-up, and Bunter blinked in on him.

"I say, Wib, old chap—"

"Hallo, you want repainting?" asked Wibley, making a dash at him with a stick of grease-paint.

Bunter beat a prompt retreat. He rolled along to No. 14, and found Fisher T. Fish there. Fish was wrapping up typed manuscript in a paper parcel, with a very satisfied expression on his face.

"I say, Fishy, got five bob?" asked Bunter.

"Yep."

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"CHAMPION OF THE OPPRESSED!"

EVERY
MONDAY

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

"Will you lend it to me?"

"Nope."

"I'll tell you what, Fishy—I'll whack out the prize," said Bunter. "Of course, you know you've got no chance with that silly rot of yours—"

"Oh, vamoose the ranch, do!" said Fisher T. Fish disdainfully. "I guess this hyer yarn is going to work the raffle, some. You galoots don't know how to write in this old island, I calculate."

Fisher T. Fish stuck the stamps upon his packet, and quitted the study with it. Billy Bunter, as a last resource, looked in at No. 13. Mark Linley was on the cricket ground, however, playing for the Remove. Little Wun Lung was curled up in the armchair, with his eyes closed.

Bunter grunted with annoyance. Mark Linley's good nature could always be depended upon, and Bunter had no scruple about making demands upon it. But Linley was out, and Bunter's last chance was gone.

On the table lay a large envelope, stamped and directed. Bunter glanced at it; the superscription was "Editor of the 'Weekly World,' Fleet Street, London, E.C., Literary Competition."

Bunter snorted angrily.

That was Linley's story—the story which Harry Wharton & Co., at least, considered good, while they persisted in chuckling over Bunter's great war story. It was quite possible that the editor might consider the story good, too; he might be such an ass. The prize might go to Linley; such miscarriages of justice did occur. And Bunter's great story had to repose in manuscript at Greyfriars, for want of a "few rascal counters" to get it typed.

Billy Bunter's eyes gleamed.

He felt that it wasn't fair. It was like Linley's cheek to compete at all, and Quelchy's favouritism was rotten, and, anyway, he was sure of winning the prize if his manuscript went in; only it couldn't go. A rascally idea was working in Bunter's mind.

He tiptoed into the study, and blinked cautiously at Wun Lung. The little Chinese seemed to be sleeping soundly.

It was safe enough.

Bunter's fingers closed on the envelope.

If his manuscript couldn't go in, Linley's shouldn't; that was the idea in his mind. Serve the beast right, Bunter considered. He blinked again at the little Chinese, but Wun Lung did not move. Billy Bunter tiptoed out of the study, the envelope in his hand, his heart thumping.

He had done it now.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER. Skinner's Little Scheme!

"HALLO!"

Bunter gave a guilty jump.

He had almost run into Skinner as he came out of the study, with the stolen manuscript in his hand. His extremely cautious manner had naturally struck Skinner's eye.

"What have you been up to?" asked Skinner curiously.

"N-n-nothing!" stammered Bunter. "Lemme pass!"

"What have you got there?"

"Mum-mum-my story!"

"Addressed in Linley's fist!" grinned Skinner. "You've bagged Linley's manuscript, you fat bounder!"

"Oh, really, Skinner, I—I—"

"Better not let him catch you," said Skinner, with a chuckle. "What are you going to do with it, you fat burglar?"

"It—it's only a joke!" stammered Bunter. "Keep it dark, Skinney, old man. I'm going to hide it till it's too late to send it in. Serve the beast right!"

Skinner nodded.

Bunter, wondering what Skinner wanted, followed him into his study. The Bounder was on the cricket-field, and the study was empty. Skinner closed the door carefully. There was a gleam in Skinner's eyes that Bunter did not understand.

"Open it," said Skinner.

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

"I—I say, we'd better not open it," said Bunter. "I'm going to shove it into a corner somewhere."

"I know a trick worth a dozen of that," said Skinner. "This may be worth five guineas to us. That is a jolly good story. I've seen it, and I'm blessed if I know how Linley could do it. I shouldn't wonder if it bagged the prize."

"What rot!" said Bunter. "'Tain't anything like mine!"

"Of course it isn't; that's why it's good," said Skinner. "Open the envelope. I've got another like that. Now shove that letter into the grate and put a match to it; no good leaving clues, you know. Now take that pen, and write a letter yourself to the editor."

"What on earth for?" demanded Bunter, in astonishment.

"Don't you see, fathead?" whispered Skinner excitedly. "You've bagged Linley's story, and it may bag the prize. Send it in as your own."

"Great Scott!"

Billy Bunter's big glasses almost fell off. He had intended to play Linley a scurvy trick, but this rascality had never occurred to his mind.

"I'm jolly hard up," said Skinner, "and so are you. That fellow Linley is always bagging prizes, for one thing or another. I don't see letting that factory bounder bag everything."

"That's so," agreed Bunter at once. "But—but—"

"Get it posted at once," said Skinner. "Linley won't be in from the cricket till dusk, and then it will be too late for him; the last collection will be gone, even if he could remember the story and type it out again. Unless it's delivered by the first post in the morning it's too late. Of course, you can do as you like, but my advice is, bag the story. We'll go halves if there's a prize."

"I'll tell you a better idea," said Bunter.

"What's that?"

"Lend me five bob to get my war story typed!"

"Oh, cheese it!"

"You see, it would be a dead cert then!"

"Dry up, for goodness' sake!" said Skinner unceremoniously. "That war story would give the editorial johnny apoplexy or something. There's a good chance with Linley's yarn if you've got sense enough to take advantage of it."

Bunter hesitated.

"I—I suppose we should be justified in doing it," he said slowly. "Linley really hadn't any right to compete, considering—"

"Exactly," said Skinner.

"And then Quelchy's beastly favouritism—"

"Quite so."

"He let that factory bounder use his typer, and wouldn't let me use it," said Bunter. "It ought to have been reversed, of course. Then my story would have been typed, and Linley's wouldn't."

"Precisely!" grinned Skinner.

"So, as a matter of absolute fact, I can really look on this manuscript as belonging to me, in a sense," argued Bunter.

"In a sense," chuckled Skinner.

"We'll do it," said Bunter. "Only—only you send it in in your name, Skinner."

Skinner shook his head promptly.

"No fear!"

"You can take the risk as well as I can," said Bunter warmly.

"'Tain't the risk, but the fellows know I haven't written one. You simply make out that this is the one."

"Some of the fellows have seen it."

"Oh, that doesn't matter. If Linley says this is his story, and calls them as witnesses, all you've got to say is that he boned your manuscript to read to them."

"Oh!"

"Five guineas, half each, if it wins the prize," said Skinner temptingly. "Linley won't know anything about it till you've got the money. He'll simply miss his story; he won't know what's become of it. He will be tearing his hair. Ha, ha, ha!"

"He, he, he!" echoed Bunter.

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THE PENNY POPULAR,
Every Friday.

CHUCKLES,
Every Saturday 2

"Is it a go?" demanded Skinner.

"Yes. I'm entitled to do it, and I'm going to!" said Bunter. "Here goes!"

Bunter sat down to write. Skinner looked over his shoulder.

"No 'e' in story, fathead," he said, "and no double 't' in competition."

"Look here, Skinner, if you think I don't know how to spell—"

"I jolly well don't think—I know!" grunted Skinner. "Write that blessed letter out again, and spell it as I tell you!"

The letter was finished at last, and Skinner produced an envelope. The manuscript and the letter were enclosed, and the envelope duly sealed and addressed.

"Now cut down and post it before the fellows come away from the cricket," said Skinner.

"Right-ho!"

Billy Bunter concealed the long envelope under his jacket, and left the study. He blinked suspiciously at Wun Lung, who was passing, but the little Chinese did not seem to see him. Bunter rolled away to the stairs, and Wun Lung looked after him with a peculiar grin. Then he slipped into No. 7 Study, and when he returned to his own quarters he had something concealed in his wide flowing sleeve.

Meanwhile, Billy Bunter reached the letter-box in the school wall. He was in good time for the late afternoon collection—the latest at Greyfriars. His heart throbbed a little as he slipped the envelope into the box. He had worked it out to his own satisfaction, with Skinner's assistance, that he was quite justified in what he was doing, but somehow his conscience was not quite easy. But the die was cast now.

Billy Bunter rolled hastily away from the letter-box. Wun Lung passed him in the Close, going towards the gates. But Bunter had no eyes for the little Chinese. He rejoined Skinner in the study.

"Done it?" asked Skinner.

"Yes."

Skinner rubbed his hands.

"Good egg! I shouldn't wonder if it bags the prize—and it's halves!"

"Is it?" said Bunter warmly. "If I get the five guineas for my story—"

"Linley's story, you mean," chuckled Skinner.

"It's mine now, and if I get the prize, I'll stand you ten bob out of it," said Bunter.

"You'll stand me halves," said Skinner coolly, "unless you want me to tell Linley that you've bagged his manuscript."

"Why, you—you rotter! You made me—"

"Oh, tell that to the marines!" said Skinner. "You'll keep to the agreement, or I shall give you away, my fat tulip. Halves, you know."

"I—I wish I hadn't done it now," mumbled Bunter.

"I—I'm not quite satisfied after all that—that—"

"Rather late in the day to think about that, ain't it?" said Skinner cheerfully. "You'll be all right, so long as you keep mum, and I keep mum. And I shall keep mum if I get my half. Ta-ta!"

Skinner strolled away whistling, leaving Bunter in an unenviable frame of mind.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Missing Manuscript!

"LICKED to the wide!" said Bob Cherry cheerily, as the Remove cricketers came off the field.

Temple, Dabney & Co. had suffered their usual fate at the hands of the heroes of the Remove. Harry Wharton, for once, had had bad luck, being dismissed for 2 by a lucky catch brought off by Fry of the Fourth; and the Fourth Form team had hoped. But Mark Linley had put in 30 runs on end, and Temple's hopes were dashed to the ground once more.

"Who says ginger-pop?" queried Squiff.

"Ginger-pop!" responded a chorus.

Bob Cherry linked his arm in Mark Linley's, as the Lancashire junior was leaving the merry crowd.

"Come on, Marky. Come and booze with the boys."

Mark laughed.

"My letter——" he began.

"Lots of time for that," said Bob. "Kim on!"

"You yanked me out of the study before I could take it to the post," said Mark. "I don't want to risk losing the collection. To-day's the last day——"

"Well, buzz off and post it, and then come back," said Bob. "We're going to celebrate."

"Right-ho!"

Mark Linley ran off towards the School House. There was half an hour yet to the collection, but he was anxious to see his manuscript dropped safely into the letter-box. He had had it all ready for posting, when Bob Cherry had rushed him off to the cricket-ground.

No. 13 was empty when Mark arrived there. He glanced at the table for his letter, but the table was bare. The Lancashire junior proceeded to look about the study, concluding that one of his study-mates had wanted the table, and had tossed the long envelope somewhere.

A cloud gathered on his brow as he failed to find the letter. He looked at his watch. It wanted ten minutes to the hour of the last collection at the school.

"It's too bad!" muttered Mark. "What has become of it? Some duffer has shoved it somewhere—but where? Surely nobody would have played any trick with it?"

He hunted desperately about the study, turning out drawers, and the bookcase, seeking in all likely and unlikely corners. But the large envelope containing the manuscript failed to come to light.

From the clock-tower came the boom of the hour.

Mark clenched his hands.

Old Boggs, the postman, was punctual as a rule. At that moment he would be unlocking the letter-box outside the school-wall, and clearing it of its contents. And Mark could not find his manuscript.

The collection was gone.

There was a tramp of feet in the passage, and Bob Cherry looked in.

"Why didn't you come, fathead?" he demanded.

"You've missed your whack in the ginger-pop. Why, what's the matter?" he added, becoming serious at once, as he caught the troubled expression on Mark's face.

"Somebody's removed my letter," said Mark. "I can't find it. And I've lost the collection."

"My hat!"

"I've looked everywhere. It's not in the study at all." Mark set his lips. "It must have been taken away; for a rotten joke, I suppose."

"Let me find the joker, and I'll joke him!" said Bob Cherry. "We'll find it all right, Marky. You'll have to get a pass out of gates, and bike over to Court-field, and post it there. The collection's up to ten o'clock there, you know."

Mark brightened up.

"Yes. I hadn't thought of that," he said. "Wingate will give me a pass out, when I tell him what I want it for. But we've got to find the manuscript first."

"We'll jolly soon do that," said Bob. "All hands on deck!"

Bob's booming voice called in his chums. Wharton and Nugent, Hurree Singh and Johnny Bull hurried to the study. Squiff and Peter Todd came with them, and Vernon-Smith. They were all concerned about the Lancashire lad's loss.

"Some rotter has hidden it for a joke, I should say," Vernon-Smith remarked. "Might be Skinner; just one of his rotten jokes. Let's ask him."

"I'll take a stump with me," said Bob Cherry thoughtfully.

The whole party proceeded to Vernon-Smith's study, where they found Skinner. The cad of the Remove calmly disclaimed all knowledge of the manuscript. Indeed, he hinted a doubt that any manuscript was missing at all.

"Sorry, if you've lost it, Linley," he said blandly. "You should really be more careful, you know. Sure you've lost it?"

"I haven't lost it," said Mark. "I left it on the table in my study, and it's been taken away."

"Ahem! That sounds rather thick, don't it?" said Skinner. "Rather a rotten joke for anybody to play, if you ask me? But you're quite sure——"

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EVERY
MONDAY

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

"Quite sure of what?" asked Mark sharply.

"Quite sure you're not pulling our leg," said Skinner coolly. "If you've changed your mind about sending in your bosh, and chucked it away, you know it was really a sensible thing to do——"

Mark's eyes flashed.

"Do you think I should be pretending to miss it if I had done that?" he exclaimed.

Skinner shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't say so; but a fellow might."

"Oh, dry up!" snapped Mark.

But there was evidently nothing to be got out of Skinner, and the searchers proceeded further. Wibley and Rake were in their study, and they were questioned. They were genuinely concerned about the loss, but they knew nothing.

"You've been here while we were playing cricket, Wib," said Wharton. "You haven't seen anybody going in or out of Marky's study?"

Wibley shook his head.

"I've been busy," he said.

"By Jove, I have, though," said Rake. "That grinning little heathen. I noticed him when I came in. He was grinning like a Chinese joss over something."

"Wun Lung!" exclaimed Mark. "He wouldn't have done it."

"I don't know," said Bob. "He's a queer little beast, and as full of tricks as a monkey. We'll ask him, anyway."

Wibley and Rake joined the search-party. Quite a little army started looking for Wun Lung. But it was not difficult to find him, for he was discovered curled up in the armchair in No. 13. His almond eyes opened, and he blinked at the crowd of juniors as they came in.

"So here you are!" said Bob Cherry.

"Me hele, handsome Bob Chelly," murmured Wun Lung.

"Where have you been?"

"Me goee out, and then me comee in."

"Have you been playing any of your blessed heathen tricks?" demanded Bob Cherry sternly.

"Tlicks?" repeated Wun Lung.

"My manuscript is missing, kid," said Mark gently. "You haven't taken it away?"

"No takee notting."

"Do you know who did?"

"Me savvy."

"You savvy?" exclaimed Wharton.

Wun Lung grinned.

"What you tinkee?"

"Then you know where the manuscript is?" exclaimed Mark.

"Me knowee."

"Oh, good!" said Bob Cherry. "Where is it, you grinning image?"

"Hele!"

"Wha-a-at?"

The juniors stared at Wun Lung as he groped in his loose garments, and produced a folded typewritten manuscript. Mark Linley caught at it.

"That's my story!" he exclaimed, in great relief. "You young bounder, what have you taken it out of the envelope for, and where's the letter?"

"What did you take it at all for?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"And he said he hadn't," said Bob Cherry, in an exasperated tone. "The young villain! He will never learn to tell the truth like a Christian. Give him a jolly good bumping."

"No bumpee!" yelled Wun Lung, as he whisked out of the armchair in the grasp of two or three pairs of hands.

"Give it him!"

"No bumpee—me no takee—yarooooop!"

"Hold on," said Mark, interposing in time. "Don't bump the little ass. He doesn't know any better. Let him alone, you chaps. It's all right, now that I've got the manuscript safe."

"He ought to be bumped as a lesson," demurred Bob Cherry.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"CHAMPION OF THE OPPRESSED!"

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry
Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

"No; let him off."
 "Markee velly good to poor little Chinees," said Wun Lung. "Bob Chelly velly gleat duffee."
 "What!" ejaculated Bob indignantly.
 "Me no takee Markee lettee," howled Wun Lung.
 "Me no takee; me takee backee."
 "Oh!"
 "By Jove!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "If that's true—"
 "All true. Wun Lung always speakee tluth."
 "Yes—when you catch yourself napping," growled Bob.
 "But if you didn't take the letter, you young heathen, who did?"
 "Buntree."

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

To Make the Punishment Fit the Crime!

"**B**UNTER!"
 The crowd of juniors in the study all uttered the name together. Wun Lung nodded and grinned.
 "Buntree takee. Velly bad boy, Buntree. Me, Wun Lung, good boy."
 "Bow-wow!" said Bob Cherry.
 "Did you see Bunter take it?" asked Harry Wharton, his brows contracting a little.
 Peter Todd looked very grim.
 "Me see. Me sleepee in chair when Buntree comee in, and me see Buntree takee lettee," explained Wun Lung.
 "How could you see him if you were asleep?" demanded Wibley.
 Wun Lung grinned his peculiar grin.
 "Chinee sleepee with one eye opee," he said.
 "Oh, you were sleeping with one eye open!" said Bob.
 "And if you saw Bunter taking the letter, why didn't you stop him?"
 "Wun Lung no could stoppe Buntree, but watchee-watchee," grinned the little Chinese. "Buntree takee lettee, meetee Skinnee—"
 "Skinner!" exclaimed Wharton.
 "Skinnee velly bad boy, likee Buntree. Wun Lung velly good boy. Watchee-watchee. Buntree and Skinnee talky-talky in studee. Wun Lung listen outsidee."
 "That's a rotten game," growled Bob Cherry.
 "The rottenfulness is terrific, my esteemed heathen chum," said Hurree Singh, with a shake of the head.
 "Wun Lung no samee handsome English boy," said the little Chinese calmly. "Me heal all sayee. Skinnee sayee Buntree sendee storee in Buntree namee, winnee prizee, go halves with Skinnee. What you tinkee?"
 "Great Scott!"
 Harry Wharton & Co. looked very serious now. Wun Lung's story startled them. They had no high opinion of either Bunter or Skinner, but they would hardly have suspected them of such rascality as this. And Wun Lung, who had a truly Oriental disregard for the truth as a rule, and never could learn the English way of looking at such things, was not wholly to be relied upon.

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"But here's the manuscript," said Bob Cherry.
 "How—"
 "Get on, Wun Lung."
 "Me gettee on. Buntree writee new lettee, puttee in manuscript, takee out and postee. Me watchee."
 "Bunter posted the letter?" exclaimed Nugent.
 "What you tinkee?"
 "But here it is," said Mark.
 "Me gettee backee. Chinees velly clever chappee," said Wun Lung modestly. "Me goee outee into load and fishee in lettee-box for the lettee."
 "My hat!"
 "Me usee wire with hooke on endee," explained Wun Lung. "Me fishee up biggee lettee, see? First me fishee up lettee of Fishee T. Fishee—lubbish. Then me fishee up Buntree lettee. Puttee Fishee lettee in again, and bling Buntree lettee backee."
 The juniors stared at Wun Lung almost aghast. The cool way in which he related that he had hooked a letter out of the school letter-box took their breath away.
 "You young rascal!" said Bob Cherry.
 "You young ass!" said Squiff. "If you'd been spotted, you'd have got into trouble."
 "Me watchee allee light, you bet," grinned Wun Lung.
 "Quitee easee. Me velly clever. Mustee savee Markee storee."
 "Well, that's right enough," said Mark Linley. "If this yarn is true—and I think it is—Wun Lung has saved my manuscript. I should never have suspected even Bunter of such a trick."
 "But hold on," said Johnny Bull. "If Bunter posted it, he must have posted it in an envelope, with a letter inside. Where are they, Wun Lung?"
 Wun Lung chuckled gleefully.
 "Me takee and playee little jokee on Buntree," he explained. "Me goee in Buntree studee, takee sille war storee, and puttee in envelope with lettee inside, and postee. Me open over kettlee, not showee. Sealee up again with Buntree storee inside, postee, what you tinkee?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of laughter in the study.

Wun Lung, evidently pleased with himself and the impression he had made, chuckled and chuckled away somewhat like an alarm-clock going off.

After recovering the letter from the school box, he had opened it with steam, rescued Linley's manuscript, and put in Bunter's own—the ridiculous war story Billy Bunter had written but not been able to type. And then he had posted the envelope again, with Bunter's letter in it and Bunter's story. The juniors understood. It was Wun Lung's weird sense of humour again, but this time they could not blame him. When they thought of the effect of that absurd and ill-spelt manuscript upon a long-suffering editor, they yelled.

"I suppose the little ass isn't romancing," said Bob Cherry at last. "Blessed if I ever know whether he's telling the truth."

"We'll soon know that," said Peter Todd. "If Bunter's manuscript is gone he will raise Cain about it."

"Me tellee tluth this

AN IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT CONCERNING YOUR FAVOURITE PAPER.

An important step has been taken in connection with this journal. The golden-coloured cover which has for years been a distinctive feature of the "Magnet" Library has been temporarily discarded, and a

White Cover, Printed in Bronze-Blue Ink,

has taken its place. The reason for this somewhat drastic change is contained in the fact that there is a shortage of aniline dye in this country at the present time

Owing to the Great War.

Your Editor trusts that this change will in no way interfere with the extensive circulation of the "Magnet" Library. My readers will, I feel sure, readily realise that

Such a Step is Quite Unavoidable,

and that the tone and quality of the contents of this journal will maintain their high standard of all-round excellence.

YOUR EDITOR.



"Master Bunter, Mr. Slogg will now hand you your five pounds. Pray advance and take it." Bunter advanced, and Mr. Slogg pushed back his right shirt-cuff. Biff! (See Chapter 14.)

time," said Wun Lung indignantly. "Chinee velly good boy."

"But what about Bunter and Skinner?" said Harry Wharton, his brow darkening. "The precious pair of rascals. Bunter is too much of an idiot to know what a rascally thing he was doing, but Skinner——"

"A pair of blessed thieves," said Rake.

"And they were going to whack out the prize if it was won—with Marky's story!" exclaimed Bob Cherry indignantly. "Why, we ought to yank them into Quelchy's study and report the whole bizney."

"Ratherfully."

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"We can't sneak on them, rotters as they are," he said. "Besides, now Wun Lung's got the manuscript back, there's no proof—and they would deny it. It only rests on Wun Lung's word. I think he's told us the truth, but there's no denying that he is an awful fibber as a rule, and Quelchy wouldn't take his word against Skinner and Bunter in such a serious matter. Least

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said, soonest mended. We'll jolly well take the law into our own hands, and make them sorry for it ourselves."

"Good egg!"

"A jolly good ragging will meet the case," said Nugent.

"The ragfulness should be terrific."

"Hold on," said Wibley.

"Rats! They want a ragging badly."

"Hold on, I say!" Wibley's eyes were gleaming. "I've got an idea. Look here, Skinner and Bunter have sent in Linley's story, in Bunter's name. They'll expect to hear from the editor in reply, won't they?"

"I suppose so," said Harry. "What the dickens——"

"It's a wheeze!" grinned Wibley. "Suppose we write them a letter on Quelchy's typer. Quelchy is out now, and we can borrow it."

"Well?"

"And tell 'em we—the editor—are so pleased with the story that we're calling to see Bunter, to hand him his prize."

"What the thunder——"

"Don't you see?" howled Wibley.

"No, ass!"

"No, fathead!"

"Bunter's never seen the editor of the 'Weekly World,'" said Wibley.

"Of course, he hasn't."

"And do you think I can't make up as an editor?" demanded Wibley warmly. "Why, I'd make up as your own grandfather, and you wouldn't know the difference. I'll fix an interview with Bunter as editor of the 'Weekly World.'"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And offer him ten pounds instead of five guineas, as I'm so pleased with the story," chuckled Wibley. "Skinner will want half—so that will be five pounds each. My sub-editor will hand them the pounds. Bob can be the sub-editor. He's rather an ass, but I can make him up."

"You want me to hand them five pounds each?" exclaimed the astounded Bob.

"Yes."

"Is that your idea of punishing the rotters?" demanded Bob.

"Certainly."

"Are you off your rocker? Give 'em five pounds each?" yelled Bob, in utter astonishment. "And where are the five pounds to come from?"

"You can provide them," said Wibley. "I pick you out because you are an athletic chap."

"What's that got to do with it?" shrieked Bob.

"Lots! If you like, I'll give you ten pounds to start with," said Wibley.

"Bow-wow! You haven't got ten quid, you ass!"

"I didn't say ten quid—I said ten pounds," replied Wibley calmly. "Here's one to go on with, and to make you understand!"

"Yarook!" roared Bob, staggering as Wibley pounded him in the ribs. "You dangerous ass, wharrer you at? Giving you a pound!" explained Wibley.

"A—a—a what?"

"A pound in—the ribs."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

They comprehended now the kind of "pounds" that were to be handed out to Bunter and Skinner.

Bob Cherry rubbed his ribs, and glared at the humorous Wib.

"You silly ass! Why couldn't you explain, instead of nearly bursting my ribs?" he demanded. "I've a jolly good mind——"

"Peace, my infants!" said Harry Wharton. "It's a jolly good wheeze. Don't say a word—let Bunter and Skinner run on. Mark, you'd better put that manuscript in another envelope, and get off with it."

"Right-ho!" said Mark.

The story was sealed up again, and Mark Linley slid it inside his jacket, when he went to ask Wingate for a pass out of the gates. The captain of Greyfriars gave him the pass, willingly enough, and Mark cycled down to Courtfield to post his letter.

Meanwhile, the chums of the Remove gleefully consulted upon the details of the little scheme suggested by Wibley. The discussion was punctuated with chuckles. Skinner and Bunter were not destined to "bag" the desired guineas—but there was no doubt that they would get the pounds.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Another Missing Manuscript!

"I'VE been robbed!"

There was a regular roar from Billy Bunter.

Study No. 7 were at prep—Peter and Alonzo Todd and Tom Dutton. Billy Bunter had finished his prep, having "scamped" it as usual—and he had gone to the table drawer. In that drawer he had hoped to find the remnant of a chunk of toffee. In that drawer, too, he kept the valuable manuscript of the war story. But he forgot the toffee, as he discovered that the place of the manuscript was empty—the great war story was

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gone. That wonderful work, "Through Mud and Blood," had vanished.

Billy Bunter could scarcely believe his eyes, or his spectacles, at first. He groped over the drawer; but the manuscript certainly was not there. Bunter knew very well that he had left it there that afternoon. His own trick with Mark Linley's manuscript recurred to his mind; he had not the slightest doubt that he had been robbed.

"I've been robbed—burgled!" he roared.

Peter Todd looked up with a grin. This was the confirmation that was wanted of Wun Lung's story.

"Somebody boned your toffee?" asked Peter innocently.

"My manuscript!" yelled Bunter. "Have you taken it, you bounder?"

"My dear chap, I wouldn't be found dead with it!"

"Have you taken my manuscript, Alonzo?"

"My dear Bunter," said the mild Alonzo, "that question betrays a distrust of your study-mates that is really distressing for me to contemplate. My Uncle Benjamin would be shocked—nay, disgusted——"

"Oh, cheese it!" yelled Bunter. "Dutton! I say, Dutton!"

Tom Dutton went on with his prep. Dutton was deaf—very deaf; but he was often deafer than ever when Bunter spoke to him. But the Owl of the Remove was not to be denied. He grabbed Dutton by the shoulder, and shook him.

"Have you seen my manuscript, Dutton?" he shouted.

"Leggo!"

"Where's my story?" shrieked Bunter. "Some beast has stolen it, and got it typed, I know that! Some awful rotter is after my prize. That's why they wouldn't lend me five bob to get it typed—they meant to bag it all along. Was it you?"

"Eh?"

"I want to know whether it was you," roared Bunter.

"I don't know."

"Eh! You don't know!" gasped Bunter.

"No. How should I know about the weather?" said Dutton. "I dare say it will keep fine. But I don't know."

"I'm not talking about the weather, you silly ass!" roared Bunter. "I'm asking you whether you've taken my story from the drawer."

"Well, I hope it won't pour," said Dutton. "It will be jolly bad for the cricket if it does. But it's no good asking me—I'm not a weather-prophet."

"My story's been taken!" shrieked Bunter.

"Sure?" asked Dutton, staring at him.

"Yes."

"Well, I'll shake you, if that's what you want!"

"Eh! Hallo! Wharrer you doing?" shouted Bunter, as Tom Dutton took him by the collar, and shook him with terrific vim.

"Didn't you say you wanted to be shaken?" demanded Dutton.

"Groooh! No! Leggo! Yow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Peter Todd. "Go it, Tommy!"

"Leave off, you deaf idiot!" shrieked Bunter. "If you make my glasses fall off—Groooh! Will you leggo? Yah! Oh!"

Tom Dutton let go, and Bunter collapsed on the study carpet. He sat there, and gasped for breath. Tom Dutton went on with his prep.

"You'd better put down Tommy as not guilty, Bunt," said Peter Todd kindly. "I'll tell you what! Perhaps Quelchy's bagged it—or the Head! Go and ask them."

"I've been robbed, I tell you!"

"No need to tell us any more," yawned Peter. "Go and tell somebody else."

Billy Bunter scrambled up, furious. Convinced as he was of the high literary value of his story, he had no doubt whatever that a rival had "boned" it, in order to win an absolutely certain five guineas with it. He shook his fist at the study generally, and rolled out in search of the delinquent. His red and furious face looked in at Vernon-Smith's study.

"Skinner, you rotter——"

"Hallo!" said Skinner, in surprise.

"Have you bagged my story?" roared Bunter. "It's just like you! You're just the chap who would do it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at, you fathead?"
"Bagging your story," howled Skinner. "Do you think anybody would be idiot enough to bag it, you dunder-head? Perhaps Toddy's used it to light the fire."

"Rot! Somebody's taken it to win my prize—"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
The fat fist was shaken again, and Bunter rushed on to No. 1 Study. He burst in upon Wharton and Nugent like a thunderbolt.

"I've been robbed!" he roared.
Wharton looked up.
"Well, this isn't a police-station," he said. "Better go down to Friardale and see old Tozer about it. Buzz off!"
"Look here, Wharton—"

"No time—I'm doing my prep. Hand me that cushion, Franky."

Nugent passed the cushion, but Bunter did not wait for it. He rolled away in hot haste, and slammed the door. He blinked in at the next study, where Bulstrode and Hazeldene and Tom Brown were at their preparation. They stared at his excited face. They stared still more when he told them what was the matter. Bulstrode jumped up.

"So you've been robbed, and you've come to this study to ask us if we're the thieves—what?" he said. "I'll jolly soon show you!"

Bulstrode seized Billy Bunter with one hand and a cricket-stump with the other. Bunter and the cricket-stump came into violent contact, and there was a yell of anguish.

"Give him another for me!" said Tom Brown.
Whack!

"And one for me!" said Hazeldene, grinning.
Whack!

"Satisfied?" asked Bulstrode.
"Yaroorh! Leggo! All serene! I'm satisfied!" shrieked Bunter.

"Then you can clear off!"
Bulstrode helped Bunter to clear off, using his boot for the purpose, and the unhappy author staggered into the passage. He groaned dismally as he drifted along the Remove passage. But he was somewhat subdued when he blinked into No. 13. He had decided to ask the fellows there whether they had seen the manuscript, not whether they had "boned" it. It was more tactful.

"I say, you fellows, my story's been stolen," said Bunter dismally. "Have any of you fellows seen it?"

There was a general grin in the study. Wun Lung curled up in the armchair in a paroxysm of chuckling. Bunter blinked at them indignantly.

"I tell you I've been robbed!" he shouted.
"Robbed?" said Bob Cherry. "Your valuable thirty-five guinea gold watch gone?"

"No! My story—"
"Your diamond pin, worth twenty pounds—a birthday present from your uncle the marquis—"

"No!" shrieked Bunter. "My story—my war story, 'Through Mud and Blood'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Bob. "What a ripping title!"
"Ha!" cried our hero, "Revenge!" Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, somebody's bagged my story!"
"A German spy, perhaps," suggested Bob Cherry.

"The country's full of 'em. See daily papers. Better let the War Office know about it."

"You silly ass!"
"Or send a wire to Kitchener," said Bob. "Better go right to the head at once. Let Kitchener know—"

Slam! Billy Bunter did not stay for any more advice; he departed, and slammed the door. He left the whole study chuckling.

But Bunter was in earnest. It seemed impossible to get on the track of the missing manuscript in the Remove passage. But Bunter was not beaten yet. He rushed away to his Form-master's study, to pour his tale of woe and wrong into the more or less sympathetic ear of Mr. Quelch.

The Remove-master heard him out, with a frowning brow.

"Bunter," he snapped, "you are an utterly stupid and ridiculous boy!"

"Eh?" stuttered Bunter.

This did not sound very sympathetic or very helpful. "You showed me the story when you asked me if you might type it in my study," said the Form-master. "I told you at the time that it was ill-spelt, ill-thought-of,

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ill-written, and utterly nonsensical. I am quite sure that there is no other boy in the Remove stupid enough to think of sending such rubbish in for a literary competition. Your suspicion, therefore, that it has been taken for that purpose cannot be correct."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"I forbid you, therefore, even to suggest again that there has been a theft," said Mr. Quelch sternly. "Probably some boy has hidden it, for a joke, or perhaps you have a friend who has done so from a desire to prevent you from making a fool of yourself. You may go!"

Bunter went, quite overcome. But he was looking furious when he came back into Study No. 7.

"Found the missing treasure?" asked Peter Todd blandly.

"Quelch's got it!"
"Wha-a-at?"

"What do you think of that for a Form-master?" said Bunter bitterly. "Of course, it's as plain as daylight! I showed the story to Quelch, never dreaming that he would think of boning it."

"Boning it?" said Peter faintly. "Quelch?"

"Yes; it's plain enough now. He's forbidden me to say it's been stolen. He's got it!" said Bunter, with conviction. "He's after my five guineas! Now, what am I going to do about it? You might advise a chap, Toddy!"

But Peter Todd was in no condition to give advice. He had collapsed into his chair, and was in hysterics.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Great News!

HEARD anything yet, Tubby?"
Skinner asked Bunter that question very frequently.

He also kept an eye on the postman, and on the letter-rack. If Bunter heard anything from the "Weekly World" Skinner meant to hear it, too.

Bunter shook his head at every query for two or three days. He had heard nothing from the editorial offices on the subject of the purloined story.

"They'll announce the winner in the paper, most likely," he said. "I don't suppose I shall hear from them till then. Get the paper this week, Skinny!"

"Oh, I leave that to you," said Skinner.

"You needn't—I'll leave it to you," said Bunter.

Skinner glared at Bunter, and Bunter glared at Skinner. The price of the paper was only one penny, so there was not really much room for dispute. But Skinner was very, very careful of his pennies; and as for Bunter, every penny he received went the same way—to the tuck-shop. He had no intention of expending the price of a jam-tart upon a weekly paper.

"We'll borrow Linley's," said Skinner, at last; "he takes it regularly, and does the chess problems and things. Besides, he's bound to have it, to see how he's getting on in the competition."

"I—I say," said Bunter, a little shocked—though he was not easily shocked—"don't borrow the chap's paper after boning his story!"

"What rot!" said Skinner coolly. And he walked away to Linley's study to inquire after the current number of the "Weekly World."

But Skinner met with a disappointment there. Mark Linley had had the paper, but after reading it he had sent it away. He was used to sending it to his cousin at the Front to read in the trenches. And it was gone.

Skinner retired with a grunt. He did not care to display too much interest in that paper, either, for he did not want his concern in the story competition to be guessed. It was necessary to keep that very dark.

Skinner was greatly puzzled over the lack of inquiry after Mark Linley's missing manuscript. That manuscript had been purloined by Bunter, and, on Skinner's insidious advice, it had been sent to the competition in Bunter's name. Mark Linley must have missed it, Skinner knew that. Why wasn't he making a fuss about the loss?

Certainly he was not making a fuss. He seemed to take his loss smilingly, without complaint.

The Co. had kept their own counsel, of course, and Skinner knew nothing of Wun Lung's cunning trick.

He was puzzled and perplexed, but at the same time relieved. If Linley did not make it public that his manuscript had been stolen, he could scarcely claim the story as his own if it won the prize in the "Weekly World." It was very puzzling that Mark should say nothing about his loss, but it was all to the good, from Skinner's point of view.

Bunter said enough about his loss—enough for two, perhaps. Every fellow at Greyfriars had heard of "Through Mud and Blood," and how that priceless manuscript had been purloined from the table drawer in No. 7. The general belief was that Peter Todd had used it to light the study fire. Certainly it was of no use for anything else.

In his keenness to see how the competition was getting on Skinner expended a penny of his own money on a copy of the paper. But he found in it only an announcement that the result of the literary competition would be announced the following week.

"Next week, then!" said Skinner, rubbing his thin hands. "I shouldn't wonder if it takes the prize, Bunt! It was a good yarn, I know that."

Bunter shook his head.

"My belief is that we've had all our trouble for nothing," he replied. "You see, somebody's boned my story and sent it along. My story is bound to take the prize, and the rotten thief will bag the five guineas. But I shall chip in, I can tell you. As soon as I see 'Through Mud and Blood' in print, I shall claim it!"

"You silly ass!" snorted Skinner.

"What else could it have been taken for?" demanded Bunter. "It's a dirty trick to steal an author's manuscript—worse than stealing his watch. I—I mean, under—under some circumstances," Bunter added, remembering that he was, in fact, describing his own action in regard to Mark Linley's manuscript.

It was, indeed, the irony of Fate. Bunter had purloined Mark's story in the hope of getting the prize, and he was convinced that somebody else had served him the same trick. And, as Bunter regarded his own effusion as being incomparably the better of the two, it seemed that the other thief had the best chance of bagging the loot. Which was very exasperating indeed for Bunter.

Fisher T. Fish might have been able to console him—if he had listened to Fisher T. Fish. For Fishy was serenely convinced that only one manuscript in the competition had the faintest chance of getting "there"—and that was, of course, "J. P. Shucks' Big Grab," as Fish had entitled his literary effort.

Fishy, indeed, had already mapped out a little scheme for using the five-guinea prize as capital in a new venture, which was to cause the dollars to roll in—if all went well.

Bunter and Skinner had resigned themselves to waiting for the next number of the "Weekly World" for news, but, as it happened, they were not destined to wait so long as that. On Saturday morning there was a letter for Bunter, with the address typed. The postmark was London. A typed letter from London made Bunter open his eyes behind his glasses. He did not recall, at the moment, that Frank Nugent had a cousin in London who was obliging enough to post a letter for him.

Billy Bunter grabbed down the letter from the rack, and was scuttling off with it, when Skinner joined him. Skinner's keen eye had been on the rack, too.

"Well?" said Skinner grimly.

"Oh, only—only a postcard from my cousin Wally," stammered Bunter.

"It's a letter!"

"I—I mean it's a letter from my pater!"

"Not much difference between the two!" grinned Skinner. "Well, I'm going to see that letter from your pater, my son. I fancy it's from the office, as it's typed, and I rather bet it's from the 'Weekly World.' Anyway, I'm going to see."

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Every Saturday 2

"Look here, you're not going to nose into my private correspondence!" said Bunter.

"Are you going to show me that letter?"

"No," growled Bunter; "it's mine!"

"Then you can come along with me to Linley, and I'll tell him a little story," said Skinner, taking Bunter by the ear.

"I—I meaner say, come with me, and I'll show you the letter," stammered Bunter. "I—I mean to go halves, of course! I never break my word."

"Not if you're kept up to the mark," smiled Skinner. "Open the letter, and let's get a squint at it!"

They retired into the quad, and the letter was opened. They read it eagerly under the elms. It was typewritten, and it ran:

"Master W. G. Bunter, Greyfriars School, Kent.

"Dear sir,—Many thanks for your story, duly received. We have been greatly impressed by this story, which is remarkably good for the work of a schoolboy. Under the circumstances, and considering your merits, we shall not award you the five guineas, which we do not regard as being equal to what you deserve. Our Mr. Hooker will call upon you at the school on Saturday afternoon and interview you personally. He will require a personal assurance from you that the story is your own work, and it will be better if you can produce a witness to that effect. He is then empowered to hand you ten pounds, which I hope you will regard as satisfactory.—Faithfully yours,
THE EDITOR."

"Hurrah!" ejaculated Skinner.

Bunter grinned with delight.

"My hat, ain't that a corker!" he said. "Ten pounds! The funny thing is that it is Linley's story all the time. Mine can't have been sent in after all."

"Oh, cheese it!" Skinner rubbed his hands. "This is simply ripping! You see, if they hand us the money before the announcement is made in the paper, that makes it all safe. We get our fingers on the rhino. When the story comes out, Linley can say it's his till he's black in the face; he won't get the cash away from us!"

"Us!" said Bunter rebelliously. "Me, you mean!"

"Us!" said Skinner firmly. "Ten pounds—that's five each. Halves, you know. And I'll be your witness."

"Oh!"

"You want a witness," said Skinner. "I'll do that for you for nothing. I'll tell Mr. Hooker how I used to see you labouring over that story, with a wet towel tied round your head!"

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter.

And the two young rascals looked forward to Mr. Hooker's visit in the afternoon with gleeful anticipation. As they chuckled and grinned over that typewritten letter, the Famous Five spotted them from a distance, and chuckled and grinned, too. So everybody was pleased.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Our Mr. Hooker!

"MAN to see you, Bunter."

Billy Bunter was hanging about the school shop that afternoon, when Bob Cherry called to him. Bunter was stony as usual, and he was regarding the tuckshop window with a hungry and anticipatory eye. Ere long those tempting comestibles were to be his, and he was longing for the five pounds to be in his fat fingers. The only thing that dashed his satisfaction was the fact that Skinner was to have five pounds, too. But that could not be helped.

He blinked round eagerly as Bob called to him. It was evidently Mr. Hooker, of the "Weekly World," at last.

"Where is he?" asked Bunter excitedly.

"In your study."

"What sort of a johnny is he, Bob, old man?"

"A johnny in whiskers and glasses," said Bob. "He gave the name of Hooker. Peter shoved him in the study. Relation of yours?" asked Bob innocently.

"No—yes. My—my uncle," said Bunter vaguely. "A distant uncle—I mean a distant relation. Thanks!"

Billy Bunter scudded off to the School House as fast

as his fat little legs could carry him. He did not intend to call Skinner. If once Bunter had secured the whole ten pounds it would not have been much use for his partner in iniquity to ask for his whack. But Skinner was on the watch. He spotted Bunter tearing towards the School House, and rushed after him.

"Has he come?" demanded Skinner, catching Bunter by the shoulder.

"No!" gasped Bunter. "I—I'm going in to get my—my bat!"

Skinner grinned.

"I'll come in with you to get your bat," he chuckled.

"Look here, Skinner—"

"Oh, ring off, Tubby!" said Skinner. "You can't fool me, you know. We're going to see Mr. Hooker together."

And Harold Skinner accompanied the Owl of the Remove to No. 7 Study. They entered it together.

Peter Todd was there with the visitor. The visitor was seated in the armchair, with his back to the window. He looked about fifty years old; he wore a tight black frock-coat, and gold-rimmed glasses, and a grey beard and whiskers. A shining silk hat reposed on the table.

"Here's Bunter, sir," said Todd. And with a nod to Bunter, Peter Todd quitted the study, much to the relief of the two conspirators. They did not want Peter present at the interview.

The gentleman in glasses rose to his feet. He blinked at the two juniors through the gold rims.

"Ah, Master Bunter?" he asked.

"That's me, Mr. Hooker!" said Bunter promptly.

"I'm the witness, sir," said Skinner, "you mentioned in your letter!"

"Precisely—precisely!" said Mr. Hooker, seating himself again. "I am very glad to meet you, Master Bunter. Now—merely as a matter of form, of course—I require an assurance that the story entitled 'The Half-Timer' is your own original work."

"Oh, certainly!" said Bunter.

"The story is remarkably good," said Mr. Hooker—"remarkably. It was read out to me, and I was quite impressed with it."

Bunter grunted slightly. All this praise bestowed upon Mark Linley's story did not please him, though it was to be followed by the gift of ten pounds. If Mr. Hooker's remarks had referred to "Through Mud and Blood," Bunter could have understood it.

But Skinner hastened to speak.

"Bunter is awfully literary, sir," he remarked. "He's often astonished us by the things he writes. I really felt all along that Bunter would bag the prize."

"Quite so," assented Mr. Hooker. "Master Bunter, you assure me that the story is your own work?"

"Yes," said Bunter desperately. Even Bunter did not like telling a direct falsehood, but he had left himself no loophole.

"The story displays an intimate knowledge of factory conditions," said Mr. Hooker. "Indeed, I should have supposed that the writer had been a half-timer in a factory himself, from the knowledge shown. You have perhaps been employed in a factory, Master Bunter."

Bunter snorted.

"Certainly not!"

"No?" said Mr. Hooker, raising his eyebrows. "Then may I inquire how you gained your intimate knowledge of factory conditions, as displayed in this story?"

Bunter blinked helplessly at Skinner. But the schemer of the Remove was seldom taken at a loss.

"Bunter's a well-read chap, sir," he explained. Bunter gasped. "He simply devours books, sir—good books, of course, and high-class periodicals like the 'Weekly World.'" Skinner felt that a little "soft sawder" would not be out of place. "Besides, he has a close chum who worked in a factory—a scholarship kid at this school. This factory chap has told him lots of things about it, and Bunter is so clever, you know!"

"That's it," said Bunter, relieved. "I've got a lot of information on the subject from—from my pal Linley, sir."

"Did Linley help you to write the story?" asked Mr. Hooker.

"Oh, no, not at all; he had nothing whatever to do with it," said Bunter hastily. "He doesn't even know it's written. He's never even seen it."

"And this young gentleman is prepared to bear witness

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that you wrote the story by your own efforts?" said Mr. Hooker, glancing over his glasses at Skinner.

"He was with me all the time, Mr. Hooker," said Bunter promptly.

"Indeed!"

"We're great pals, you know, sir," said Skinner confidentially. "I backed up Bunter; I felt that he'd get the prize. In fact, he has promised me half the prize if he got it, and we've arranged that it's to be paid to us half each. Unless it's paid like that, Bunter won't take it at all; we're such pals."

Bunter's eyes gleamed behind his glasses. He understood that Skinner's words were intended to convey him a hint.

He nodded in a sickly way. There was no way out of it. Skinner had to have half.

"That is a very peculiar arrangement," said Mr. Hooker. "But, of course, I have no objection, if Master Bunter is willing."

"Oh, yes—certainly!" stammered Bunter.

"I used to sit with him while he was writing, sir," said Skinner glibly. "I used to urge him on. 'Go it, Bunt!' I used to say, when he was inclined to give in. I tied a wet towel round his head one night. If it hadn't been for me, in fact, Bunter would never have sent in the story."

Which was certainly true.

"Quite so—quite so!" said Mr. Hooker. "I am quite satisfied. It remains only to hand over the ten pounds."

Bunter's eyes glimmered, and Skinner drew a quick breath. They were coming to real business at last. Ten pounds instead of the five guineas they had hoped for! It really seemed too good to be true. So it was, as a matter of fact.

"My sub-editor will hand you the prize, young gentlemen," said Mr. Hooker. "I will now call him in."

The two young rascals stared; they had not known that Mr. Hooker's sub-editor was at Greyfriars with him. Mr. Hooker rose, and went to the door.

"Is he here, sir?" asked Skinner.

"Yes, he is waiting for me to call him in," said Mr. Hooker. "He has been preparing to make the payment while I have been talking to you."

Skinner did not see what preparation exactly the sub-editor needed for making the payment of ten pounds. He understood later, however. Mr. Hooker opened the study door, and called out:

"Mr. Slogg!"

"Here, sir," said a deep voice.

"Pray come in!" said Mr. Hooker. "Dear me, what do you young gentlemen want?"

Skinner scowled at the sight of Harry Wharton & Co. outside the doorway. He did not want any witnesses to the transaction. There was quite a crowd of them—four of the Famous Five, and Squiff, and Todd, and Rake, and Vernon-Smith, and Mark Linley, and Wun Lung. They were all smiling.

"If you please, sir," said Harry Wharton, very respectfully, "we should like to see the prize presented to Mr. Bunter."

"Certainly!" said Mr. Hooker. "Pray come in!"

Harry Wharton & Co. marched into the study.

"I say, you fellows—" began Bunter.

"Congratulations, old chap," said Johnny Bull affably.

"The congratulativeness is terrific, my esteemed Bunter."

Mr. Slogg followed the juniors into the study, and Skinner and Bunter looked at him curiously. He wore a long coat, and his face was almost covered with thick beard and whiskers, and he blinked through a large pair of steel-framed spectacles. His hair was very long, and he had a very high colour. Indeed, Skinner suspected that his colour was not quite natural—if a sub-editor could be supposed to be guilty of the effeminacy of artificially improving his complexion.

The juniors ranged themselves round the study, in a smiling crowd, to witness the presentation. Skinner began to feel slightly uneasy; he hardly knew why

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Paid in Pounds!

"GENTLEMEN," said Mr. Hooker, "I am glad that you are present to witness a well-merited presentation to Master Bunter."

"Hear hear!" said the juniors.

"Master Bunter assures me that the story submitted in his name is his own original work."

Bunter and Skinner trembled. If Mr. Hooker had mentioned the name of the story the game would have been up.

All the fellows present knew that Mark Linley's story was called "The Half-Timer." The ten pounds seemed to fade further away from the two young rascals.

Fortunately Mr. Hooker did not mention the title, and the pair of plotters breathed freely again.

"And Master Skinner bears witness to that fact," added Mr. Hooker.

"So you sent in your yarn, after all, Bunt?" said Yugent.

"Ye-e-s," stammered Bunter.

"I—I—how did you fellows know?" demanded Skinner. "Who told you about Mr. Hooker coming here to give Bunter the prize?"

Skinner's vague uneasiness was increasing.

"We've been talking to Mr. Slogg," explained Wharton.

Skinner snapped his teeth. He wished that Mr. Slogg had held his tongue. Curiously enough, it seemed to Skinner that he had seen Mr. Slogg before somewhere, there was something familiar about him.

"Master Skinner has told me how he sat up with Master Bunter while Master Bunter was engaged upon his literary work," went on Mr. Hooker. "It is very pleasant to see such devoted friendship between two such worthy young gentlemen. Mr. Slogg!"

"Sir!" said Mr. Slogg, in a deep voice.

"You are aware, Mr. Slogg, that Master Bunter is to receive ten pounds instead of five guineas, as being more adequate to his peculiar merits?"

"Certainly, sir."

"It appears that he has made an arrangement for Master Skinner to receive half. You will, therefore, hand five pounds to Master Bunter and five pounds to Master Skinner."

"Very good, sir!"

Skinner rubbed his hands. It was coming at last! Bunter's eyes glistened. He had begun to think that Mr. Hooker would never get to the point.

"Master Bunter, Mr. Slogg will now hand you your five pounds."

"Oh, good!" said Bunter.

"Pray advance and take it."

Bunter advanced.

Mr. Slogg pushed back his right shirt-cuff.

Biff!

"Yoop!" yelled Bunter.

He staggered back as Mr. Slogg's heavy fist crashed upon his fat ribs. So great was his astonishment that he sat down on the carpet.

"My ha-a-at?" stuttered Skinner.

"Patience, Master Skinner," said Mr. Hooker blandly, "your turn is coming."

"Mum-mum-my turn?"

"Pray get up, Master Bunter, and take the other four pounds."

"What?" yelled Bunter.

"If Master Bunter will not rise to the occasion, Mr. Slogg, perhaps you can hand him the remaining four pounds in his present position."

"Certainly, sir!" said Mr. Slogg.

He stooped over the astonished Bunter.

Biff!

"Yah!" roared Bunter. "Yow! Help! Are you gone dotty, you raving maniac? Lemme alone! Yaroooh! Draggimoff!" shrieked Bunter.

Biff! Biff! Biff!

"Yaroooh! Help! He's mad! Rescue! Ooooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter rolled frantically under the table to escape

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the athletic Mr. Slogg. But he had received the last of the five pounds before he escaped.

"Now, Master Skinner," said Mr. Hooker smoothly.

Skinner dodged round the table. He was wondering whether he was on his head or his heels.

"Look here," roared Skinner. "You keep off, you silly idiot! What do you mean? What's the little game?"

"You are entitled to five pounds," explained Mr. Hooker. "It was not specified what kind of pounds you were to receive. Doubtless you fancied that you would receive coin of the realm. If so, you made a serious mistake. You will be pounded in the ribs five times. Such is the five pounds to which you are entitled. Please come and take them!"

"Are you potty?" shrieked Skinner. "Is this a lark? Keep off, you beast!"

Mr. Slogg was circling round the table after Skinner.

"Keep off!" yelled Skinner. "I—I won't have halves at all! I don't want the five pounds!"

"Too late!" said Mr. Hooker. "Unless Master Bunter withdraws his offer, you must receive them. Master Bunter, do you wish to receive the other five pounds yourself?"

"No!" yelled Bunter, from under the table.

"So, you see, Master Skinner—"

"Keep off, you rotter!" shrieked Skinner, dodging round the table again. "I can see this is a jape, you beast! You're not an editor at all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stop him!" shouted Squiff.

Skinner made a desperate break for the door. But half-a-dozen hands collared him, and he was hurled back into the middle of the study. There Mr. Slogg got at him.

Biff!

"Yow-ow!" roared Skinner.

He staggered to one side; but another terrific biff on the other side set him straight again. Then, Biff! Biff! Biff!

"Oh, crumbs! Yooooop!"

Skinner collapsed on the floor as he received the last pound.

Study No. 7 rang with merriment. The juniors were shrieking, and Mr. Slogg laughed so much that his beard came off. Mr. Hooker sat in the armchair and yelled, completely disarranging the hirsute adornments of his face.

Skinner gasped and blinked at them.

"Bob Cherry, you beast!" he yelled, recognising Mr. Slogg minus his beard.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And—and who are you, you rotter?" yelled Skinner, staring furiously at Mr. Hooker. "Why, my hat! It—it's Wibley!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors were almost in convulsions. Mr. Hooker and Mr. Slogg dragged off their disguises. Bunter blinked out from under the table, and his eyes almost started from his head as he recognised Bob Cherry and Wibley, of the Remove.

"Oh, you rotters!" yelled Bunter. "It's a rotten jape!"

"You wrote that letter to Bunter?" shrieked Skinner.

"On Quelch's typer!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"And—and you've been pulling our leg all the time?" howled Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, dear!" groaned Bunter. "Ow! You rotters! I'll jolly well complain to Quelch about this rotten trick!"

"Not quite so rotten as stealing a fellow's manuscript and using it as your own," said Harry Wharton. "You see, you were spotted."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Marky's manuscript was got back, and it's gone in in his own name," said Wharton, "and your own rot went in your envelope, Bunter. You precious pair of swindlers, you ought to be sacked from the school!"

"It—it was Skinner's idea all along," groaned Bunter.

"I was only going to hide Linley's bosh. Of course, I knew it was no good. But that idiot Skinner——"

"It—it was only a lark!" stammered Skinner. "Of—of course, we shouldn't have kept the money."

"Cheese it!" said Wharton. "No good lying, Skinner! You meant to swindle Mark out of the prize if his story won it."

"And they've got ten pounds instead of five guineas," chuckled Bob Cherry. "I say, they haven't had enough. Let's give 'em another ten pounds each!"

There was a wild rush of Bunter and Skinner to the door. They fled down the passage like startled hares. They did not want any more "pounds." For a long time afterwards sounds of merriment were heard in the Remove passage—but not from Bunter and Skinner. For a long time they rubbed their ribs and groaned. Mr. Slogg had done his work well, and it was some time before the two recipients recovered from the effect of the pounds.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Mark Linley's Luck!

SKINNER had lost all interest in the literary competition in the "Weekly World." He was quite sick of the subject; and he scowled savagely whenever it was mentioned to him—as naturally it often was.

But Bunter, when he had recovered from the effect of the "pounds," was observed to be in high feather.

True, the swindle planned by Skinner and the Owl in concert had been a ghastly failure, owing to Wun Lung's intervention. But now that Bunter was aware of the facts, he knew that his own story—his thrilling "Through Mud and Blood"—had actually gone in after all in his own name.

It was unfortunate that it had not been typed, according to the rules of the competition. But Bunter felt that that detail would hardly count against it; the quality of the literary work would shine forth, as it were, and the editor could not fail to be struck by it. If he saw the manuscript at all, there was a certain five guineas for Bunter—which would be ever so much more welcome than the ten pounds. And he would not have to divide with Skinner next time.

So Billy Bunter was looking forward with keen anticipation. Like Fisher T. Fish, Mark Linley was not feeling so keen; he had less faith in his powers.

But a great many of the Remove were interested, and when Mark's paper arrived at the school the following week, with the result of the competition in it, there was a rush of fellows to see it. Mark took the paper in at the gates, and he was surrounded at once by a crowd of juniors.

"I guess I want to see that paper," said Fisher T. Fish, eagerly, jerking it out of Mark's hand before he could open it. "Skuse me!"

"Dash it all!" said Mark. "Let me see my own paper!"

"I reckon your name ain't here," said Fish. "And I guess mine is."

"I say, you fellows, lemme get at that paper!" shouted Bunter, wedging his fat form through the crowd. "I know jolly well I've got the prize!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! Gimme that paper, Fishy!"

Bunter snatched at the paper.

"Hand it back, you galoot!" yelled Fish. "I guess——"

Bob Cherry jerked the paper away from Bunter.

"Here it is, Marky!"

"You read it out, Bob," said Mark.

"I guess——"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up!" roared Bob Cherry. "Order! Now, lend me your giddy ears!"

"Order!"

Bob Cherry opened the paper, and there was a hush of anticipation. Fisher T. Fish and Billy Bunter eyed him almost wolfishly. Mark was quiet and sedate.

"Result of the Literary Competition," read out Bob Cherry. "The prize of five guineas for the best short story is awarded to a member of Greyfriars School!"

"Hurrah!"

"I guess the name is Fish!" chuckled the Yankee junior.

"What did I tell you, you mugwumps?"

"Bunter, you silly ass!" snorted the Owl of the Remove.

"I know jolly well——"

"Order! Go on, Bob!"

"The name of the successful competitor is Mark Linley," read out Bob.

"Bravo!"

"Well, I swow!" ejaculated Fish.

"It's a swindle!" yelled Bunter.

"Go on, Bob! Shut up, you burbling duffers!"

"The short story, entitled 'The Half-timer,' is a remarkable performance for a schoolboy, and he is fully entitled to the prize. We shall have much pleasure in despatching a cheque for five guineas to Master Linley, and the successful story will appear in our next number."

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Marky!"

"The congratulations are terrific!"

"D'ye mean to say my name ain't mentioned?" shrieked the indignant Fish.

"They can't have read my story!" howled Bunter.

"It's a swindle!"

"Lemme see! There's some honourable mentions here," said Bob. "But there isn't any Fish or Bunter among them. Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here are your names! You are mentioned! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Read it out, you galoot!"

Bob Cherry read out:

"We may add that we have received two extraordinary papers from the same school as the winning story. We recommend Master Bunter to suspend his literary labours for a time while he devotes his attention to the simplest rules of orthography!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And we strongly advise Master Fish to learn English before he attempts to write in that language!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Waal, I swow!" gasped Fisher T. Fish. "That editor galoot must be right off his blessed onion, I guess! I calculate——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hurrah for Marky!" shouted Bob Cherry. "Shoulder high with the literary genius, my infants!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Mark, laughing.

But the Removites refused to draw it mild, and Mark was whipped up on Wharton and Bob Cherry's shoulders and marched off in the midst of a cheering crowd. They marched him shoulder high round the Close, and landed him at the School House steps, where Mr. Quelch met them, frowning. But his frown faded away as he learned the cause of the uproar, and he shook hands with Mark and congratulated him warmly. And, with the exceptions of Skinner and Bunter and Fish, all the Greyfriars Remove rejoiced in the Lancashire Lad's Luck!

THE END.

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"CHAMPION OF THE OPPRESSED!"

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NEXT MONDAY—

"CHAMPION OF THE OPPRESSED!"

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. BY FRANK RICHARDS.

BRAVO, RIFLE BRIGADE!

The following letter and comments concern your Editor's soldier brother, who has passed through a period of breathless excitement in the British trenches. At the earnest request of some of my "Magnet" chums, who read the account in the "Clarion," I am reproducing Mr. Robert Blatchford's article below. Mr. Blatchford is one of the greatest and best-known journalists of modern times, and I feel sure that his remarks will be read with keen interest by all readers of the "Magnet."

A FRIEND has sent me a copy of a letter written to his father by Rifleman H. D. P. Hinton, of "I" Company, 1st Battalion Rifle Brigade, some excerpts from which will, I hope, prove interesting.

My young musketeer writes well, which is to say that he writes with sincerity, and reveals himself in his writing—two of the chief essentials to literary success.

He has just been in a battle—a horrible, bloody, hand-to-hand combat—and while the impressions stamped upon his kindly, modest, English soul are still hot and flaming he conveys them to his "dears" at home. His story is, I think, typically English in form and character, for it deals only with facts, and with direct impressions. I notice, as I notice in most English soldiers' stories, an absence of the scenic sense. The art is artless. The writer gives us no formed picture. There is nothing to convey to us an idea of the country. Yet, the letter is forceful and graphic, like a vivid picture without a background. As in the case of Bunyan's "footpath over the field," the landscape is left to make itself. The character of the writer stands out with startling clearness; he is revealed to us unknown to himself; he shows us his heart without effort. The opening is admirable:

Well, since my last letter to you, pater, dated July 3, I have gone through some momentous and thrilling days, and I thank God I am alive to tell you about it.

That simple, direct opening is immediately followed by the first touch of unconscious self-revelation:

Before I had actually finished my letter last Saturday week we got the wire that we were wanted for some stiff job. I could have done so, but did not, on second thoughts, mention it to you.

The kindness of the restraint imposed by the "second thoughts" (*italics mine*) is sufficiently obvious. So will the effectiveness of the following contrast be obvious:

On the Sunday morning we had a grand church parade, with a very fine sermon, and after it was over a never-to-be-forgotten communion service, immediately after which we were paraded and addressed by our general; and he took us all into his confidence, and told us in detail the work that had been allotted to our division. It was none other than that we were to go back into our trenches that night, and, just after dawn on Tuesday morning, we were to attack and carry the German trenches facing us.

You, perhaps, cannot imagine the thrill we all experienced at this news.

But I think we can imagine it quite well, Private Hinton, and none the worse because you, with a fine instinct, trust our imagination in the matter.

I certainly cannot describe my own feelings, although I must say it did not come as a very great surprise to me, nor many of my comrades, as the position we had been holding for the past six weeks was surely one of the most dangerous of our line—the extreme left of the British line, the French joining up in the next trenches. (The French did not take part in the attack, although their magnificent 75's supported us from the rear.)

Well, we went up at nightfall on Sunday, with everything and everyone detailed for the job—and

with good hearts!—only wondering what our fate was to be. Monday came, and it almost seemed as though the enemy anticipated something, as they showed nervousness, and were not quiet at all.

At last daybreak of Tuesday arrived, and we were all ready to do or die.

Our artillery started to the minute of prearranged time; and didn't they give it 'em!—only for an hour.

It was music to hear and watch our shells. And as suddenly as they started they ceased fire, and the time for the 1st R. B.'s, to whom had been given the job to carry the trenches at the point of the bayonet, had arrived!

We were all over our parapets in a flash—not a man wavered. And then we charged. In less than three minutes we had carried the position.

Many of our boys fell, mainly from machine-gun fire from the left, but the Huns in the trenches facing us showed practically no fight at all. They were surprised, no doubt, but they were cowards. I captured four prisoners, who surrendered to me eagerly. They went on their knees to me, crying for mercy, and saying: "English very gut, very gut," etc., etc. They were mainly Prussians and Bavarians—quite a mixed lot, really. Many of our fellows did not show the mercy that I did, but I am not really ashamed to admit that I had not the heart to "stick" men who held up their hands defenceless, although, naturally, my feelings are very bitter against them—as a matter of fact, I narrowly escaped with my own life in protecting them. We captured just over eighty, all told—alive. Of course, the number of killed and wounded in their trenches were *greatly* in excess of this number.

This was only the beginning, and what proved to be the easiest part of it. We had to advance (only my company) beyond the captured trenches, and dig a fresh trench about 100 yards further on, in broad daylight!

We worked like madmen, and succeeded in our task with really surprisingly few casualties, considering the awful danger. There is no doubt we had taken the Huns' breath away, so to speak, in the audacious manner we did the business.

However, after a time they started, and we had a bad time, although they got it hotter still. They counter attacked three times that day, and were repulsed with great losses to them each time.

Nightfall came at last, and we were told we should be relieved about 9.30.; but our relief did not come until just before dawn on the Wednesday, and I can assure you the four hours we spent after dark were by far the worst of the whole time!

I was on sentry the whole time, and we were all absolutely whacked and exhausted after what we had gone through. I had not had any sleep for three days and nights, and the excitement and fearful work of it all was telling on everybody. However, our relief did come. We thought we were destined for another day of it. Those that were left of us *did* get away—rather less than half of the strength we went up with, alas! A large percentage were wounded, and I think they all got away. There was some fine work

done in this direction. V.C.'s were earned on many hands, but will never be given.

Our haul was a rich one. We got three machine-guns and several trench mortars—the deadly things that had caused us more casualties and terrors than anything else—and hundreds of bombs, grenades (which we at once used on them!), and many other death-dealing articles. It was an absolute arsenal of stuff. We could all have had any number of souvenirs (helmets, etc.), but they did not trouble me, although my prisoners insisted on pouring into my possession the contents of their pockets, etc. They were certainly very grateful to me. They would shake hands! And this is war!

Well, dears, I could tell you a great deal more of my experiences in this affair, but am getting short of paper and time, so will wait until I see you again.

As I said, we got away on Wednesday morning and returned to the beautiful place we had left on the Sunday, and on the road the brigadier met us in the grey morning, and cried incessantly as we shuffled past him: "Bravo, Rifle Brigade!" He could see what we had gone through, and our sadly depleted numbers—our company numbered forty-nine out of 150!

We dropped down in the wood, and had a good tot of rum, and then hot tea; and there was plenty of food, but we were soon all asleep.

Our work was not completed, although we did not have to go into action again, but we had to go up again to assist in digging for a night or two; but on Friday night, I am thankful to say, we moved off for a well-earned rest right away from it all, and we are now about fifteen miles away, for at least a fortnight, we understand, and we are in very comfortable billets, and I think we shall have a jolly good time here.

We have only two or three officers left, and they could not possibly use us again yet. We are done up, and only a shadow of a battalion.

It all seems like a dream now!

I hope we shall not go up into that part of the line again. We have been that way since April 24th, and there were very few of those who went up with the battalion then who are now still in it.

The brigadier (a fine chap!) has been down to see us and address us to-day, and he simply could not say enough in praising our work. And he read a telegram from General French and more of the "heads"—very gushing. We deserve it all—and a furlough home with it!

Glad to say Sid came through all right; he did not take part in the fighting, being an officer's servant, although, of course, to a great extent, he shared most of the dangers we encountered.

I came through with nothing worse than being hit in the back by a piece of shell, which only just bruised me *very slightly*.

Since we left the scene they have made more desperate efforts to regain the ground we took, but our general told us to-day that they have not succeeded an inch, and that, after a careful estimate, it is reckoned we accounted for 2,500 Huns in killed alone; so you can see we have really done a good piece of work. Naturally, we feel rather proud, and we feel that at last we have got a bit of our own back. It was a fine little victory!

By the way, we captured two gas cylinders as well, and one fellow got an Iron Cross.

So there is a battle described by one of the men who was in it. I really do not know which to admire most—the courage, the modesty, the humanity, or the frankness of this young musketeer. He might have told us more of what happened in the trench, but he exercised a fine restraint, and it is well. We can fill in the details for ourselves. Our young musketeer is just a typical "nice" English boy. A year ago he had no thought of war; he had never dreamed of a flanking machine-gun, nor of a bayonet fight with Huns in a drain, nor of digging trenches under a hail of shells; and now he is Rifleman Hinton, "Somewhere in France," and I have printed his letter from hell. Good luck to him, the dear lad, and may he come home sound and merry to those for whom he is so wisely thoughtful while he is waiting for the dawn of a day of horrible trial.

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FAVOURITE FRIENDS IN FICTION.

No. 7.



A gallant band, the comrades three,
Stand forth in all their glory;
What stirring times on land and sea
They have with faithful Rory!
Their escapades so great and grand,
In tempest, frost, and thunder,
From Poles to India's coral strand,
Have moved the world with wonder.

Jack Owen charms us first of all,
A man of education;
Clear-headed, and possessed withal
Of keen determination.
And though from time to time he smarts
At Pete's persistent chipping,
His comrades dub him in their hearts
A sportsman great and ripping.

Sam Grant, of Yankee-land, excels
At shots both low and skyward;
In every place where talent tells
His shooting is a byword.
And when the shades of night descend
On forest, plain, or prairie,
His skilful aim to death doth send
Wild beasts, however wary.

The negro Pete, so brave and bold,
To Britons is no stranger;
A hero with a heart of gold,
Impregnable in danger,
He serves his friends through thick and thin
With wonderful devotion,
And always revels in a din,
And causing great commotion.

United by the closest ties,
Three gentlemen of leisure,
They sail the seas and soar the skies,
And hunt for hidden treasure.
Adventure is their end and aim,
Amusement is their mission;
They neither seek the sweets of fame,
Nor idolise ambition.

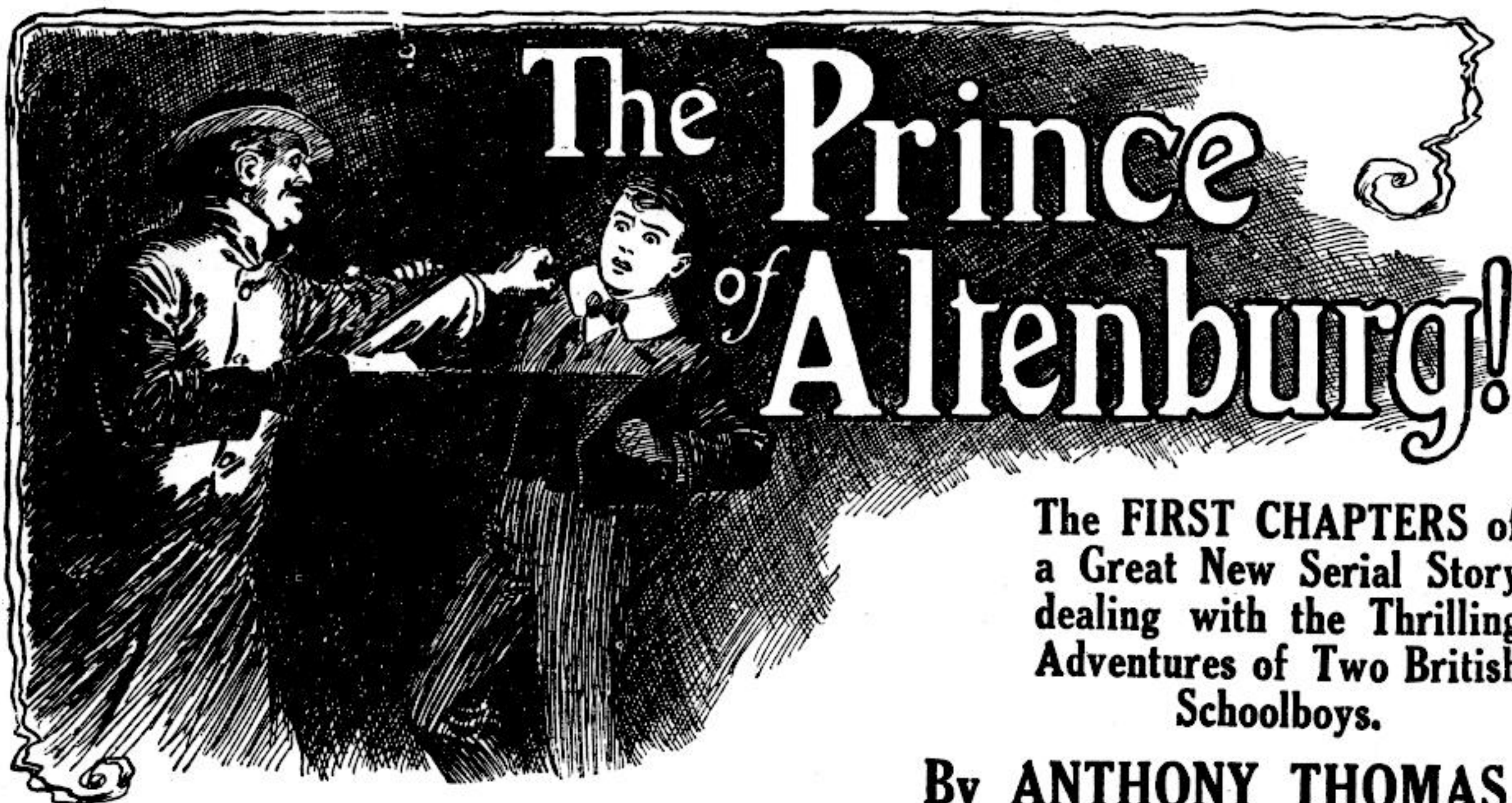
The pioneers of healthy sport,
By British boys commended,
The comrades bear a rich report,
And shine in all that's splendid!
Once every month a charming book
Contains their deeds romantic;
Then "three times three" for S. Clarke Hook—
We'll cheer him till we're frantic!

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By ANTHONY THOMAS.

THE FIRST INSTALMENTS.

Two boys of St. Dunstan's School, JACK DARRELL and TEDDY BURKE, are discovered trespassing by an irate farmer, Mr. Stone.

In order to appease the farmer's wrath, Teddy Burke shows him a copy of a newspaper containing a portrait of THE PRINCE OF ALTENBURG, and leads him to believe that Jack Darrell, who bears a strong resemblance to the portrait, is really the prince, and that they were coming to ask his permission to be shown over the farm.

Mr. Stone is unable to keep the knowledge that a prince is a scholar at the local college to himself, and eventually the news reaches the ears of a person named Lewis Mackay, who is staying in the neighbourhood.

Mackay, under the impression that Jack Darrell is really the Prince of Altenburg, kidnaps both him and his chum, Teddy Burke.

The chums eventually find themselves on board the German submarine V2 and under the care of a person named BARON ZELLING.

The submarine is attacked and sunk, Baron Zelling and the two boys being picked up by the Tronjeim, a Norwegian vessel.

The Tronjeim is then chased and caught by the German cruiser Kielberg, to which the baron and his captives are transferred.

Meanwhile, DERWENT HOOD, chief of the British Counter-Espionage Department, hearing that the baron and the two boys are on board the Kielberg, goes in chase of that vessel in H.M.S. Chatswood.

The Kielberg is sighted, and, being hard pressed, is forced to seek refuge in the mouth of a river in the tropics, where she runs aground.

(Now go on with the story.)

The New Colony.

To understand all that happened during those days of chase and storm, it is necessary to understand something of Captain Diemster, commander of the Kielberg.

It has already been mentioned that he was not a true German. His mother was an Irish lady, and Rudolph Patrick Diemster inherited much of her nature. It was she who had persuaded his father to send him to an English school, and for the six years between the ages ten and sixteen Diemster had lived chiefly in England.

These facts were against him when he entered the German Navy. He had chosen the life in preference to the Army because he loved the sea, and he had risen in the Navy because of his extraordinary ability. He would have risen much higher but for his British "taint."

When the war broke out he was put in command of the Kielberg, a fast armoured cruiser, and escaped into the Atlantic under sealed orders.

His instructions, he found later, were not at all to his liking; simply he had to sink as many British merchant ships as he could, but to run no risk of capture. There could only be one end to his commission, and gradually the knowledge of it spread to those on board; the Kielberg would be overtaken one day by a better British boat or boats, and would go to the bottom. There was no other end possible.

Gradually the Kielberg's sphere was narrowed. It became difficult to get coal and other necessities. With the best will in the world no commander could hope to escape now. Diemster was not in the least afraid of the end, and he meant to put up a good fight; only it all seemed so foolish to him.

It was during the storm that the great idea came to him. They had succeeded in eluding the Chatswood for the time, and Diemster decided that, at all costs, they should never sink his boat.

He himself took control of the steering. Some years before he had been engaged on an expedition for the German Government to explore the river Kunene, which runs for part of its course between Angola and German South-West Africa. He had made charts of the sandbanks, and taken soundings, and amongst his papers now on the Kielberg were the original maps and notes he had made then.

It was practically impossible to navigate the river with a fair-sized boat. Impossible, at all events, for any other man save the one who knew every sandbank, and even for him it was a risky undertaking. But he took that risk, and the Kielberg was run aground sixty miles or more up the river.

Diemster had not chosen the spot rashly. It was as far as he dare go, and at the precise place where he went aground the trees from the sloping banks of the river made a natural hiding-place for his ship. And he had come sufficiently far inland to be away from the swamps and the mangrove marshes, which made the river terribly unhealthy, and dangerous nearer the mouth.

Of the future he neither knew nor cared. The one great hope in his life had been centred round a girl who lived in a quiet English village, and that hope was dead for ever now. So, too, were Captain Diemster's personal ambitions and desires.

All that night the officers and men worked, making communication with the shore easy, and clearing some of the ground. Diemster had already had a consultation with his officers, and explained to them as far as he could the reasons which had led him to take this course.

As he had anticipated, about one half of them entirely approved, and the remainder said nothing, but were obviously inclined to disagree.

When morning came the captain addressed the crew. Jack Darrell and Teddy Burke by some means found themselves standing at the back of the crowd. They had been ranged up on the river-bank, which had now been cleared of most of the undergrowth. Near them stood Zelling, but during the landing, and once or twice when they had met since, he simply ignored them. Just at present he stood some half-

dozen yards away, pulling and tugging at his moustache as though anxious to get it off.

"He's mad—real mad this time!" Teddy Burke whispered to Darrell. "I can't tell a word the captain is saying, but I guess Zelling doesn't like it. I wish I'd swotted at German more; it would have come in useful now."

"Same here!" agreed Jack. "I wonder just what the captain is arguing about. Some of 'em seem to like it, and some don't."

The captain had finished his speech, and some of the men, led by a certain number of the officers, made the woods resound with their cheers. But an almost equal number, it seemed, did not take part in the cheering; they simply stood and watched the others, without raising any objection.

The men were dispersed to go on with the different duties which had been allotted to them. From the river the bank rose steeply for perhaps twenty yards, then came a fairly flat stretch, and then again gently rising ground beyond.

Most of the bank at the river's edge had already been cleared, and now the men were at work making a broad pathway up to the flat stretch where some of them were already clearing away the undergrowth and the smaller trees.

Jack Darrell and Teddy Burke stood watching the scene. They had read of tropical forests before, but never had they realised the picture until they stood as they did now on the gently sloping river-bank. The light was more like twilight, though here and there a break in the dense foliage allowed a thin beam of sunlight to come through. Almost, as Darrell said, the lighting was that of a cathedral, and gave a touch of solemnity to everything.

Only a few yards from the side lay the great hull of the Kielberg, leaning over towards the shore. But the tilt, while sufficient to make it awkward to get about the decks, was not enough to make it really difficult.

Gangways now ran from the boat to the shore, and men were constantly passing to and fro. Even the boat itself lay in the shelter of the huge trees which overhung the river, their foliage in most places dropping down into the water itself and forming a natural curtain which hid the boat from the view of anyone in the centre of the broad river.

As Darrell and Burke stood there the captain suddenly came upon them. He stopped as he recognised them.

"You did not understand what I said a short time ago?" he asked.

"No," Darrell answered. "You see, neither of us knows German well. So we couldn't do anything but just guess."

"Of course!" the captain nodded. "I think I ought to tell you where we are now, as I have told the officers and crew. You will find maps, if you are interested, in the officers' library. They will explain anything you wish to know."

"Thank you very much." Jack looked at the captain in surprise. He had become so accustomed to the fact that he was really a prisoner that it was difficult to understand the captain's attitude now.

"We are some sixty miles from the mouth of the river Kunene," the captain went on. "The Kielberg, I fear, will never be floated again, so it is more than likely that this will be your home for many months to come. There will be no fear of a food shortage, and the situation here is quite healthy. What we shall do later on I cannot say yet, but it will be discussed by the officers. You and Baron Zelling will, of course, be made quite comfortable; but I have already told him that you will all be subject now to whatever discipline we decide to impose. If you have any complaints, however, you can make them to me."

It was all said in a cold, emotionless way, and as soon as he had finished the captain gave them a curt nod, and went on to the ship.

"He's a rum beggar!" Teddy Burke said, as they watched him crossing the gangway. "But what on earth is going to happen to us? Seems to me Zelling has landed us here, and doesn't care twopence about us now. Are we going to found a new colony, or what?"

"I'm hanged if I know!" Darrell answered. "We're further from St. Dunstan's now than ever we were, and it looks as though we're fixed up here for the rest of our natural lives. Hallo! Here's old Zelling coming. Doesn't he look pleased with himself! I'll bet that for two pins he'd shoot both of us!"

Jack turned the conversation suddenly, and when the baron came up to them they were admiring the scenery.

"Beautiful weather they seem to get in this neighbourhood, baron," Jack said cheerily; and Burke hurt himself in his endeavours to keep his face straight.

Zelling was obviously in no mood for pleasantries this morning.

"I've no doubt," he retorted. "But I want to talk to you about more important matters than weather—"

"Seems to me that is the most important thing just now," Darrell interrupted. "If this isn't a holiday trip, I don't know what it is. And you brought us here, baron!"

"I did not!" They were amazed at the anger and annoy-

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ONE
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ance Zelling showed. "I saw the captain talking to you a short time ago. What did he say?"

"Nothing very much," Darrell answered. "Just told us where we were, and said he hoped we should be quite comfortable and happy, and all that sort of thing."

"Oh!" Zelling appeared to consider the matter for a time. "You quite understand that we are all in a hopeless position now? There is no prospect of getting away from here, unless—"

He paused, and looked at Darrell and then at Burke.

"Unless what?" Darrell asked.

"Unless you rely on me," the baron went on. "I can do it, and I am prepared to take both of you with me, providing you will promise to help me all you can. Give me your promise that whatever happens you will be on my side, and carry out my orders, and I will see you safe. Come! I want you to make that promise at once!"

Jack looked at Teddy Burke, and guessed that he held the same opinion as himself. Zelling had been responsible for all their troubles. Why should they join forces with him now?

"Well?"

Zelling was impatient for an answer.

"I don't know," Darrell answered. "You landed us in this mess, and it seems to me it's up to you to get us out of it without asking for promises. We don't want to stick here all our lives, and if you can find a way out, you can bet we shall be in it all right. Only it isn't fair to start asking for blind promises."

Zelling growled something which was unintelligible, then laughed in his old sneering way.

"All right; I'll leave it at that," he said. "You don't want to stay here for ever; and there is only one way out, and that is by keeping to me. I will tell you later what I intend to do."

He turned on his heel and left them. Darrell laughed softly when he had gone.

"We're not going to be dull here, Teddy," he said. "That beggar Zelling couldn't live peaceably if he tried, and he's plotting something right now, but what it is I can't guess."

"Nor I," agreed Burke. "Only I know one thing I'm going to do—I'm going to try and pinch a revolver. There's going to be trouble presently, and we may just as well get ready for it. But let's go over to the boat, and see if there's any grub going!"

On the Kielberg's Trail

When the Chatswood sighted the Kielberg, no one knew better than Commander Brewis that it would take every ounce out of his boat if he wished to get within firing distance.

But he was an optimist, and hoped for the best. His orders were quickly given, and the Chatswood settled down to do its maximum speed.

Throughout the afternoon and evening they kept their quarry in sight, neither gaining nor losing an inch, it seemed. As the light grew poorer, Brewis became more anxious. A sailor's knowledge told him that to the difficulties of darkness were going to be added those of a storm.

And the storm came. For more than two days the Chatswood struggled through it, but all sight of the Kielberg had gone. She might have changed her course, or run towards port, for all they could tell.

But here the wireless came in to help them. It was three days after the chase began that the Chatswood received a message to say that the Kielberg had been sighted in a certain latitude.

"She's running for West Africa," Brewis told Derwent Hood, in one of the brief intervals he took off duty. "Probably she expects to pick up coal somewhere round there, and with a bit of luck we may get her yet."

Brewis had not lost hope, and as they came nearer land again he began to pick up further messages.

"It's as good as being a detective," he said. "If we go on at this rate, we can't fail to overtake her eventually. She can't run into any port round here."

Derwent Hood began to take a fresh interest in the chase. During the storm, good sailor though he was, he had lost some of his anxiety over the affair. But now he began to hope that, after all, the Chatswood might be able to take the Kielberg as a prize, in which case Hood would bring his own case to a successful end.

They were just within sight of land, and Chatswood had slackened speed very considerably, when Brewis came in to see Hood one morning.

"More and more like a detective yarn," the commander said gloomily. "I've just been talking the thing over with

Wilsdon. He knows all about this fellow Diemster, who's in command of the Kielberg. I'm afraid we've lost the brute, after all!"

"Why?" asked Hood. "I thought you were quite certain she'd come down this way?"

"So we are," Brewis answered. "We've got her right down to this point, yet no one has sighted her since. Wilsdon's theory is that, as Diemster knows this little piece of the coast thoroughly, he's dodged into one of the little bays, and will lie up there; or else he's taken the risk and run up the river."

"River? What river?" demanded Hood.

"Oh, a silly affair called the Kunene! This chap Diemster, it appears, has written a book, or part of a book, about it. He explored it for his Government. We're going to send a party ashore to make inquiries. Someone may have seen the boat, though there's precious few people to see anything!"

The party, however, duly went, and later in the day Brewis told Hood the result.

"They had a stiff time trying to find out anything at all," he said, "but it seems fairly obvious that two or three days ago a big boat went up the Kunene. What boat it was no one knows, but they are quite sure that the man who took the boat up was either drunk or mad."

"Why do they think that?" asked Hood.

"Because no man in his right mind would attempt to take a boat of any size up that river. It's full of sandbanks, and is a most dangerous place. Only if this man Diemster knows as much about it as Wilsdon says he does, he may be able to get up a fair way."

"In which case," suggested Hood, "you just stick here and wait for him to come back again?"

Brewis shook his head.

"He's not going to come back. That's my opinion, and Wilsdon agrees. I guess what has happened is that Diemster knew the game was up, and he simply took all risks and ran his ship up the river. I expect later on they'll try and work their way down to German South-West Africa, and leave their boat to rot."

"By which time it will probably be in British hands," said Hood.

"Probably! But the Kielberg has simply retired, and there isn't much glory in that for the Chatswood. Anyway, it's all theory, and I'm hanged if I can see what's the next step I have to take."

He sat staring at the wall of Hood's cabin for a time. It was an unpleasant knock for Brewis, as he had set his heart on being the man who sank the Kielberg. Now all that he could do was to report that he believed she had run up this river, and that in his opinion she would never come back to the sea again. But of the latter fact he had no proof whatever.

It was impossible for him to venture his ship into waters which he knew were dangerous and of which there was no known chart except those done by Diemster. Equally impossible was it to send an expedition up the river.

"I don't know," he exclaimed irritably. "It's as certain as anything can be that the beastly boat is up the river somewhere, but the Admiralty won't take my word for it. Yet there's no way out."

"Can I be of any help?" asked Hood.

"You? How?" demanded Brewis.

"Supposing you gave me that pretty little motor-launch of yours," Hood said slowly, "and let me have one or two men—one of your junior officers, if you could. Fit us out decently and let us go up the river. If, as you say, the boat is up there, I'd undertake to come back here with the two youngsters I'm after, and Zelling as well if we had a bit of luck. That would be proof enough even for the Admiralty. We'd find out, too, what the condition of the Kielberg is. There's no objection to the scheme, is there?"

For a moment Brewis was thoughtful. Then he brought his fist down on the table with a bang.

"It's a bully scheme," he said, "if you are prepared to take the risk."

"Risk?" Hood asked, and smiled. "If you don't agree to the plan, I'm going ashore on my own. I don't go back to England without those two boys, as I've told you before."

"Right!" Brewis agreed enthusiastically. "I think I've got the idea now. That motor-launch of ours is a real beauty, though it isn't wonderfully fast. It would carry everything you need for a month, and you're not likely to be longer than that. I'll get one of the juniors who understands the thing thoroughly to go with you, and you can have a man, too. He might be useful."

"Thanks! We might have a little trouble over my business," Hood said. "But if you'll fix that for me I think I can guarantee that if the Kielberg is up that river you shall have a full report on her position and her condition."

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and, I hope, on what the commander proposes to do. You can trust me not to run any risk over the job."

"I'll take that for granted," Brewis laughed. "I'll run away now and see who's anxious and willing to go with you. It's got to be a voluntary job, you know. See you later and let you know."

He went out, and Hood sat alone. Inwardly he was rejoicing that Brewis had agreed so readily to his plan, knowing that it was not altogether in accordance with the regular order of things.

On the other hand, it was the only way possible for Hood himself. In his own peculiar way Derwent Hood was the most tenacious and determined man who ever undertook a task. Despite all difficulties and hardships, he was decided in his own mind to go on with his chase after Zelling and the two boys, no matter where it might lead or how long it might take.

Presently Brewis returned, and behind him came a youngster of eighteen or nineteen years. He looked possibly a little older, as his square-cut jaw and the determined set of his mouth suggested that if a boy in years he had a man's sense of responsibility.

"This is Mr. Dexter, our senior midshipman," the commander said, as he came in. "He knows everything there is to be known about that little motor-boat, and undertakes to carry out any repairs with a tobacco-tin and a piece of string."

"Scarcely, sir!" the midshipman laughed. "But I'd do the best I could, Mr. Hood."

"Right!" Derwent Hood had expected an older officer, but he already felt that this youngster would serve him better. "And you are quite game for this little trip?"

"He is," Brewis interrupted. "Actually, of course, he will be in command of the boat, but I've no doubt you won't have any difficulties over that problem. The man who will go with you is Walters—quite a good fellow. He's putting the boat in order now. I've already given orders for the provisioning."

The three left the cabin and followed the commander to where several men were busy overhauling and unfastening the motor-launch, while various packages were being stowed away in the lockers or packed as conveniently as possible in any vacant corner. A big, strapping A.B. watched this latter business carefully, making a mental note of the hiding-place of the different commodities.

In half an hour everything had been checked, examined, and passed as being in order. Brewis had his last chat with Derwent Hood and Midshipman Dexter.

"You quite understand the arrangement, then?" he asked. "I shall be back here in two weeks' time; that should give you heaps of time to explore everywhere and get everything you want. But if you're not back I shall cruise round for a week or more, so at the outside you have very nearly a month before you. Still, a couple of weeks ought to do it."

"I think you'll find that in that time we shall be here waiting for you," Hood answered confidently. "Don't you go and get blown up in the meantime!"

"No fear!" the commander answered. "Good-bye, and good luck!"

A few minutes later the motor-launch was bobbing on the waves. The midshipman held the little steering-wheel, and before him was a chart of the coast. Presently he looked across at Hood.

"I fancy we're entering the river now," he said. "It's pretty broad at the mouth. I don't propose to go many miles to night. We won't take any risks of missing the brutes if they really are up the river."

"I think we shall find them all right," Hood answered. "I've got a kind of instinct that I'm going to meet my man Zelling very quickly this journey. And this time I don't want to make any mistake."

Baron Zelling's Invitation!

"What are those three up to, I wonder?" Teddy Burke whispered to Darrell, as they lay in a little nook just below the level stretch which had now become the chief home of the Kielberg's crew.

A little to their right Zelling, Von Bohn, and another officer were talking together. They were quite unaware of the fact that their position was observed, for, just as Darrell and Burke had done, they had chosen a quiet, secluded corner for their conference. And it seemed as though every time the two chums scrambled into their little shelter they were able to look down and along, and see the baron earnestly discussing matters with Von Bohn, or one or two of the other officers of the Kielberg.

What was the object of these secret meetings neither Darrell nor Burke could tell, but they guessed pretty



Suddenly Darrell seized Burke's arm, almost causing him to drop his rod. "What's that, Teddy?" he asked excitedly. "Isn't it another boat? Look at the flag they're flying!" "It—it's the Union Jack!" Burke cried. "Hooray! Let's give them a cheer!" (See page 28.)

accurately that there was some plan afoot to displace the captain. In some way which the chums could not gather, this was to bring Zelling and his friends back to Germany again.

Zelling had spoken to them once or twice in the past few days, but it was always with the same object. He wanted them to be on his side, as he termed it.

"I can't quite make it out," Darrell said. "Here we are without the slightest chance of getting away, and yet old Zelling is keener than ever on his plots and plans. He must have some wonderful idea up his sleeve, and apparently he's got to get rid of the captain first. Personally, if I could only write home, and let them know I'm fit and well, I'd be quite content with a few weeks of this game."

"So should I," Burke agreed. "Only there is the trouble—you don't know when we are going to get back home, or what we are in for before this part of the game is over. It's been pretty jolly here for the last few days since we landed, but we're a long way from home, and—"

"I know," Darrell interrupted. "I've been thinking a lot about it, Teddy, and it seems to me that if we put our faith in old Diemster, we'll just stick here for ever and ever. And if we give in to that beast Zelling, you can rely upon it that we sha'n't be any better off!"

"That's right enough," Burke agreed. "Look at the beast now. He's got Von Bohn all right, and I'd like to punch both their heads. We won't join in with Zelling!"

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"We won't!" Darrell was very definite on the point. "And if we simply stick as a kind of neutral, and just do nothing, I think we'll come off worse than ever. We've got to act on our own. That's all!"

"How?" Burke was generally the first to suggest new ideas, and he looked at his chum in amazement now.

"I've been studying it all out on the map," Darrell went on. "And I've been watching the chap who uses that motorboat they've got. They've always got sentries on the watch at night, but we could dodge them."

"You mean we could pinch the boat, and simply clear off?" Burke asked. "But where?"

"We'd go to the mouth of the river, and then turn up the coast. There's a place called Pinda, and I'll bet we could get a boat from there to take us somewhere, perhaps up to Loanda, and then from there we'd get on to some bigger port. Anyway, we'd get a boat to England in the end, and then—What a yarn to tell St. Dunstan's!"

"And what a row there'd be about me!" Burke answered. "But I'm game, Jack. We'll watch to-night, and see how they run the sentries and do that kind of thing."

Once the idea had gripped them they could talk of nothing else. The few days they had been living on the banks of the Kunene had really been quite enough. It was strange how, under Captain Diemster's orders, everything had quickly settled down into working order.

The ship was used as the store-room, but each morning men were busy as usual in cleaning everything on board. Hunting-parties were told off; fishing expeditions were organised. Other men were engaged in taking stock of what was on board, and altogether the crew were kept just as busy as they were when the boat was at sea.

On the plateau above the river rough huts were being built, and the work of clearing the ground was still carried on. Various means were taken to rid the place of pests, or at least to drive them a safe distance away.

Darrell and Burke had taken little part in this, though they had been allowed to accompany a party in one of the ship's boats when they went to discover the chances of adding fish to their larder.

"Let's go across to the boat, and have a look at the maps," Darrell suggested. "I'll show you which way I think we could go."

They went down to the river-bank, and then on to the boat. The officers' library was deserted, and Darrell quickly discovered the maps he wanted.

For half an hour or more they talked, or studied the maps. Burke suggested they should make a copy of them for use when they put their plan into execution.

It was very pleasant in the library. No one came in, and the quietness was needful to the calm consideration of their scheme.

Yet when they rose at last to leave the place, who should be sitting in one of the armchairs but Zelling. How he had come in and sought this alcove, almost under their nose, was not easy to understand.

As soon as Zelling saw them going out he also rose.

"Oh, prince," he said, very pleasantly, "I wish you would give me five minutes of your time. I wanted to see you particularly."

"Both of us?" queried Darrell.

"No, not this time. I've really very little to say."

Burke wandered on, treading carefully on the sloping floors, while Darrell went back to one of the chairs.

"I heard most of your conversation a little while ago," Zelling began, "and am sorry you are thinking of trying such a hazardous plan by yourself. You won't get away, of course, and if I were you I shouldn't attempt it, as I have already arranged an easier way."

He paused for Darrell to make some reply, but Jack was feeling too horribly disappointed to say a word.

"So I just want to repeat to you my previous advice," Zelling went on. "You had better agree to give me all the help you can—otherwise it may be too late. As it is, I am afraid your friend will have to be dropped."

"Then you can count me out, too!" retorted Darrell. "I think perhaps I'd better go and see the captain, and tell him what you propose to do."

Zelling laughed.

"Go by all means!" he sneered, then advanced suddenly, and caught Darrell by the arm. "You young fool! Why can't you act reasonably? You have everything to gain and nothing to lose. This is the last chance you'll get of coming of your own free will. To-night—"

He stopped abruptly. The anger went from his face almost as quickly as it had come, and he held out his hand to Darrell. The latter simply ignored it as he repeated the baron's last word.

"To-night—what about to-night?"

"Just nothing! I wish there were something!" Zelling answered. "Aren't you getting tired of this? I am. However, I'll see you again, and have a longer chat with you to-morrow."

He went out of the big cabin, leaving Darrell simply more perplexed than ever. He could not understand what the baron was driving at; and it was horribly unfortunate that he had heard Burke and himself discussing their plans.

On deck Darrell found Teddy very much interested in one of the sailors who was trying to get one of the boats away.

"He's going fishing, I think," Burke explained. "Let's go with him, Jack. I guess we can talk as much as we want because this chap doesn't understand English."

The man appeared to have no objection to their company, and they climbed down into one of the ship's boats he was just about to untie. Pushing out carefully into the centre of the river, the sailor cast anchor, and began fishing operations.

There were two rods, home-made, it is true, but good enough for anything. The sailor took one and Teddy Burke the other, as Darrell was not anxious to test his ability this evening. He was quite content to sit and watch.

Presently his gaze wandered from the fishing-floats to the bend of the river. Suddenly he seized Burke's arm, almost causing him to drop his rod.

"What's that, Teddy?" he asked excitedly. "Isn't it another boat? Look at the little flag they're flying!"

"It—it's the Union Jack!" Burke cried. "Hooray! Let's give 'em a cheer!"

"Shut up!" Darrell ordered. "We don't want to let everybody know. Wait till they get nearer. Now— Give 'em a call! Not too loud!"

They hailed the boat, which was now coming ahead very slowly. Someone was looking at them through glasses; then a handkerchief was waved to them.

The sailor who was with Darrell and Burke watched the oncoming launch with as much fascination as the two chums. When at last it came right alongside he uttered never a word, but began to pull in his anchor.

In the motor-boat were three men. One of them, a tall, pleasant-looking man dressed in a suit of white drill, stood in the centre of the boat, and called to the two chums.

"Darrell and Burke?" he asked. "Are those your names?"

"Yes," they both gave the answer together.

The next moment the three men were clinging to the German boat, pulling their own alongside.

"Jump in—and quick!" the tall man said to the boys. "There's no time to waste! We've come for you!"

Neither of them needed any proof. Before the dull-witted and astonished German could say a word, both Darrell and Burke had scrambled into the motor-launch.

"Now we're all right!" Burke cried. "Love to Baron Zelling! I guess he'll be mad when he finds we've disappeared!"

But the German sailor by this time had realised what had happened, and was crying out with all his might.

The young naval man who was in charge of the launch had started her going again, and was now endeavouring to turn round.

"Watch out for any of those beastly sandbanks, Walters!" he said to the man near him. "We don't want to run ashore."

Derwent Hood was anxiously watching in case anyone should appear on the scene prepared to give chase. Not until the launch had safely turned did he breathe safely.

"I think we're clear now, Dexter," he said. "Right away!"

He turned to Darrell.

"You didn't expect this little surprise, I guess—" he began, when Teddy Burke suddenly called out:

"Drop your head! They're going to fire!"

Shooting from under the curtain of foliage which hid the Kielberg, came another motor-launch, practically level with them. And in the bow stood an officer, a revolver in his hand.

A shot rang out, but passed harmlessly above them. Jack Darrell ventured to look up.

"Great Scott! It's Von Bohn—and old Zelling's there, too!" he cried. "I—I'm afraid they'll get us!"

The Kielberg's boat was racing furiously through the water now, in an endeavour to get to the bend first, it seemed. The British boat, flaunting its Union Jack, also spurted ahead, and for a few moments it was a neck-and-neck race. But the German had the inside course. As they approached the bend the German gained a lead of a yard or two owing to this advantage.

"Let her rip, Dexter!" Hood begged, almost pathetically.

But even as he did so the German boat swung across. Its intention seemed to be to run the British boat down at all costs, even though it meant smashing their own boat.

Dexter probably realised this, for he shut down as quickly as he dared. The German boat just grazed him, then it, too, slowed down and pulled up a few yards ahead of the British launch.

For a minute the two boats lay practically motionless. But the German boat was in front. There were six or seven aboard her, and all seemed to be armed in some way or other.

One of them stood up and faced Hood, who had also risen to his feet. It was Baron Zelling, and he recognised Derwent Hood.

"How are you, Mr. Hood?" he called. "We meet again, and, I fear, the advantage lies with me once more. Won't you come back to our little camp with me for a chat?"

For a moment Hood stood silent. With his eye he measured the distance between them, and calculated the prospects of getting past them. Then he laughed, quite cheerfully, it seemed.

"Pleased to meet you, baron!" he called to the figure in the other boat. "If that invitation of yours includes a nicely-cooked meal, I think we'll all come along with you."

And then, bending down, he whispered to Dexter:

"We'd better go back, I guess. There's no hope of getting away from them just yet."

(Look out for next Monday's instalment of this exciting yarn. Order your "MAGNET" early!)

MY READERS' PAGE

OUR COMPANION PAPERS:

"THE BOYS' FRIEND," 1d., Every Monday. "THE GEM" LIBRARY, 1d., Every Wednesday. "THE BOYS' FRIEND" 3d. COMPLETE LIBRARY "THE PENNY POPULAR," 1d., Every Friday. "CHUCKLES," Price 1d., Every Saturday.

The Editor is always pleased to hear from his chums, at home or abroad, and is only too willing to give his best advice to them if they are in difficulty or in trouble. . . . Whom to write to: Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

For Next Monday:

"CHAMPION OF THE OPPRESSED!"

By Frank Richards.

Under this title, which speaks eloquently for itself, Frank Richards has penned an admirable story of the great Coker. The burly, blustering member of the Fifth Form, having tried his hand at many things, and succeeded at none, turns his attention to the bullying methods of Gerald Loder, and puts himself enthusiastically on the side of the prefect's victims. Great is the excitement when Coker meets Loder in fair fight, and trounces him thoroughly and completely; but when the enterprising Coker eventually sets authority at naught, and seeks to rule Greyfriars by his own hand, the Head comes down heavy, and Horace Coker,

"CHAMPION OF THE OPPRESSED!"

is severely flogged by Dr. Locke, and brought to realise that it is not wise policy to kick against the powers that be.

"THE GREYFRIARS HERALD."

Definite Decision Next Monday.

In our next issue of the "Magnet" Library I shall be in a position to give my chums a definite "Yea" or "Nay" concerning the possibilities of bringing out "The Greyfriars Herald" every week as a separate halfpenny paper.

At the time of writing, the response to my appeal of a few weeks back has been a comparatively poor one, only 53,000 readers having stated their approval, whereas it was necessary that 100,000 boys and girls should do so.

It depends, therefore, on the number of postcards I receive in the course of the next few days whether the scheme will stand or fall. I am not a pessimist, but it really seems to me that the latter event will come about, unless shoals of appreciative postcards reach the Fleetway House shortly after these words are published.

Come on, you fellows! The single word "Yes" on a postcard will answer the purpose. Send in your opinion now!

Write to Your Editor About It!

Although, so far as the appeal for "The Greyfriars Herald" is concerned, my correspondence has been of an unsatisfactory nature, in other respects it has bucked up tremendously. Indeed, I never remember having received such a colossal number of letters from loyal readers in any period of the "Magnet" Library's flourishing existence.

I expect most of my chums realised this fact when they saw that I had latterly been devoting an extra page in order to reply to my numerous correspondents. Even with this innovation, however, I find it a very difficult, almost an impossible, task to acknowledge every single letter I receive. In future, therefore, I shall continue to write to readers on topics of general interest, but I shall have to content myself with acknowledging the rest of my correspondence by stating the reader's name and town only. This strikes me as being the best way out of the difficulty, and it is certainly much more satisfactory than ignoring the letters of some of my chums entirely.

Just another word on this important subject. Do not imagine, because of these remarks, that I have any desire to choke my chums off in any way. I want them to write to me as often as of yore, on any subject which worries or perplexes them. Ideas for new features and for future stories will also be warmly welcomed. In a nutshell, write as much and as often as you like, but do not, as is the case with some impatient individuals, expect to see a reply on this or the next page the week after you write. It usually takes four or five weeks for an answer to appear.

TOO SPLENDID FOR WORDS!

I said a few weeks ago that our circulation had reached a higher point than at any former period of our history. I need not have wasted time and space in making such an observation, for since that time the good old "Magnet" has made meteoric progress, and is now riding on the crest-wave of a great and glorious success.

To all my friends and readers who have brought about this end, many thanks! May the grand work which you are doing to lift the "Magnet" Library head and shoulders above every other boys' paper in the world be amply rewarded. Your Editor and friend feels most sincerely and genuinely grateful to you for your efforts, and his best wishes are with you always.



REPLIES IN BRIEF.

R. Brine and A. Waller.—Pleased to hear you enjoyed "Sportsmen All." This story supplied a long-felt want.

M. McGrath (Sydney).—If it is decided to bring out "The Greyfriars Herald" as a regular weekly feature, I want all my Australian chums to rally round and give it a good start off.

C. Smith (East Ham).—There is not a great gulf fixed between the Shell and the Lower Fourth, so there can be no object in saying that Tom Merry is a much better scholar than Harry Wharton.

E. B. (Birmingham).—I have to thank you for your excellent letter, which is enough to make the most bigoted critic shrivel up. Stick to the "Magnet," sonny.

Henry Pratt (Fulham).—Many thanks for your letter. Keep the flag flying in Fulham!

"The Terrible Three" (Chester).—Wingate minor is still at Greyfriars. Didn't you read the Double Number story, in which he played so prominent a part? No; all the Sixth Formers are not prefects.

"Inquirer" (Kidderminster).—The weekly salary of Charles Chaplin, of the Essanay Film Company, is estimated at £300.

E. H. Jervis (Stoke-on-Trent).—Wingate is probably the most powerful boxer in the Sixth Form, and Courtney the most scientific.

Harry M. (Nottingham).—Thank you very much, indeed for the good work you are doing on behalf of the companion papers. You're a brick!

Gladys Russell (Victoria).—Mr. Prout is the oldest master at Greyfriars, and the oldest boy in the Famous Five is Bull.

Albert Peel (Sydney).—You want a remedy for stopping the growth of hair on the upper lip? Shave, my dear reader—shave!

G. A. Greaves.—What's that? You haven't heard anything of Mark Linley for months? What about the celebrated occasion when he won the Marathon race in "Sportsmen All"?

"A Newingtonian" (New South Wales).—I have already made ample provision for soldiers at the front in the matter of their receiving copies of the companion papers. Thanks very much for your letter and good wishes.

Private Harry Taylor, of the 1st East Lancs Regt., now in France, writes me a long and encouraging letter, in which he puts the critics to shame. He says: "I consider you are doing your bit in providing such a grand book as the 'Magnet' for the boys in the trenches, and all my comrades back me up. Your reply to the critics was indeed straight from the shoulder, and we all admire you for it. Don't desert your post, and make us lose the good old 'Magnet.'"

"A Loyal Jewish Reader."—Many thanks for your suggestion. I am afraid there would be some difficulty in carrying it out, however

The Editor

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