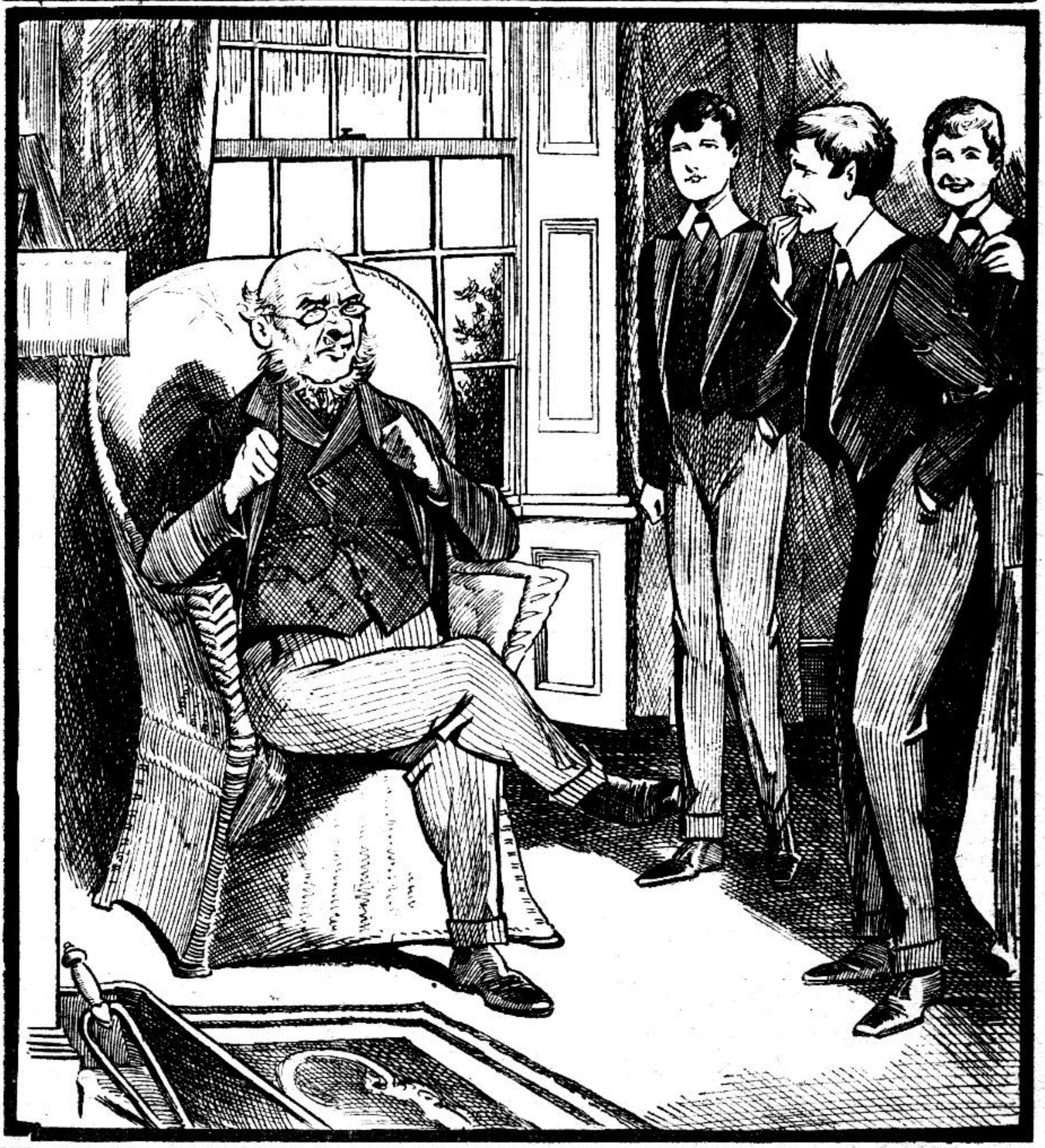
THE TRICKSTER TRICKED!

A Grand Long Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.

The Magnet 1d Library

No. 444. Vol. 10. AUGUST 12th, 1916.



MR. SKINNER SAT DOWN IN THE ARMCHAIR WITH HIS BACK TO THE LIGHT. "NOW, WOT ABOUT SOME GRUB?" HE SAID.

(An Exciting Incident in the Magnificent Long Complete School Tale in this Issue.)

MY READERS' PAGE

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:

"RAKE'S RIVAL!"

By Frank Richards.

Rake, of the Greyfriars Remove, is as typical a British schoolboy as could well be found—full of fun, plucky, keen on games, not too fond of Form work—a staunch chum and a generous enemy. Thus far he has seldom, if ever, been shown hard up against serious trouble. But in the grand, long, complete story which appears next week he finds himself confronted with the sterner things of life; and, although a trifle taken aback at times and doubtful as to his course, he comes out of a trying ordeal with flying colours. His rival—a jealous and unscrupulous one—is a certain Arthur Carthew, a new boy at Greyfriars, whose ambition is to get the place in the cricket team which has been promised by Harry Wharton to Dick Rake. To attain his end, Carthew stops short at no meanness; and his schemes are helped by knowledge unfairly obtained as to a secret which Rake is keeping. It is not Rake's own secret, but that of a cousin. There is another secret in which the new boy himself is concerned. Billy Bunter is the instrument of bringing this to light, and through him the tables are turned most completely upon

"RAKE'S RIVAL!"

A CURE FOR BLUSHING.

I have had so many letters of late from boys who suffer from the distressing habit of causeless blushing, and in so few cases have names and addresses been given, so as to enable me to write to the sufferers, that I am going to devote a few lines to the subject here.

Let me start by saying that I don't in the least believe that medicine will help in the great majority of cases, and I should not advise taking it except under doctor's orders. Here and there a tonic may be needed. But that depends on how you are feeling; and quite often the blusher is as fit and well as the next fellow.

What is the matter with him is a thin skin. I don't mean in a physical sense. I mean that he cares too much about other people's opinions as to things which really do not matter one way or another.

Public opinion is an important thing—when it concerns itself with matters of importance. It is not so when the question is as to whether the tie you are wearing is just the thing, or whether your new dodge of parting your hair in the middle is becoming, or about your stopping to speak to a girl you know, or taking off your hat to somebody. Get it into your mind that there is really no public opinion about things of this sort—that no one is troubling himself about them. For those who chip others on such trifling matters are not worth regarding at all.

In short, try to get out of the way of believing that your little world always has its eyes upon you. This belief induces awkwardness, and from the feeling of awkwardness comes the trick of blushing. Think about your work, your games, the book you are reading, not about yourself and what others are thinking of you. Take it from me, that most of them simply are not thinking about you at all!

THE BROTHER OF A CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR.

I have had a letter from a boy who says that he is not a regular reader of this paper, but has read a few numbers. He has heard from some of his friends who are regular readers that Mr. Richards has made uncomplimentary remarks about conscientious objectors, and he is surprised. He himself is the brother of a conscientious objector, he says, and he is proud of it. Well, each to his taste! If I were the brother of a conscientious objector of the usual type, I should be bitterly ashamed of it; and even if my brother were a Quaker, or belonged to one of the other sects which do truly repudiate the idea of fighting, even in self-defence, I should not feel proud. I believe that war is the last foolishness, the most absurd way of settling disputes. But, nevertheless, I do not believe in the man who will not fight for his rights and for the things dear to him. It may be folly to fight; but it is cowardice not to fight. Better by far be a fool than a coward!

"It is clear that Mr. Richards does not understand conscientious objectors," says my correspondent, "so the least he can do is to cease throwing nasty slurs." But let the C.O. and his friends be consistent! If fighting is so completely out of their line, let them receive in the proper spirit of meekness any criticism directed at them. Calling it "a slur" does not really destroy its force. If your principles will allow you to sit tight while the Germans do as they please with your nearest and dearest, surely you have no right to kick at any name anyone chooses to call you! Be meek all the time, or don't be meek at all!

NOTICES.

For Back Numbers, etc.

By B. Godson, 119, Nicholson Road, Heeley, Sheffield—"Magnet" volumes 1-9, clean.

By R. S. Monerieffe, 27, Museum Street, W.C.—"Surprising the School," "The Rival Ventriloquists," "Hurree Singh's Peril," "Alonzo's Marvellous Mixture," and the story about Bunter's cousin.

By Private D. Mayers, 21840, Machine Gunner, 8th Batt. K.O.Y.L.I., 23rd I.B.D., Sec. 17, care of A.P.O., B.E.F., France—"Magnet" sent weekly by some generous reader.

By Rifleman H. Johnston, 5300, C Coy. 6th King's Irish Rifles, St. George's Hospital, Malta—Back Numbers of the Companion Papers.

By Cyril Pratt, 111, Far Gosford Street, Coventry—"The Mystic Circle," "Bob Cherry's Barring-Out," and "Carried Away." Double prices offered; also 4d. for No. 1 of the "Magnet."

Miss Stella M. Sisley, Woodhurst, St. Barnabas Street, Sutton—"The Boy Without a Name."

By James R. Burnside, 16, Thirlmere Road, Anfield, Liverpool—"Kaiser or King?" "The Flying Armada," and other stories of the same type published in the "Boys' Friend" 3d. Library.

By W. Bennett, 59, Wingfield Road, Trowbridge—Some back numbers of the Companion Papers for his soldier brother at the Front.

By E. S. Watkins, 34, Croxteth Grove, Liverpool—"Kaiser or King?" and "The Conquest of London."

By G. S. Green, 52, Wantz Road, Maldon, Essex—"Greyfriars Herald" No. 2.

By Private J. Blackham, 487, 1/1 East Lancashire Field Ambulance, Egyptian Exp. Force, Egypt, Christmas, 1915, Double Number of "Magnet." He was in Gallipoli when it came out.

By C. Prime, 64, Dresden Road, Highgate, N., "Wun Lung's Wheeze."

By Walter Blease, High Row, Aycliffe, Darlington, "Carried Away."

By E. Binderman, 149, High Street, Shoreditch, E., "Penny Popular," No. 1.

By G. H. Edwards, Office of Superintendent of Line, Cambrian Railways, Oswestry—"The Boy Without a Name," "School and Sport," and the "Magnets" in which the Bounder gets the Famous Five expelled one by one.

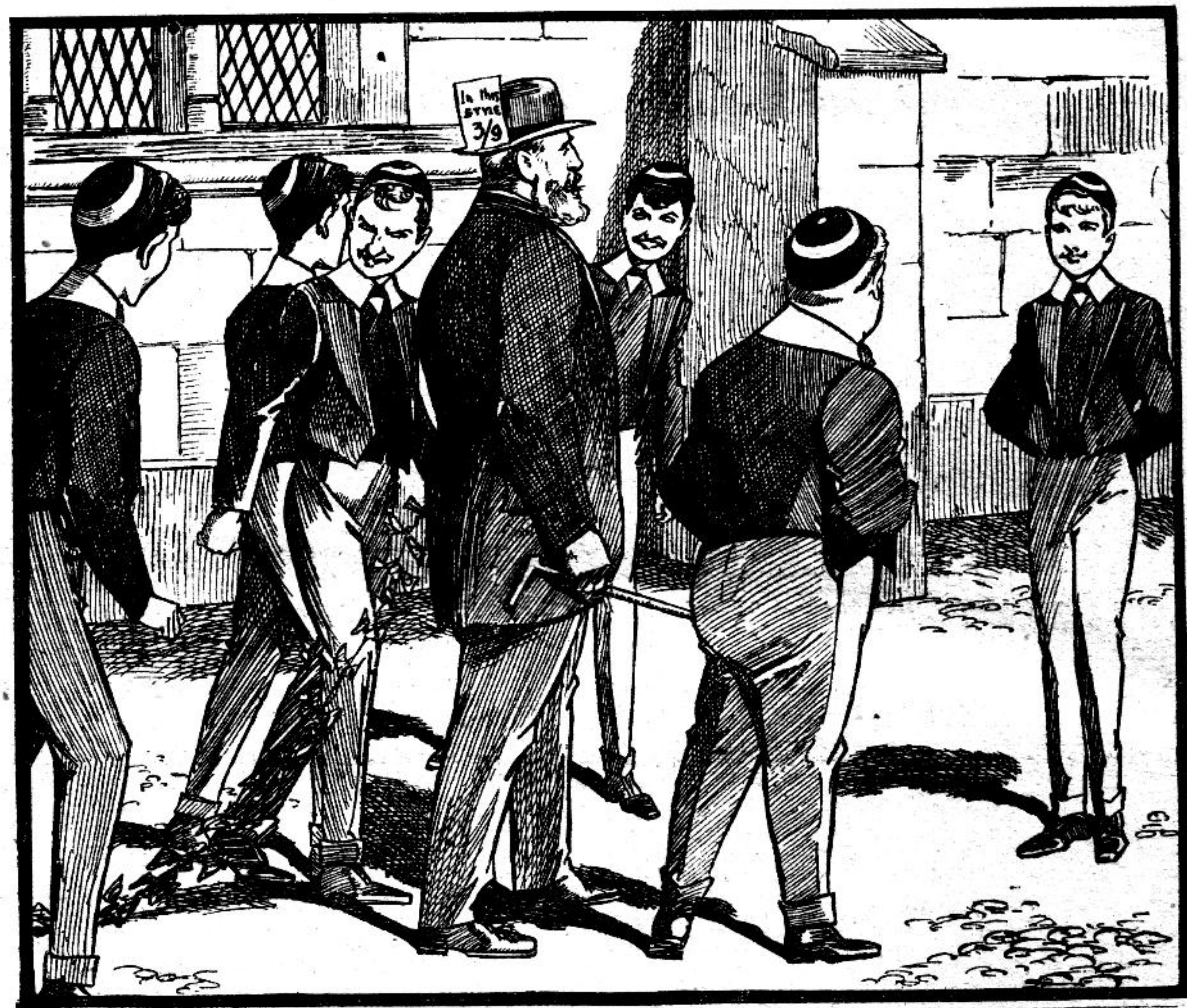
Your Editor

The Magnet Library 1d

THE TRICKSTER TRICKED!

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

By FRANK RICHARDS.



The Fourth-Formers burst into an involuntary laugh. They did not mean to be rude to the stranger, but they could not help it. The sight of an unsuspicious man with the tail of a kite dangling behind him, and a price ticket at the back of his hat, was too much. *(See Chapter* **6.)**

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
Outside!

CRASH!

Mark Linley stopped suddenly in the Remove passage as he heard that crash from Wibley's study.

It was a half-holiday at Greyfriars—a sunny afternoon. Everybody, or nearly everybody, was out of doors.

Harry Wharton & Co. of the Remove were playing the Upper Fourth on Little Side, and most of the other Removites were there to watch the match. But Mark had been working at Greek in his study. His work finished, the Lancashire lad was going out to see how the cricketers were getting on when he heard that crash in No. 6.

Crash!

"What the dickens——" muttered Mark, in amazement.

He opened the study door and looked in. The study belonged to Rake and Wibley and Morgan and Desmond, and he knew that they were on the cricket-ground.

Crash!

Skinner and Snoop of the Remove were in the study. They were standing by a large box under the window, and Skinner was wielding a poker. As Mark looked in the poker came down with another crash on the lock.

"What are you up to?" exclaimed Mark.

Skinner and Snoop swung round hastily.

There was alarm and guilt in their faces, and it was evident that they feared for a moment that the owners of the study had returned.

"All serene! It's only Linley!" said Skinner, much relieved.

"Mum's the word, Linley!" said Snoop.

Mark came into the study, frowning.

"What are you doing with Wib's property-box?" he asked.

"Suppose you mind your own business?" suggested Skinner. "I suppose Wibley hasn't asked you to look after his box?"

"You were trying to break it open!" exclaimed Mark.

"Exactly!"

"What for?"

"What does a chap generally open a box for?" queried Skinner in his turn. "To get at what's inside, you know!"

"You have no right to burst open Wibley's box!" said Mark.

"Can't you keep your oar out of what doesn't concern you?" asked Skinner. "Go back to your swotting, you blessed prize-hunter!"

"Yes; mind your own business, you know!" urged Snoop. "Don't chip in where you're not wanted! You're not in your factory now, you know!"

"You're not going to smash Wib's things while he's out!" said Mark quietly, taking no heed of Snoop's taunt. "Let that box alone!"

"Who's going to stop us?" demanded Skinner.

"I am, if necessary!"

"You cheeky factory bounder——"

"That will do!" said Mark. "They did not play dirty tricks like that in my factory, at all events! You'll let that box alone!"

Skinner and Snoop exchanged glances. They were two to one, and they were not troubled with any scruples about fair play. But they felt a certain hesitation about tackling the sturdy Lancashire lad.

"Look here!" said Skinner, after a pause. "I'm going to open that box! Wibley keeps his rubbish in it—his theatrical rot! I'm going to make a bonfire of the lot!"

"Why, you rotter, those things cost Wibley ever so much!" exclaimed Mark. "Some of them belong to the Remove Dramatic Society, too."

"The Remove Dramatic Society can go and eat coke!" said Skinner. "Wibley is too jolly fond of playing the fool with these things. If he impersonates a chap and makes game of him he can take the consequences! See?"

Mark grinned faintly. He understood Skinner's object now. Wibley, the amateur actor of the Remove, could impersonate anybody; and the previous night he had set the Remove dormitory in a roar with an artistic rendering of Harold Skinner. He had acted over again a certain adventure of Skinner's with a cigar, which Skinner had smoked with direful results internally. All the Remove fellows had considered it very funny—excepting Skinner. To play the part, Wibley had adopted a sallow and sickly complexion, and by clever make-up had made his mouth appear larger, his eyes closer together, and his whole expression extremely cunning and foxy—all the Removites, excepting Skinner, declaring that he had made himself the exact image of the black sheep of the Remove. Skinner was not at all pleased to "see himself as others saw him"—not in the least.

This was Skinner's revenge. But for the fact that Mark had stayed in his study to swot, it would have been carried out easily enough, all the rest of the Remove being out of doors and the studies deserted.

"Wibley is too jolly clever!" said Snoop. "He imitated me the other day—not that it was anything like me, of course!"

"And when he finds his rubbish burned it may be a lesson to him," said Skinner. "I'm going to make a clean sweep of the whole lot!"

Mark shook his head.

"You can't," he said. "Wibley's little joke was a bit personal, but you could punch his head if you don't like it. Burning his property is a bit too thick!"

"I suppose I can please myself about that?"

"Not while I'm here!"

"Clear off, then!"

"I'll see you two safe out of the study first!" said Mark. "Don't be a cad, Skinner! Besides, Wibley and his friends would rag you bald-headed for this!"

"Not unless you sneak about what you've seen!" sneered Snoop.

"Well, I sha'n't do that; but I sha'n't let you go on with it!" said Mark quietly. "It's a rotten trick, and you know it!"

"Not quite up to the high standard of the factory you lived in before you wangled a scholarship and sneaked in here?" suggested Skinner.

"That is quite true!" said Mark, unmoved. "Never mind the factory now! You fellows had better get out of this study!"

"Well, we're not going!"

Mark paused.

"I can't stay here and watch you," he said. "I'm going down to cricket. Now, I ask you civilly to step out!"

"You can go and eat coke!"

"Go back to your swotting!" suggested Snoop. "If you don't grind, you won't bag the prizes away from the other chaps, you know!"

Mark flushed a little. It was rather hard that he could not stick to his work without being called a swot and a prize-hunter. But he was accustomed to the sneers of Skinner & Co., and he gave them little heed.

"Are you going?" he asked.

"No fear!"

Skinner raised the poker again, and crashed it on the lock, to show Mark how little he cared for his interference. There was a terrific crash, and the lock burst open.

The next moment a powerful grasp was laid on Skinner, and the poker was wrenched away and tossed clanging into the fender.

"Hands off, you factory cad!" yelled Skinner furiously.

Mark did not heed. He whirled Skinner towards the door. The weedy slacker of the Remove had little chance in his strong hands.

"Back up, Snoop!" yelled Skinner.

Snoop sprang forward to his aid.

Mark released one hand, and a quick back-hander sent Sidney James Snoop staggering across the study.

Then Skinner went through the doorway—head first. He bumped in the passage outside, and roared. Mark turned on Snoop.

Snoop dodged round the table.

"Hands off, you factory cad! I—I—I'm going!"

"Better go sharp, then!"

Snoop dodged out of the study, stumbling over Skinner in his haste. Mark Linley followed them out, changed the key to the outside of the door, and locked it. Snoop staggered against the wall. Skinner sat up and panted.

"You rotter! You cheeky cad! Grooh!"

Mark gave them a glance, and then walked down the passage, with the key of Wibley's study in his pocket. Skinner staggered to his feet. Neither of the raggers followed Mark. They had had enough.

"The cheeky cad!" gasped Snoop. "A factory rotter like that handling us! He ain't fit for a fellow to touch, or I'd—I'd lick him!"

"You couldn't lick one side of him, or you'd do it!" snarled Skinner.

"Well, you couldn't, either!" snapped Snoop.

Skinner ground his teeth.

"I know I couldn't! But I'll make him sorry for this, all the same! There's another way!"

And Skinner and Snoop limped savagely away. Wibley's property was out of their reach now. But for some time afterwards the two cads of the Remove were in deep consultation, and the subject of their discussion was Mark Linley and the punishment that was to fall upon the scholarship junior if Skinner could contrive it. And Skinner thought that he could.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Wibley on the War-path!

"BRAVO, Rake!"

Harry Wharton & Co. were going strong when Mark Linley arrived on Little Side.

Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Fourth, were all out for sixty. Wharton had knocked up twenty for the Remove before he was out. Bob Cherry and Dick Rake were at the wickets now, and they were making the fur fly. Rake had just hit the ball to the boundary.

Wibley and Morgan and Micky Desmond were cheering their study-mate vociferously. No. 6 Study was not always represented in the Remove eleven, but Dick Rake was bringing glory on the study in this innings.

Mark tapped Wibley on the shoulder.

"Hallo!" said Wibley, looking round. "Finished your swotting?"

Mark Linley laid a powerful grasp on Skinner, and the poker was wrenched away and tossed clanging into the fender. "Hands off, you factory cad!" yelled Skinner furiously. (*See Chapter* 1.)

"Yes," said Mark, with a smile. "Here's the key of your study."

Wibley stared as he took the key.

"Thanks! But what the merry dickens have you brought me my key for?"

"I've locked your door."

"The merry dickens you have!"

"Faith, and what have you locked up our study for intirely?" demanded Micky Desmond.

"There was a ragging going on, and I thought I'd better," said Mark. "You won't find much damage done."

"A ragging!" ejaculated Wibley. "Who's had the cheek to rag my study?"

"Oh, some fellows!"

"Who are they?" demanded Morgan. "Tell us who they were, look you, and we will go and talk to them!"

"Oh, never mind who they were—there's no much harm done."

And Mark walked away to the pavilion, to avoid further questioning. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh were in the group there, looking on at the batting. They greeted Mark cheerily.

"I gave Rake your place, Linley," said Wharton. "He's keeping his end up rippingly."

"The ripfulness is terrific!" declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Hallo, there goes Bob's wicket! Man in, Inky."

"I am ready, my esteemed chum."

Hurree Singh walked out as Bob Cherry came off the pitch. Bob was ruddy and cheery. He had bagged twelve runs for his side, and Temple of the Fourth had been lucky to take his wicket. He greeted Mark, who was his study-mate, with a tremendous slap on the shoulder.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Done with Xenophon for this afternoon? How many parasangs have they marched since I left you?"

Mark laughed.

"And you might have been playing cricket, and you marched with that blessed Ten Thousand instead," said Bob. "There's no accounting for tastes."

"You haven't missed me, as far as the cricket goes."

"Oh, no! Rake's done jolly well, and we sha'n't need all our wickets, anyway. The Fourth haven't an earthly."

Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Fourth, were beginning to realise that they hadn't an "earthly." As a matter of fact, Bob's was the last wicket down. The Remove were winners with five wickets in hand. The Removites grinned over the result, and Cecil Reginald Temple of the Fourth was a little pink as he led his merry men off the field.

"You kids have had rather good luck," drawled Cecil Reginald, in a lofty, patronising way, and he sauntered off before the Removites could think of a suitable rejoinder. Cecil Reginald had the happy gift of being always satisfied with his own performances—even when they were, according to Bob Cherry, enough to make a "cat laugh."

The chums of the Remove went in to tea when the play was over. Bob Cherry was in funds, and there was an uncommon spread in No. 13. The spread was going strong when Wibley came into the study, looking excited and wrathful.

"Linley, you ass——"

"Hallo!" said Mark, looking round.

"Who's been busting my property-box?"

Mark hesitated.

"The lock's smashed!" roared Wibley. "It will cost me five bob to get the damage mended. I want to know who did it!"

"Well, I'd rather not tell you," said Mark, colouring. "I turned the rotters out of your study, Wib, before any harm was done."

"I tell you the lock's busted into pieces——"

"But the props are all right."

"So they were going to damage my props?" demanded Wibley, in a sulphurous voice.

"Well, yes."

"I'm obliged to you for stopping them, but I want you to tell me who they were. I'm going to mop them up, and slaughter them, and scalp them!"

Mark shook his head.

"Look here, why won't you tell me?" demanded Wibley.

"I'd rather not be the cause of a row."

"Oh, you are a silly ass!"

"Thanks!" said Mark, laughing.

"And a frabjous dummy!" roared Wibley.

"Thanks again!"

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

Wibley stamped out of the study.

"The rotters ought to be licked for playing a trick like that," said Wharton.

"Well, they got rather a bump when they left Wib's study," said Mark. "I can't very well give him their names."

"No; that's all right. I think I can guess," said Harry.

"Well, Wib can guess if he likes," said Mark, smiling.

Apparently Wibley exercised his mental powers in guessing, and arrived somewhere near the truth; for there were sounds of strife later on in the Remove passage, and Skinner and Snoop were seen fleeing for their lives, with Wibley and Rake on their track. They fled into a box-room, where the pursuers cornered them, and the sounds that proceeded from the box-room during the next five minutes were full of anguish.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Surprising News!

THE Remove were at lessons on Saturday morning, when there was a tap at the door of the Form-room, and Trotter, the page, put his head in.

Mr. Quelch looked round sharply. The Remove-master did not like interruptions during lessons. The Removites did, and they were quite pleased to see Trotter. It gave them a brief rest from the immortal Virgil. It was possible to get fed-up, even with the great works of P. Virgilius Maro.

"Well?" rapped out Mr. Quelch.

"Telegram for Master Linley, sir," said Trotter.

"Oh! The lad may deliver it," said Mr. Quelch.

The lad from the post-office came into the Form-room, and Mark Linley rose in his place. Mark was surprised. He was not expecting a telegram. He thanked the lad quietly, and sat down again.

"You may open your telegram, Linley," said Mr. Quelch kindly.

Telegrams generally meant news of some kind—probably bad. Unless there was illness at home, Mark could not see why he should get a telegram.

"Thank you, sir!" he said.

He slit open the envelope, and drew out the slip of paper within.

The message was brief. It ran:

"Coming this afternoon—FATHER."

"My hat!" murmured Mark.

Bob Cherry nudged his elbow.

"Not bad news, old son?"

"Oh, no!" said Mark.

"Good!"

"I trust you have not received bad news from home, Linley?" said Mr. Quelch.

The Remove-master took a kindly interest in the hard-working scholarship junior.

"No, sir," said Mark. "My father is coming to see me this afternoon, that is all."

"Very good,"

The lesson was resumed. But Mark Linley did not give P. Virgilius Maro his undivided attention after that.

He was puzzled and perplexed.

He would be glad to see his father—the Lancashire lad sometimes felt very keenly the separation from his family, at so great a distance. But Mr. Linley had never given a hint of his intention to visit Greyfriars. It was very surprising that he should make up his mind to do so all of a sudden, and apprise his son by telegram. So far as Mark could see, there was no reason why his father should not have written.

Mr. Linley was a quiet, solid, thoughtful kind of man, not in the least liable to take sudden resolutions without apparent cause. Mark could not help feeling a little uneasy. Unless there was something wrong at home, he could not see what this sudden visit portended.

The Lancashire lad was very thoughtful during the remainder of the morning lessons. Some of the Removites eyed him curiously. It was well known that Mark's father was a workman, and that Mark himself had worked in a factory before he won his scholarship at Greyfriars.

It was common enough for fellows' relations to visit them at the school; but Mark's people had been conspicuous by their absence.

The expense of a train journey from Lancashire to Kent was a sufficient reason; but Skinner & Co., and fellows of their sort, hinted very broadly that Mark's relations were of a kind he would not care for the Greyfriars fellows to see. And even if it was merely the expense that stood in the way, that was enough to make Skinner & Co. sniff with contempt. What right had a fellow at Greyfriars, if his people couldn't afford to see him there? But Mark's father was not likely to spend a week's wages on a railway ticket, to propitiate Skinner & Co., even if he had known anything about those agreeable young gentlemen.

As it happened, however, Mark's father was "on munitions" at the present time, and there was an unaccustomed prosperity in the little home. For the first time, probably, Mr. Linley could afford the journey without great difficulty. Yet that alone was not sufficient to account for it. Yet if his mother or sister was ill, it was more likely that Mr. Linley would wire for him to come home. Mark could not understand it, and he was troubled in mind.

He did not observe that Skinner and his friends were whispering and grinning. The cads of the Remove were already speculating upon what kind of a "johnny" "old Linley" was, and what kind of a figure he would cut at Greyfriars.

Skinner, who was good at drawing, proceeded to design a weird figure in his exercise-book—the figure of a tipsy workman in corduroys, with a stumpy pipe in his mouth, and a rum-bottle sticking out of his pocket. Skinner's artistic effort elicited giggles from the fellows who saw it, and, unfortunately for the humorist of the Remove, drew Mr. Quelch's attention to him.

"Skinner," rapped out Mr. Quelch suddenly, "bring your exercise-book here!"

Skinner's jaw dropped.

"Do you hear me, Skinner?"

Harold Skinner unwillingly went out before the class with the book in his hand. The Remove-master took it, and looked at the picture.

"Very cleverly drawn, Skinner," he said. "You might choose a better subject, I think—your taste appears to be somewhat low, Skinner. Need I explain to you, Skinner, that the Form-room is not a suitable place for such efforts? Kindly tear out that page, and place it in the waste-paper-basket. You will take two hundred lines of 'Virgil,' Skinner."

Mr. Quelch had not guessed that the caricature was intended for Mark Linley's father, which was fortunate for Skinner.

The humorist of the Remove went back to his place scowling; and he did not venture to be humorous again before lessons were over.

When the class was dismissed, Bob Cherry joined Mark as the juniors left the Form-room.

"All serene, Marky?" he asked.

"I suppose so," said Mark. "I don't quite understand it. My father's wired that he's coming this afternoon."

"Good! We'll have him to tea in the study," said Bob heartily.

Mark smiled.

"That's a good idea," he said. "But it's odd that he shouldn't have written. He seems to have made his mind up very suddenly."

"May have got a sudden holiday?" suggested Bob.

"It's possible, of course; but he isn't likely to take a holiday now he's on munition work. But I suppose I shall know when he comes. I shall chuck cricket this afternoon. I don't know what time he's coming."

"We're playing the Shell," said Bob doubtfully. "Wharton will want you to play."

"I'll speak to Wharton."

"Just as you like," said Harry Wharton, when Mark explained to him. "But couldn't you play till he comes? I should think your pater would like to see you playing for the Remove."

"He would," said Mark. "But——"

He paused and coloured.

"But what?" asked Harry.

"I'd rather meet my father directly he comes," said Mark, flushing.

"All serene!" said Wharton, with a curious look at him. "I'll ask Rake to take your place in the eleven. He'll be glad."

Mark nodded and walked away.

"I—I suppose you'll want me this afternoon?" asked Bob.

"Yes, rather," said Wharton promptly. "Marky can look after his pater—at least, till the match is over, Bob."

"I think I see what's in his mind," said Bob, knitting his brows. "Do you think any of the fellows would be cads enough to chip his pater?"

"Well, one or two might," said Harry. "Skinner and Snoop and Stott seem awfully tickled about something already. But, dash it all, we want you to bat, Bob! The Shell are rather hefty for us, anyway."

"All serene!" said Bob. "I'll speak to some of the chaps. If there's any idea of chipping Linley's pater, it's going to be nipped in the bud."

"Yes, rather!"

After dinner, Bob confided his views to some of his friends in the Remove. All the Famous Five were playing in the cricket match, as well as Vernon-Smith, Peter Todd, Squiff, Tom Brown, Hazeldene, and Rake. But a good many of the fellows were quite willing to see that there was no rotting as far as Linley's father was concerned.

Wibley and Morgan and Micky Desmond agreed to keep an eye on Skinner & Co., and to deal with them drastically if they tried to make things uncomfortable for Linley senior. And the kind-hearted Bob went down to cricket feeling relieved in his mind.

— —

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
Rejected Kindness!

"HE, he, he!"

William George Bunter seemed greatly tickled. The Remove cricketers were on the ground, waiting for Hobson & Co. of the Shell, when Billy Bunter emitted that cachinnation.

"I say, you fellows, you'll miss all the fun this afternoon," grinned Bunter.

"What is the esteemed funfulness, my worthy fat Bunter?" asked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Old Linley, you know," chortled Bunter.

Bob Cherry began to glare. But the Owl of the Remove did not see that warning glare, and he chirruped on cheerfully:

"The old bounder's coming to see Linley, you know. Skinner thinks he'll turn up in corduroys, with his knees buckled, you know. He, he, he!"

"And suppose he did?" said Bob Cherry, in a sulphurous voice. "Is that anything for a fat toad to cackle at?"

"Oh, really, Cherry! Snoop thinks he will arrive tipsy. Do you think he will turn up here tipsy, Wharton?"

"Oh, shut up, you fat idiot!" said Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton! Snoop says he's certain to have a bottle of gin in his pocket. All the working classes drink gin, you know," said Bunter, with an air of great knowledge. "They simply roll in it. What do you think the Head will say if he comes here boozy, Bob?"

Bob Cherry did not reply in words. He took Billy Bunter by the collar, and forcibly applied his bat to Bunter's fat person. The fat junior roared in astonishment and wrath.

"Yarooh! Wharrer you at? Leggo! Wharrer marrer? Oh, yoop!"

Billy Bunter jerked himself away and fled. Bob Cherry breathed hard through his nose.

"I shall slaughter that fat toad some day!" he said.

"Here comes the Shell," said Vernon-Smith.

And the chums of the Remove had to devote their attention to cricket. Mark Linley came down to Little Side to see the beginning of the match. He did not know by what train his father was to come, or whether he was coming to Friardale or Courtfield, so he could not go to meet him. But he wished to be unoccupied so that he could attend to him the moment he arrived at Greyfriars. He had only too much reason to fear that the cads of the Remove would be looking for an opportunity of "chipping" the old gentleman.

Mark had had a good many little difficulties to encounter at Greyfriars, as was natural enough. But naturally he did not want his father to be worried by knowledge of them. Above all, he feared that the old gentleman's feelings should be hurt by any caddishness on the part of the snobs of the Remove. One mean and ill-natured fellow might give Mr. Linley a bad impression of the whole school.

Mark was looking on at the opening of the Shell first innings when Billy Bunter nudged him. He looked down at the fat junior.

"I say, Linley, when's your pater coming?" asked Bunter.

"I don't quite know. Some time this afternoon," said Mark quietly.

"Rather a lark, ain't it?" grinned Bunter.

"No, I don't think so."

"I mean, your pater is rather a queer old codger, isn't he?" urged Bunter.

"I'd rather not discuss my father with you, Bunter."

"Oh, don't get on the high horse!" said Bunter, with a sniff. "I suppose you didn't learn to ride the high horse in your factory, did you?"

Mark turned his back.

"I'm not going to chip you about your pater, Linley," pursued Bunter reassuringly. "Of course, I know you're ashamed of him——"

"Will you hold your tongue, Bunter?" asked Mark, over his shoulder.

"My dear chap, I don't blame you," said Bunter kindly. "If I had a father like that I should be ashamed of him."

"If you had a father like that you might not be such a mean little toad," said Mark.

"Oh, really, Linley! The fact is, I'm going to be kind to you," said Bunter. "Of course, a rank outsider like you—you don't mind my speaking plainly, do you, old chap?"

"I'd rather you didn't speak to me at all, Bunter. I don't want to have to hit you," said Mark.

"My dear fellow, there's nothing to get waxy about!" exclaimed Bunter, in surprise. "I tell you I'm going to be kind to you. It stands to reason that a rank outsider like you would like to keep up a certain amount of appearances—what! You'd like your father to think you've got friends here, and that chaps treat you on a footing of equality, and all that. So I'll tell you what, Linley. I'm going to chum up with you this afternoon, and see you through!"

Mark stared at the Owl of the Remove, and his clenched hand unclenched again.

It really looked as if Bunter with all his stupidity and snobbishness, meant to be kind, in his own obtuse and factless way.

"I'm going to pal on to you for this afternoon," repeated Bunter. "Of course, it's got to be clearly understood that it's for this afternoon only. I couldn't undertake to keep on intimate terms permanently with a factory chap. I'm not a snob, you know, but a fellow must draw a line. But for this afternoon I'm going to see you through, out of sheer kindness. You can introduce me to your father as a pal, and show him that a gentleman takes notice of you!"

Mark burst into a laugh. It was really not worth while to be angry with Billy Bunter.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at, Linley!" said Bunter, blinking at him through his big glasses. "It will give you a leg up, you know. I'm perfectly willing to be introduced to your father as your pal—to see you through. Of course, it's understood that I drop you afterwards, and that your father doesn't presume on the acquaintance. I must make a point of that!"

"You silly, fat duffer!" exclaimed Mark. "Will you clear off before I punch your silly head?"

"Oh, really, Linley! Don't think I'm joking—I mean it. Of course, I should have to make one or two conditions. I should expect a good tea in the study. Unless there was a really good spread, I couldn't undertake to speak to your father!"

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Mark.

He understood now.

Bunter was to be treated to a good spread, and on that condition he was generously willing to pose as Mark's pal for the afternoon. This was his notion of giving Mark a leg-up.

The Lancashire lad could not help grinning.

"Well, what do you say?" asked Bunter. "I mean it, you know. And—and I think you might cash a postal-order for me, Linley. One good turn deserves another, you know. I'm expecting a postal-order——"

"I'm afraid it can't be done, Bunter. You see, I couldn't introduce you to my father as my friend," said Mark calmly. "In the first place, you are not my friend. In the second place, I should be ashamed to let my father suppose that I could make friends with such a fellow. In the third place, I'd rather my father did not see you at all, as he might suppose from seeing you that Greyfriars fellows generally were cads, snobs, and bounders. So, you see, it can't be done!"

Mark turned away.

Billy Bunter stood quite breathless for a moment or two, his fat face growing purple with rage. He found his voice at last.

"You cheeky factory bounder!" he roared.

Mark walked away to another part of the field; but Billy

Bunter followed him. He meant to express his opinion at full length.

"You dashed factory rotter!" he shouted. "Why, it's a disgrace for your boozy old father to come here at all! Yaroooooh!"

Mark turned back at that. His grip fell on Bunter's collar, and the Owl of the Remove was shaken till every tooth in his head felt loose.

"Gurrrrrgh!" gurgled Bunter. "Leggo! Yow-ow-ow! Don't sh-sh-shake me like that, you beast! Groogh! If you make my glasses fall off—yoop!—you'll have to pay for them—yow-ow-ow!—if they get bub-bub-broken! Yoooop!"

Mark Linley shook him till his arm ached, and then let him drop.

Billy Bunter collapsed into the grass, gasping spasmodically. Mark walked away again; but Bunter did not think of following him this time. He was only too glad to see him go.

"Grooogh!" gasped Bunter. "Beast! After I was going to be kind to him, too! Grooogh! What are the working classes coming to, I wonder—actually laying his low-class hands on me! I'd jolly well go after him and thrash him—grooogh!—but—but it's beneath my—grooogh!—dignity!"

Billy Bunter scrambled to his feet, and rolled away in an opposite direction to that taken by Mark Linley. Whether it was beneath his dignity or not, he wisely decided not to thrash Mark. The thrashing would have been a very painful process—to William George Bunter!

Skinner & Co. were going down to the gates, and Billy Bunter joined them.

"Hallo! You coming, too?" asked Snoop.

"Yes, if you're going down to the tuckshop!"

"Fathead!" said Skinner. "We're going to meet Linley's pater!"

Bunter snorted.

"Then you can go without me! I'm jolly well not going to meet a factory bounder's pater!"

"Ass! We're going to pull his leg!"

"Oh, I see! I'm coming!"

And Billy Bunter rolled out of the gateway after Skinner & Co.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
Linley's Father!

SKINNER & Co. arrived at Friardale Station in a cheery mood. The four o'clock train was not yet in, and they proceeded to the platform to wait for it. Skinner and Snoop and Stott were grinning merrily, but Bunter was puzzled.

He was quite willing to join in pulling Linley senior's leg, so far as that went. But how Skinner & Co. knew anything about Mr. Linley's train was a puzzle. Mark Linley did not know when his father was coming, but Harold Skinner apparently knew.

"Not in yet," said Skinner. "We're in good time!"

"I say, you fellows, is it really Linley's pater you are after?" asked Billy Bunter suspiciously. "If you're pulling my leg, we may as well get along to the tuckshop at once!"

"Fathead!" said Skinner.

"But how do you know he's coming by this train?" persisted Bunter. "Linley doesn't know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The fact is, a little bird told me," said Skinner gravely.

"Oh, really, Skinner!"

"Or, rather, I don't know at all, really," said Skinner. "But I thought he might come by this train, and I've come to meet him because I'm so fond of Marky!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, that's all rot!" said Bunter. "He might come to Courtfield, and walk from there. It would save something on the ticket, and you know he's a poverty-stricken rotter!"

"Of course he might!" agreed Skinner. "Still, we'll wait here on spec!"

Skinner's companions roared again. It was evident that they had some secret source of information, which they did not intend to confide to Billy Bunter.

"Here comes the train!" said Snoop at last.

Skinner & Co. were keenly on the watch as the train came in from Courtfield Junction. They had debated what Mr. Linley would look like, and whether he would turn up tipsy, and whether he would look as if he wanted washing, and whether he would wear hobnailed boots. Hobnailed boots appeared particularly comic to Skinner & Co., for some reason best known to those humorous young gentlemen themselves.

They were somewhat disappointed not to discover an unwashed and tipsy man among the passengers who alighted from the train.

There were several people they knew by sight, and several soldiers bound for Wapshot Camp. Among the passengers was a solidly-built, broad-shouldered man, with a grave, thoughtful face, and a brown beard. He was dressed quietly, and wore thick boots and a bowler hat. It was easy for Skinner & Co., as they scanned him, to trace a resemblance between his features and those of Mark Linley.

"That's the merchant!" said Skinner.

"I—I say, that old chap looks quite respectable!" said Bunter.

"Yes; a bit different from your pater, in his blazer waistcoat and two-inch watchchain, Bunty!"

"Why, you rotter, Skinner——"

The new-comer had stopped on the platform as the other passengers streamed to the exit, and was looking about him. He came towards the group of juniors, and raised his bowler hat civilly.

"Excuse me," he said, in a deep, pleasant voice, which had a trace of the musical North-country burr in it. "I was expecting to see some young gentlemen from Greyfriars School here. Perhaps——"

"That's us, sir," said Skinner. "Mr. Linley, I suppose?"

"Yes. You are friends of my son Mark?"

"Bosom pals, sir!" said Skinner affably.

"We love him as a brother!" chortled Snoop.

"He's the apple of our eye!" chimed in Stott.

And Billy Bunter giggled.

Mr. Linley surveyed them in a quiet, grave manner, and the giggling died away.

The old gentleman was puzzled. The manner of the young rascals was not respectful, but he was willing to make allowance for schoolboy exuberance of spirits.

"Marky had my telegram, I suppose?" he asked.

"Yes; it came during lessons," said Skinner.

"Is he quite well?"

"Right as rain!"

"Perhaps you know why he wired for me to come?" asked Mr. Linley.

"Did he wire for you to come?" asked Skinner.

Billy Bunter's eyes glistened behind his spectacles. He was beginning to understand the trick that had been played. He knew that Mark had not wired for his father to come to Greyfriars.

"Yes. I had the telegram late last night," said Mr. Linley. "As you are his friends, I supposed you knew."

"No. Marky never mentioned it to us," said Skinner calmly. "Did he mention it to you, Snoopey?"

"Not a word," said Snoop.

"He simply said his pater was coming," explained Stott; "and as we're his friends, we came to meet the train."

"That was very kind of you," said Mr. Linley. "I was afraid that something serious was the matter. If Mark isn't ill, why didn't he come to the station himself?"

"Oh, he hadn't time!" said Skinner. "There's a match on this afternoon."

A shade crossed the old gentleman's face.

"A cricket-match?" he asked.

"Yes."

"My son is playing cricket?"

"Yes; in the Remove Eleven, you know."

"Oh!"

"Of course, he couldn't cut the cricket to come out and meet you," said Skinner, watching the effect of his words on the old gentleman, and noting the pain they gave with malicious satisfaction. "I don't suppose he even thought of it."

Mr. Linley nodded without speaking.

"So we thought we'd come along," said Skinner. "As you're a stranger here, we thought it was up to us."

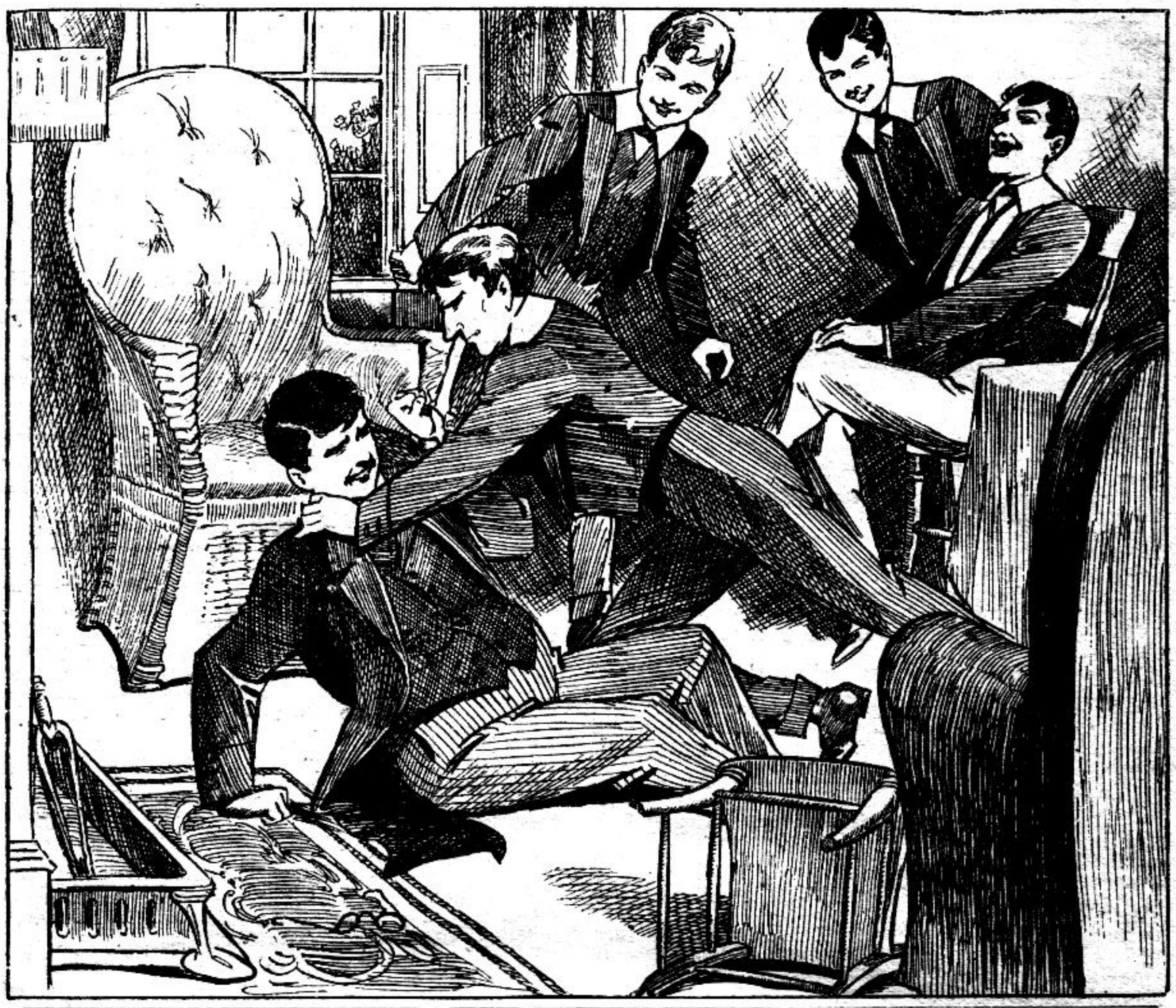
"You are very kind." Mr. Linley drew a telegraph-form from his pocket and looked at it. Billy Bunter blinked at it over his arm. It ran:

"Come at once! Don't fail! Very serious! My friends will meet four train at Friardale Station.—MARK."

That had brought Mr. Linley down from the North-country in hot haste. Billy Bunter understood it all now, and he blinked at Skinner with mingled alarm and admiration. It was a cunning move of the cad of the Remove—his object being, of course, to bring Mark's father to Greyfriars and "show him up." But Bunter's opinion was that there would be a row about it later, and that Harold Skinner would be sorry he had been so humorous.

"That's the telegram," said Mr. Linley. "I—I supposed that Marky was ill, or in some serious trouble. It's very strange."

"Perhaps he was longing to see you, sir," suggested Skinner.



Skinner uttered a yell, and rushed at Wibley. "Uncle Joseph" rolled on the floor in Skinner's furious clutch. "I'll smash you!" roared Skinner. (*See Chapter* 13.)

"It's very strange," repeated Mr. Linley; "and stranger still that Mark should not be here to meet me, if he is well and hearty."

"He's playing cricket——"

"Yes, yes. I had better get to the school."

"This way, sir," said Skinner.

Mr. Linley left the platform with the juniors. He gave up half his ticket at the barrier, Skinner & Co. noting, with sniffs, that it was a third-class one. Outside the station Skinner signalled to the old hack-driver, who detached himself from a post, and ejected a straw from his mouth, and touched his ancient, shiny hat.

"'Ack, sir?"

"Yes; this gentleman wants to go to Greyfriars," said Skinner.

Skinner's companions repressed a giggle with difficulty. They saw the worthy Skinner's object—to make Mr. Linley spend money as much as possible. As he was not blessed with much money, this seemed a screaming joke to Skinner & Co.

Mr. Linley hesitated.

"It isn't much of a walk, I understand," he said.

"Oh, we always take the hack," said Skinner, not at all truthfully.

"I should think a man could walk as fast as that horse," said Mr. Linley. "I think I will walk."

"Oh, take the hack, sir!" urged Skinner. "It's only four bob."

"Thank you, I think I will walk. Thanks, my man, but I shall not want a hack," said Mr. Linley quietly.

Skinner & Co. exchanged glances of disgust. The North-countryman was not to be fooled quite so easily as they had expected. Four shillings represented a certain amount of hard work to Mr. Linley, and he did not see any reason for wasting that sum.

"Well, it's this way," said Skinner, rather sulkily; and the juniors piloted Mr. Linley down the High Street.

Mr. Linley walked with a rapid stride, and Skinner & Co. found it a little difficult to keep up. The middle-aged gentleman was in good condition. Billy Bunter was soon panting behind.

Snoop and Stott were quite disappointed. It was true that Mr. Linley was not fashionably or expensively dressed, but there was nothing about him to excite derision at Greyfriars. He was not "squiffy"; he was not unwashed; he did not drop his h's; he did not even wear hobnailed boots. He looked a quiet, worthy, sensible man, for whom an average person would have felt respect at the first glance. Snoop and Stott felt that Skinner's trouble and their own had been wasted. What was the good of showing-up Linley's pater if there was nothing to show up? The fact that Mr. Linley hadn't much money, and was careful with what he had, was not specially comic, even to Snoop and Stott. But the cheery Skinner was by no means at the end of his resources. Linley's father was to be made to look ridiculous in the eyes of the Greyfriars fellows, and Skinner, though disappointed not to find him a hooligan, was equal to the occasion.

As they drew near the gates of Greyfriars Skinner stumbled over a stone and fell against Mr. Linley. As he

did so he jerked a fish-hook into the back of Mr. Linley's coat. There was the tail of a kite attached to the fish-hook, and it trailed behind the old gentleman, reaching half-way to the ground, as he walked on. Mr. Linley, quite unconscious of that addition to his attire, walked on with the juniors, who almost suffocated in trying to suppress their mirth.

"You young gentlemen seem very merry this afternoon," said Mr. Linley at last, glancing at them.

"It—it's Bunter, sir," giggled Snoop. "He's such a funny merchant, we can't look at him without laughing."

"Oh, really, Snoop! What about your own funny face?" growled Bunter. "I haven't the face of a boiled cod, anyway!"

"Why, you fat porpoise——"

"You skinny shrimp——"

"Shush!" said Skinner. "Don't rag, with Marky's father here! Don't let him think we're quarrelsome chaps at Greyfriars. Keep on your best behaviour, with a distinguished visitor present."

"Hear, hear!" said Stott.

"You see, sir, you are a distinguished visitor," said Skinner affably. "We very seldom have such a visitor at Greyfriars."

"Indeed?" said Mr. Linley.

"Very seldom, sir. Chaps have all sorts of relations—but Marky's the only chap whose father is a coalman."

"I am not a coalman!" said Mr. Linley, in surprise. He did not seem to think, however, that there was anything to be ashamed of in being a coalman. He thought Skinner was misinformed, that was all.

"Oh!" said Skinner, rather abashed. Really, his exquisite humour seemed to be quite wasted on this solid, stolid old gentleman. "I understood you were a coalman."

"Not at all! I'm working on munitions now," said Mr. Linley.

"Oh, I see! You used to be a coalman?"

"No. I was in a factory before the war."

"Much the same thing, I suppose?" giggled Snoop.

"Well, the work is quite different," said Mr. Linley. "I don't suppose you young fellows know much about that, though."

"I suppose you make lots of money out of munitions?" said Skinner.

"The pay is higher," said Mr. Linley. "The work is hard, though, and a good deal of skill is required. A good and conscientious workman can do very well in a munition-factory."

"A rather good thing for the pubs—what?" said Skinner.

Mr. Linley frowned.

"Not at all," he said quietly. "You must not form your opinions from reading the foolish speeches of politicians. It is hardly fair to the munition-worker."

In spite of his nerve, Skinner was abashed. There was a simple and honest dignity about the old gentleman that was like an armour of proof against the mean-spirited fellow's veiled impertinence. Snoop and Stott and Bunter considered that Skinner was getting the worst of it.

Greyfriars was in sight now. Skinner fell a little behind Mr. Linley.

"Excuse me, sir. There's a wasp on your hat!" he exclaimed.

He threw up his hand to brush an imaginary wasp off Mr. Linley's hat. As he drew his hand away a little ticket remained inserted in the band of the bowler hat, which bore the inscription:

"IN THIS STYLE—3/9."

Thus adorned, the unsuspicious old gentleman walked in at the gates of Greyfriars with Skinner & Co.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.
"In This Style!"

"HA, ha, ha!"

Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth were sauntering in the quadrangle near the gates. As Mr. Linley and his young friends passed them the Fourth-Formers gave vent to an involuntary burst of laughter.

They did not mean to be rude to the stranger, but they could not help it. The sight of an unsuspicious man, with the tail of a kite dangling behind him, and a price ticket at the back of his hat, was too much for them.

"In that style, three-and-nine!" gasped Temple. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Who is the johnny?" ejaculated Fry.

"Linley's pater, I suppose," grinned Temple. "Skinner's fetched him from the station. Linley's an ass not to have looked after him! In that style—ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Linley heard the laughter, but did not connect it with himself. He walked on into the quadrangle with Skinner & Co. Gosling, the porter, grinned after him from the lodge door.

"Oh, my heye!" murmured Gosling. "'Tain't my business—ha, ha! Them young rips—he, he, he!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bolsover major, as he caught sight of Mr. Linley from the rear.

"He, he, he!" cackled Billy Bunter.

Mr. Linley looked round. A dozen grinning faces were turned towards him, and he could no longer doubt that he was the object of the general merriment. A deep flush came over his face.

"Will you tell me where to find my son?" he asked, addressing Skinner quietly.

"On the cricket-field," said Skinner. "This way. I'll show you."

Skinner was anxious to parade his victim before a crowd.

Mr. Linley followed him to Little Side, leaving a crowd of fellows giggling behind him.

His face was very red.

"Shut up, you rotters!" called out Ogilvy of the Remove. "The old chap can hear you cackling!"

"Well, let him hear!" roared Bolsover major. "Ha, ha, ha! In that style, three-and-nine! Two-and-tuppence would be nearer the mark!"

"I'd scrag Skinner if I were Linley!" said Ogilvy.

"I dare say he will," grinned Treluce. "But it's funny, all the same."

Skinner & Co. arrived on the cricket-ground with Mr. Linley.

Mark was watching the game, ignorant of the fact that his father had arrived. The Remove were in their second innings, and they were having a hard tussle with Hobson & Co. of the Shell. Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry were at the wickets, and the runs were mounting up. Mark was joining in the cheering that greeted every hit.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Three-and-nine!"

"Thereby hangs a tail!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Russell of the Remove tapped Linley on the shoulder, and Mark looked round.

"Your father's come," said Russell.

"Oh, thanks!"

Mark looked round quickly, and ran towards his father. His face flushed as he saw that the old gentleman was surrounded by a grinning crowd. Skinner & Co. were in ecstasies.

"Dad!"

"Oh, here you are, Marky!"

Mr. Linley shook hands with his son.

Mark gave Skinner a fierce look. He could not yet see what was on, but he understood that Skinner was somehow turning his father into ridicule.

"We met your father at the station, Linley," said Skinner affably. "As you hadn't time to go, we felt it was up to us."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Mark sharply. "I should have gone if I had known the train. How did you know?"

"Oh, we didn't know. We thought he would come some time in the afternoon, that's all," said Skinner calmly. "As you couldn't leave the cricket——"

Mark turned his back on him. He did not want to quarrel with Skinner in his father's presence.

"I have not been playing cricket, dad," he said. "I stood out of the match because you were coming. But I couldn't guess whether you would come by Friardale or Courtfield."

"But you told me I should be met at Friardale, Mark," said Mr. Linley, in astonishment.

"I—I told you!" ejaculated Mark.

"Yes, in your telegram."

"My telegram!"

"Yes."

"I don't understand you!" said Mark, in bewilderment. "I have not sent you any telegram, father!"

Skinner & Co. strolled away, grinning at one another. They did not desire to be present at the explanation that was coming.

Mr. Linley seemed overcome with astonishment for a moment or two. He stared blankly at his son.

"You did not telegraph to me?" he exclaimed at last

"No, father."

"But here is your telegram."

"My—my telegram!"

Mr. Linley held it out, and Mark looked at it blankly.

"Come at once! Don't fail. Very serious. My friends will meet four train at Friardale Station.—MARK."

"Good heavens!" muttered Mark.

"I thought you must be ill, or that something had gone very wrong," said Mr. Linley, quietly and gravely. "I had to get leave from the munition works, Mark, and I wired to you and came at once. I was very much surprised when your young friend told me you were quite well, and playing cricket."

Mark gritted his teeth.

"I—I'm sorry, father! It's a rotten joke!"

"A joke, Mark!"

"Yes. Some cad sent you this telegram in my name!"

Mr. Linley knitted his brows.

"Is that a joke, to bring a man hundreds of miles in a state of great anxiety?" he exclaimed. "I do not call that a joke!"

"It's a rotten, caddish trick!" exclaimed Mark, between his teeth. "I'll see that the cad answers for it, too!"

"The headmaster should be told of this," said Mr. Linley quietly. "I cannot see any joke in it."

"It's as you think best, father."

"It is a serious matter. I had to get leave from the works, but I am wanted there—I am at work on the guns," said Mr. Linley, frowning. "It is a serious matter for a man to clear off for a day, suddenly, like this. I should not have done it, but I believed you must be ill or in bad trouble. Why should a joke like this be played, Mark? Why should I be brought here like this?"

Mark flushed. He could not explain that to his father—that there were snobs in the Form who supposed that the scholarship junior's father must be some rank outsider, and that he had been brought to Greyfriars to "show Linley up." Mark knew very well that that was the object of the unfeeling practical joker, and it roused bitter anger and resentment in his breast. But he would not wound the old gentleman's feelings by explaining it to him.

"It was a caddish joke, father," he said. "Let's go in. You must be tired after a long journey."

"I shall be glad to rest a little," said Mr. Linley.

"He, he, he!" came Billy Bunter's cackle from a safe distance. "In that style, three-and-nine! He, he, he!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mark looked puzzled; but as his father turned to walk to the School House he understood. His cheeks crimsoned with rage.

"Hold on a minute, dad! There—there's something on your coat."

He detached the fish-hook and the kite-tail, and reached up and took the ticket from Mr. Linley's hat. The old gentleman's eyes fell on them, and his brow grew grim.

"Is that another joke of your young friends, Mark?" he asked, very quietly.

"I'm sorry, father!"

"Let us go in," said Mr. Linley shortly.

Mark, feeling more miserable than he had ever felt in his life before, led his father into the School House.

— —

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Kept Off the Grass!

MR. QUELCH met Mark as he led his father into the School House. The Remove-master greeted Mr. Linley genially, and shook hands with him in a very cordial manner. The Remove-master seemed quite unconscious of any difference in social standing between a Master of Arts and a munition worker. Mark could not help feeling grateful. He felt that his father had been wounded by the caddish impertinence of Skinner & Co., and Mr. Quelch's cordial greeting did much to remove that unfavourable impression.

Mark was proud of his father—as he had good reason to be—and it stung him to the quick to think that Mr. Linley should feel himself looked down upon at Greyfriars.

Mr. Linley followed him to his study, after a few minutes' chat with the Remove-master. They had the study to themselves, Bob and Hurree Singh being in the cricket team, and little Wun Lung on the ground watching the game. Mark pulled out the armchair for his father.

Mr. Linley's face was very grave.

"I'm glad to find you fit and hearty, Mark," he said. "I've been very anxious while I was coming here. It was a long journey, lad, to take with a heavy heart. I suppose the young fellow who played that trick did not think about that."

Mark clenched his hand.

"I'll make him sorry he played it!" he muttered.

Mr. Linley shook his head

"I don't want you to get fighting on my account, Mark. It was a cruel trick, but let it pass. He used your name—that's nigh on forgery, I should say. But—but least said soonest mended. I don't want to get him into trouble with his headmaster, though he deserves punishing. I'll say nothing about it, lad. It's better so."

"He doesn't deserve any kindness from you, father. Were—were any of those fellows rude to you coming from the station?" asked Mark, breathing hard.

"I don't rightly know. They have a different way of talk in this part of the country," said Mr. Linley. "I wouldn't like to take offence where none was meant. I dare say the young gentlemen meant no harm. But ain't they friends of yours, Marky?"

"Not that set! They're rotters—rotters through and through!"

"They told me they were your friends, and came to meet me because you were busy with the cricket."

"It was a lie!" said Mark. "Lies don't come very hard to Skinner. He was sacked from the school once for being such a rotter, but the Head let him come back. The others are not much better."

"Marky," said his father, after a long pause, "I never rightly knew how you got on here among the sons of rich men. This has opened my eyes a bit. Are they down on you?"

Mark smiled slightly.

"Of course there were difficulties at first," he said. "But it's all right. Don't think those fellows are good specimens of Greyfriars, dad. I've got friends here, if that's what you mean."

"Yes, that's what I mean, Marky."

"You'll see them when the match is over," said Mark cheerily. "Splendid fellows, too. Nothing like Skinner."

"It's a surprise to me," said Mr. Linley. "That trick on me was nigh on forgery—using your name on a telegram. And the young gentlemen seem to have lied to me pretty bad. I'd never have thought in a big, fine school like this that the young fellows would lie and trick in that way."

"It's only a few—just two or three," said Mark anxiously. "There are black sheep in every flock, dad, you know. You mustn't think I have a bad time here. Nothing of the kind. I don't like being so far from home, but, excepting for that, I'm quite happy at Greyfriars."

"And they don't look down on you for being a poor man's son?"

"Not the decent fellows—and they're nearly all decent. They just don't think about it at all, and don't care twopence either way."

Mr. Linley nodded slowly. He was evidently uneasy in his mind. Skinner had succeeded in giving him an impression that his son was an outsider and a pariah in the big school, which was Skinner's amiable intention. And Mark knew that that impression would be hard to remove. It was not for his own sake, but for his father's, that he was keenly desirous of removing it. His little troubles at school had never been talked of at home, and his people had cares enough of their own, without his being added to them.

There was a tap at the door, and it opened. Skinner looked in, with an impertinent grin on his face. Mark rose quickly, his eyes gleaming.

Before Skinner could speak, however, there came a rush of feet in the passage, and Micky Desmond, Morgan, and Wibley pounced on Skinner.

The three juniors had been watching the cricket-match so keenly that they had completely forgotten their undertaking to look after Linley's pater. But the cackling over Skinner's joke had reminded them of their self-imposed duty and their promise to Bob Cherry, and they had nobly torn themselves away from Little Side to keep their word. They had spotted Harold Skinner heading for Study No. 13, and, as they had no doubt that some fresh impertinence was intended, they chipped in promptly and decisively.

Skinner, in consultation with his precious chums, had elaborated a fresh joke on Mr. Linley. The old gentleman was to be invited to tea in the boot-room with Trotter. But before Skinner could utter a word of his fresh impertinence Wibley & Co. had collared him.

Skinner uttered a yell of surprise and wrath as three pairs of vigorous hands closed upon his person.

"Here, leggo! Yah!" roared Skinner.

"Sure, we want ye, darling!" said Micky Desmond. "This way!"

"Come along, dear boy!" chortled Wibley.

Skinner retired from the scene in the grasp of three cheery juniors. He went down the passage in a series of heavy bumps, to an accompaniment of wild yells. Snoop and Stott, who were waiting at the end of the passage, promptly fled. But Harold Skinner was not to escape so easily. He was taken downstairs—with a terrific bump on each stair—to the next landing.

"Now, all together, and kick as hard as you can!" said Wibley.

Skinner went headlong down the lower flight of stairs, three boots helping him on the way. He picked himself up

A little old gentleman, in a shiny frock-coat and a silk hat, blinked round the platform through a pair of large, steel-rimmed glasses, and came towards the three Removites. Skinner's heart sank a little. Was this his uncle? (*See Chapter* 11.)

and shook a furious fist at the grinning juniors on the landing.

"Come and have some more, alanna!" yelled Micky Desmond.

But Skinner did not want any more. He limped away furiously.

Wibley & Co. stationed themselves at the big window at the end of the passage, whence they could watch the cricket at a distance. A little later Billy Bunter came rolling along, with a fat grin on his face.

"Hallo! What are you after, Bunter?" asked Wibley.

Bunter chuckled.

"I've got a message for old Linley," he said. "It's Skinner's idea. He, he, he! I'm going to ask him if he'd like a bath while he's here! He, he, he! First time in his life, you know! He, he, he! Here, I say, you fellows! Yaroooh! Wharrer you at? Yow-ow-ow! Leggo! Help! Fire! Murder! Yoooop!"

Billy Bunter did not escape for some minutes. When he did escape he felt as if he had been through a mangle, and he did not come back with any more humorous messages from Skinner.

— —

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.
The Honoured Guest!

MR. LINLEY listened in astonishment to the bumping and yelling in the Remove passage. He was having quite an unexpected experience of the manners and customs of the junior portion of Greyfriars School.

Mark closed the door, and turned to his father again with a flushed face.

He was grateful to Wibley & Co. for their interference, but the incident was very disconcerting.

Mr. Linley's face had grown overcast.

"Perhaps I'd better be getting off, Marky?" he said, rising to his feet. "I'm a bit out of place here."

"No, no, dad!" exclaimed Mark. "Sit down! You haven't seen my friends yet, for one thing. And—and Bob wants you to have tea in the study. You've met Bob Cherry, you remember."

"Yes; a fine young fellow," said Mr. Linley.

"The match can't last long now," said Mark. "They were close on the finish of the second innings. Tell me about the folks at home, dad."

Mr. Linley nodded, and sat down again. Mark was very anxious for his friends to come in. Mr. Linley had to be convinced somehow that Skinner & Co. did not in the least represent Greyfriars.

The old gentleman's face gradually cleared as he talked about home and home affairs. Mark kept him busy with questions. But he was glad when there was a trampling of feet in the Remove passage, which announced that the match was over, and that the cricketers had come in.

The door burst open, and Bob Cherry came in executing a war-dance. He caught Mark by the shoulders and waltzed him round the study-table, Mr. Linley looking on in amazement.

"Beaten them to the wide!" roared Bob. "Licked the Shell hollow, Marky, old man! Hurrah! Two wickets to spare, my son! Licked to the wide! Hurrah for us!"

Then Bob became aware of Mr. Linley's presence, and he released Mark so suddenly that the junior staggered against the wall.

"Blessed if I didn't forget your pater was here, Marky!" Bob exclaimed. "Excuse me, sir! We've beaten the Shell, you know, and we always swank a bit when we beat the Shell! Don't we, Marky? How do you do, sir? Jolly glad to see you at Greyfriars!"

Mr. Linley's sombre face lighted up as he shook hands with Bob Cherry.

Bob's exuberant spirits would have had the effect of cheering up the most misanthropic of misanthropes.

Mark looked very bright, too, though Bob's energetic greeting had left him breathless.

"Now, what about tea?" said Bob. "Your pater will be hungry, Marky. I've asked all the chaps to come. You don't mind a crowd, sir?"

"Not at all, my lad," said Mr. Linley, laughing.

"You see, they all want to have tea with Marky's pater," explained Bob. "Marky is rather a distinguished chap in the Remove. He can do Greek on his head, and he not only writes Latin, but understands it after he's written it. He's helped me out of no end of scrapes with Quelchy. Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Inky! Marky's father, Inky—his Serene Highness Hurree Jampot Inky Darkness, Nabob of Bhanipur, Prince of Something-or-Other, and Great Rajah of Everywhere-else."

The nabob salaamed profoundly as Bob introduced him.

"It is an esteemed honour to meet the worthy and ludicrous parent of my estimable chum Marky," said the nabob. "If I had missed this happy meeting I should have been terrifically infuriated."

"Telegram for you, Skinner!" said Billy Bunter, blinking into Mrs. Mimble's little shop, where Skinner & Co. were whacking out ginger-pop. (*See Chapter* 10.)

"Ha, ha!" roared Bob. "That's Inky's brand of English, Mr. Linley. He learned it under the best native masters in Bhanipur."

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent and Johnny Bull came in with parcels in their hands. They had been shopping for tea. Squiff and Tom Brown and Vernon-Smith joined the party. Wibley and Micky Desmond and Morgan followed them in. No. 13 Study was pretty well crowded by that time. But the Remove fellows were accustomed to crowding, and they were careful to leave the guest of honour plenty of room.

An unusually gorgeous spread was soon on the festive board. There was a buzz of merry voices in the study. Mr. Linley's face was very cheerful now. His first miserable impression of Greyfriars had quite faded away. He saw plainly that these fellows were very different from the stamp of Skinner and Snoop, and there was no doubting their hearty cordiality. And it was evident, too, that they were all good chums of his son. Mark could read his thoughts in his face, and his own heart was lighter as he read them.

There had seldom been a merrier spread in No. 13 Study. Whenever Mr. Linley spoke he was listened to with respectful attention; but the juniors were not standing on ceremony, and there were generally two or three talking at once. The merry feast was going strong when the door opened and a fat face, adorned with a big pair of spectacles, looked in. There was a chorus at once.

"Buzz off, Bunter!"

"I say, you fellows!" Bunter wedged into the study. "I can't miss this, you know. I want to see my old pal Marky's pater. Dash it all, you know, I went down to the station to meet him—didn't I, Mr. Linley? I was down on that cad Skinner all the time. I didn't know you were going to have a spread like this—I mean——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Kick him out!" said Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Bump him!"

"Yaroooop!" roared Bunter.

He found himself in sudden collision with the passage floor, and the door closed on him.

"Excuse us, sir," said Wharton, to Mr. Linley. "We can't stand that toad. We never let visitors see Bunter if we can help it."

Mr. Linley smiled.

The old gentleman was in great spirits now, and thoroughly enjoying his visit to Greyfriars.

But he looked at his watch at last.

"Not going, sir?" exclaimed Bob.

"I must get back as far as London to-night," said Mr. Linley. "I have to catch the express to-night. It's a long way to Lancashire."

"Well, we'll all come to the station," said Wharton.

"Hear, hear!"

And when Mr. Linley left the whole Co. marched out of gates with him, to see him to the station—not only to do honour to Marky's pater, but to see that Skinner had no further opportunities for mischief.

Mr. Linley had almost forgotten Skinner by this time, however; indeed, he more than forgave the unknown trickster for having brought him to Greyfriars with the false telegram.

Mark had not forgotten it, however; and he intended to look into that matter after his father was gone.

The train came in, and Mr. Linley shook hands with the juniors, and took his seat in a third-class carriage.

"Good-bye, dad!" said Mark at the door. "I'm sorry you had that long journey for nothing, but it's ripping to see you here. And—and you're pleased with Greyfriars, I hope?"

"Yes, lad," said Mr. Linley, smiling. "I'm glad I saw your friends before I left. Good-bye, Marky, and let that chap alone!"

"What chap?" asked Mark, starting a little.

"The fellow who sent the telegram. I think I can guess who it was, too. But don't get fighting about it."

"He ought to be licked," muttered Mark.

"Better not."

"Of course, I shall do exactly as you say, dad."

"I'm glad I came," said Mr. Linley. "I've had a very pleasant visit, and I shall feel better for knowing how well you're getting on at Greyfriars, Marky. Good-bye, my boy! Good-bye, young gentlemen, and thank you all!"

The porter slammed the door, and the train moved out of the station. Mr. Linley, with a cheery face, waved his hand from the carriage window, and the Greyfriars juniors waved their caps in response.

Bob Cherry slapped Mark on the back as the Removites left the station.

"Your pater is a brick, Marky. And it's jolly decent of him to come such a thumping long journey to see you."

Mark set his lips a little. He explained quietly about the telegram, the Co. listening to the story in astonishment.

"Skinner, of course!" said Harry Wharton.

"The cad!" muttered Bob Cherry, between his teeth.

"I suppose it was Skinner," said Mark. "He knew what train my father was coming by. But—but his rotten joke has fallen flat, after all. It hasn't turned out as he expected."

"But he's going to have a thumping licking for it, all the same!" exclaimed Bob indignantly. "Why, the Head would flog him if he knew! Your pater must be a jolly forgiving chap. I wonder he didn't tell the Head!"

"We'll give Skinner a lesson about forging telegrams," said Wibley. "I suppose this rotten trick is because you stopped him damaging my props the other day. We'll see Skinner when we get in."

Mark shook his head.

"I intended to," he said. "But my father has asked me not to make a fuss about it. He's pleased with his visit here, and he wants the cad let off. I'm not going to touch him."

"Then you can leave him to me!" said Bob.

"No, no—let him alone, Bob! My father wanted it!"

"Oh, all serene!" grunted Bob.

"Or you can leave him to me," said Wibley.

"Eh! You're not starting as a fighting-man, I suppose, Wib?" exclaimed Bob.

"Well, I suppose I could knock Skinner into a cocked hat without being a fighting-man," said Wibley. "But Marky doesn't want him punched!"

"No, no!" said Mark.

"Then he sha'n't be punched. But there are more ways of killing a Hun than choking him with sauerkraut," said Wibley. "You leave it to me!"

"What have you got in your noddle?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"Something that you never have in yours, old chap."

"What's that?"

"An idea!" said Wibley calmly.

But whatever idea it was that Wibley had in his noddle, he refused to give any further explanation—though from the way he grinned and chuckled during the walk back to Greyfriars, it was to be inferred that Wibley, as well as Skinner, was a humorous young gentleman and had humorous ideas.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Wibley is Mysterious!

HAROLD SKINNER had not quite an easy mind that evening.

As there was no actual proof that he had sent the telegram to Linley's father, he expected to escape on that score. But the other tricks he had played had to be answered for, and he was anticipating a painful interview with Mark.

His scheme had not panned out well, either. He had planned to get Mark's father to Greyfriars to show him up. But the kindly old gentleman had made quite an agreeable impression on the Greyfriars fellows—he had turned out quite a respectable person, and was not in the least derided, excepting by Skinner & Co. themselves. Skinner felt that he had had his trouble for nothing—he had taken it for granted that Linley's pater was some unspeakable outsider, and he had to admit that he was mistaken. It really was not worth while to face a hammering from Mark for the sake of such a very unsuccessful jape.

But, to Skinner's great relief, Mark did not look for him after his father was gone. Skinner remained in his study, to keep out of the way; but he fully expected the Lancashire lad to call in. Mark did not appear, however, and Skinner did not see him again till bedtime. In the Remove dormitory he glanced rather uneasily at the scholarship junior. But Mark did not look at him.

Skinner was as surprised as he was relieved. He could not suppose that Mark was funking a scrap with him—he knew that the Lancashire lad could have knocked him out easily in a few rounds. He could not understand it. He finally decided that Mark was anxious for the whole matter to drop. And having come to that decision, the amiable Skinner decided that he wouldn't let it drop—not if he knew it!

The next morning he was up before rising-bell. Early rising was not customary with Skinner, but he had an object in view now. When the rising-bell clanged out, and Mark Linley turned out with the rest, Skinner was gone from the dormitory, but he had left a pencil sketch tacked on the wall near Linley's washstand. Some of the Removites grinned as they saw it, and Mark frowned darkly. It was one of Skinner's skilful sketches, and it represented a tattered, tipsy man with an old battered hat, which was ticketed: "In this style, 3s. 9d."

Mark took down the sketch and destroyed it, amid cackles from Snoop and Stott and Billy Bunter.

"Your own fault, Marky!" said Bob Cherry. "My advice is to give the cad a licking. He's asked for it."

When Mark came down he looked for Skinner, and found that humorous youth in the quadrangle. He came directly up to him.

"One word with you, Skinner," said Mark quietly. "You sent a forged telegram to my father, and brought him to Greyfriars yesterday——"

"Got any proof of that?" grinned Skinner.

"I think I could get proof easily enough. You could be identified at the post-office where you sent the telegram, if the Head inquired into the matter."

Skinner's grin died away.

"So you're going to sneak to the Head?" he sneered.

"No! My father would have been justified in complaining to the Head, but he did not do so. He asked me not to make a fuss about it, either—that is why I have not called you to account."

"Oh!" said Skinner.

"You can say what you like about me," continued Mark quietly. "You can call me a scholarship bounder, and a prize-hunter, and draw your silly pictures of the factory where I used to work. I don't mind! But I sha'n't allow you to

insult my father! I promised him not to call you to account for your dirty trick with the telegram. I shall keep my word. But now you've got to stop it!"

"Got to?" sneered Skinner.

"Yes, got to! The next time you insult my father I am going to thrash you for it. I think I can do it—at any rate, I shall try! So keep that in mind. You can be funny about me, if you like; but you'll let my father alone, or you'll put up your hands and answer for it. That's all!"

Mark walked away leaving Skinner biting his lip. It dawned upon Skinner that he had misunderstood Mark's motive in letting him alone. It was evident that he had come to the end of his tether on that subject, unless he chose to face the fists of the Lancashire lad. And Skinner was not at all anxious to do that. Mark was rather too hard a hitter for his taste.

"Cheeky rotter!" muttered Skinner. "Cheeky cad! Queer old bird his pater must be, to ask him to let it drop. Blow him! Of course, I sha'n't take any notice of the cheeky cad! I shall do exactly as I think fit!"

But Skinner was wise enough to think fit to make no further mention of Mr. Linley.

Skinner, indeed, found a plentiful lack of appreciation on all sides, which was very hard on a humorist. Most of the fellows regarded the trick with the telegram as an exceedingly dirty trick, and they were not slow to say so. Even Bolsover major jawed Skinner on that topic, though he was not particular as a rule. And the wretched joke had fallen quite flat—Mr. Linley had not disgraced his son in his appearance at Greyfriars, as Skinner had expected.

Harry Wharton & Co. agreed with Mark in respecting his father's wishes, but they all felt that the cad of the Remove ought to be punished. Mr. Linley had had to undertake a long journey in a disturbed and anxious frame of mind; he had had to leave important work—work of national importance—and Skinner had done his best—or his worst—to bring him into ridicule while he was at Greyfriars. It was too rotten that the caddish fellow should escape scot-free, after doing so much harm. Besides, as Bob Cherry pointed out, Skinner required a lesson not to play such tricks, or he might do it again. The Co. were therefore very much interested in Wibley's idea, though they did not yet know what it was. Wibley had announced that he had an idea, and that Skinner, though he was not to be licked, was to pay for his sins in another way. On Monday, after lessons, roars of laughter were heard proceeding from Study No. 6, and Bob Cherry kicked at the door. The door was locked, however, and it did not open.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" shouted Bob. "Let me in, Wib!"

"Busy!" called out Wibley.

"Fathead! What's the joke?"

"Ask next door!"

"What about that idea you were speaking of on Saturday?"

"Oh, you'll know all about that soon! Mum's the word at present!"

"Br-r-r!" said Bob. And he went on his way.

Wibley's study-mates, Rake and Morgan and Desmond, were in his confidence, but whatever Wibley's mysterious wheeze was, it went no further. When he came out of his study later there were traces of grease-paint on his face. It was clear that the amateur actor had been making up.

"What's the little game now?" asked Wharton, meeting him in the passage.

"Game?" repeated Wibley.

"Yes; what have you got on?"

"Clothes!"

"Fathead!" growled Wharton. "You were jawing on Saturday about a wheeze for dishing Skinner——"

"Mum's the word!"

"Yes; but what's the wheeze?"

"You'll know on Wednesday!"

"And why can't we know now?" demanded the captain of the Remove.

"Little boys shouldn't ask questions," said Wibley gravely. And he walked on before Wharton could decide whether to bump his head against the wall.

On Tuesday Wibley was busy in his study again, with the door locked. The Co. guessed that he was practising making-up for some new impersonation, but that was all they could guess.

On Wednesday, which was a half-holiday, Wibley disappeared immediately after dinner.

Bob Cherry looked for him later, and learned that he had gone out, carrying a bag. That was all he could learn.

"The silly ass!" growled Bob. "It was all gas, I suppose?"

"The gasfulness was terrific!" said Hurree Singh. "The esteemed Skinner will escape scotfully free, unless we punch his disgusting head!"

Rake joined the Famous Five in the quad.

"What are you fellows doing this afternoon?" he asked

"Going up the river," said Wharton. "There's no match on."

"Come along with us," said Nugent. "We want a little boy to steer!"

Rake snorted.

"I say, you fellows, I'll come and steer!" chimed in Billy Bunter. "I'll steer for you with pleasure, you know. I suppose you're taking a lunch-basket?"

"No fear!"

"You'll have some grub in the boat, Wharton?"

"Not an atom!"

"Then I'm jolly well not going to steer for you!" said Bunter emphatically. "I'm surprised at your asking me, under the circumstances!"

"But I didn't ask you!" said Wharton.

"Oh, rats!"

Billy Bunter rolled away in disgust. He was not looking for a river excursion unless there was a feed at the end of it.

"If you fellows go out you'll miss something," said Rake.

"Why, what's on?"

Rake chuckled.

"A little joke on Skinner! You know why that cad fetched Linley's father here. He thought Marky's father was a boozy old bounder, and he wanted to show Linley up, as he calls it."

"Yes, the rotter!"

"Well, one good turn deserves another. Suppose it turns out that Skinner's got an awfully disreputable relation—a near relation——"

"My hat! I shouldn't be surprised!" said Bob Cherry. "If all the other Skinners are like our Skinner, I suppose some of them must be in prison!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shouldn't wonder," grinned Rake. "Well, suppose Skinner's awfully disreputable relation visited him here——"

The juniors roared at the idea. Such an experience for the snob of the Remove would, as Bob Cherry said, put the lid on.

"What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander," said Rake. "Skinner's fetched Linley's relation here to show him up. Why shouldn't Wib fetch Skinner's relation here to show Skinner up?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do you mean to say Skinner's got some shady connection who would disgrace him if he was seen here?" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Wait and see!" said Rake mysteriously.

"And the cad has turned up his nose at Marky!" exclaimed Bob. "Well, it will serve him jolly well right, and I hope Wib will get the fellow here."

Harry Wharton & Co. decided not to go up the river that afternoon, after all. They were very keen to see Skinner's shady relation when he arrived, and to see how Skinner enjoyed a dose of "sauce for the gander."

THE TENTH CHAPTER.
Good News for Skinner!

"TELEGRAM for you, Skinner!"

Billy Bunter blinked into Mrs. Mimble's little shop, where Skinner and Snoop and Stott were whacking out a ginger-pop. Funds were low with Skinner & Co., and—sad to relate—they had not even the price of a packet of cigarettes among them.

Skinner looked round quickly.

"I say, Skinner, if your people are telegraphing money to you, I'll see about it for you, if you like!" said Bunter.

"Not likely!" growled Skinner.

"Oh, you never know! Here's the thing!"

Skinner took the telegram. He opened it rather curiously. His face brightened up, and he whistled as he read it.

"Good egg!" he chortled.

"Is it cash?" exclaimed Bunter, his eyes gleaming through his spectacles. "I say, Skinney, old fellow——"

"No, it isn't, fathead! Clear off!" snapped Skinner.

"What's the news?" yawned Snoop.

"My uncle's at Lantham," said Skinner, his eyes glistening. "You've heard of my Uncle Joseph—he's got pots of money!"

"Yes—rather—a bit!" grinned Snoop. As a matter of fact, all Greyfriars had heard of Skinner's Uncle Joseph, who had pots of money.

Mr. Joseph Skinner not only had pots of money, but he had a natural gift for looking after those pots, for none of his superabundant cash ever found its way to Skinner. Mr. Joseph Skinner wasn't on visiting terms with Skinner's branch of the family, and he had never seen his nephew or manifested the slightest interest in his existence. Skinner, as a matter of fact, regarded his uncle with considerable animosity on that account, but that did not prevent him from bragging in the Remove of his uncle's riches. A certain amount of reflected glory from those riches fell upon Skinner, though he never had an opportunity of getting his greedy fingers on a solitary quid.

"Is that wire from your giddy uncle?" asked Stott.

"Yes. He's at Lantham."

"I thought he lived abroad," said Snoop.

"So he does," said Skinner. "The old hunks—I mean my uncle—generally spends the winter on the Riviera, and the summer in Switzerland. He's got tons of oof!"

"You never see any of it."

"There was a misunderstanding once between him and my father," said Skinner.

"Which was trying to do the other?" asked Snoop pleasantly.

Skinner did not appear to hear that impertinent question.

"I've always had an idea that he might leave me something," he said. "I'm his nephew, after all, though he's never seen me or asked about me. I was named Joseph after him—Harold Joseph. The mater thinks I might have heard from him before this if I had been named Joseph Harold. It was rather a mistake. I've always thought I'm down in his will, but he's one of those obstinate old curmudgeons who go on living for ever out of sheer obstinacy."

"But what does he want to see you for all of a sudden?" asked Stott. "It's rather a change, isn't it?"

"Getting tender-hearted in his old age, perhaps," grinned Snoop. "He might want to know you, as he hasn't any idea what you're like."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't be funny!" growled Skinner. Skinner was in a state of great elation. "Look at the wire!"

His chums read the telegram eagerly. It ran:

"I should be glad to call and see you while I am in England. Expect me by the four train at Friardale.

"UNCLE JOSEPH."

"It's ripping!" said Skinner, rubbing his hands. "It shows he takes some interest in me, to come to Greyfriars and see me. I always thought he'd come round in the long run. The mater sent him my photo once to give him a chance."

"My hat! That was enough to keep him off for good!"

"Oh, don't be a funny ass, Snoop! If I get into his good books it may mean some good tips for me, as well as a whack in his will, if he ever makes up his mind to kick the bucket. Anyway, he can't come here and see me without handing out something decent—a fiver at least, I should say."

"Well, he would be bound to give you a tip, at least," agreed Snoop. "You'd better meet that train, and butter him up."

"I'm jolly well going to. You fellows can come if you like. Mind you're careful what you say; I've heard he's touchy. Simply butter him up, and stroke him down, and put him into a good temper. This may mean a fiver."

Skinner & Co. left the tuck-shop in great spirits. A visit from a rich uncle on that "stony" afternoon was like corn in Egypt in one of the lean years. Harry Wharton & Co. were chatting at the gates, and they glanced at the elate Skinner as he came out.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Come into a fortune?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Wherefore that merry and bright expression upon your esteemed and ridiculous chivvy, my worthy Skinner?" asked Hurree Singh.

"My uncle's coming to see me this afternoon," said Skinner carelessly.

"Which one?" asked Johnny Bull. "The one who keeps the catsmeat shop, or the one who keeps the pub?"

"My rich uncle," said Skinner, unheeding. "I dare say you've heard me mention him."

"I fancy everybody at Greyfriars has," chuckled Bob. "Is the old boy really turning up at last?"

"As a matter of fact, he's rather fond of me," said Skinner calmly.

"No accounting for tastes, by Jove!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

Skinner & Co. walked out, and took the road to Friardale. It was close on four o'clock already, and they had no time to lose.

The Co. exchanged a puzzled glance.

"The queerfulness is terrific," observed the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The esteemed Wib has gone to fetch a shady relation of the august Skinner, and his ridiculous rich uncle is also arriving. It will be entertainful if the two esteemed visitors meet at Greyfriars."

"By Jove, it will!" said Nugent. "Rather rough on Skinner, though it serves him right. Wib didn't know anything about this uncle chap."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Rake.

"Well, did Wibley know?" exclaimed Wharton.

"I fancy so."

"Well, he might have put off his wheeze, then," said Harry. "It will be rough on Skinner to have the two here together."

Rake roared again.

"But they're not two—they're one."

"Eh! Is this blessed rich uncle the relation Wib's sending here?"

"Yes."

"Then I'm blessed if I catch on! Where's the wheeze?" said Bob. "Skinner's grinning with glee at getting a visit from his rich uncle."

"Wait till you see the uncle!" chortled Rake.

"How the dickens is Wib working it?" demanded Nugent, mystified. "How did he even know Skinner's uncle was in England at all? I understand he lives abroad."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A sudden suspicion shot into Wharton's mind. He remembered the locked study, and the traces of make-up on Wibley's face. It dawned on him at last.

"Rake, you fathead!" he exclaimed. "Is it a spoof?"

"Spoof!" ejaculated Bob.

"What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander," said Rake coolly. "If Skinner can sign a telegram 'Mark Linley,' Wibley can sign one 'Uncle Joseph.' Skinner can't complain if his own merry example is followed. It will be a lesson he wants."

"Great Scott! But the uncle——"

"Wait till you see him!"

The juniors chuckled. They understood a little more clearly now, and they looked forward keenly to the arrival of Harold Skinner's uncle.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.
Skinner's Uncle!

"HERE'S the train!" smiled Skinner.

Skinner was in great spirits.

It was the first time in his life that his rich uncle had taken notice of him; it was the chance of a lifetime to ingratiate himself with the wealthy old gentleman. Old Mr. Skinner was touchy and crusty, doubtless, but Skinner would have stood that without limit for the sake of the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table.

Once he succeeded in getting into touch with his hitherto "distant" relative, Skinner felt that he could rely upon his own cunning for the rest. Any amount of soft sawder and buttering-up would come easy to Skinner, and he already had in his mind's eye a series of affectionate, dutiful letters to the old gentleman which were to screw a succession of tips from him in the future. All he wanted was a chance of using his cunning, and now his chance had come. And it seemed clear that the old gentleman must be experiencing an affectionate yearning towards his nephew. Mr. Skinner had visited England a dozen times before, but he had never thought of coming to Greyfriars to see Harold Joseph.

Skinner watched the train from Lantham come in with glistening eyes. Snoop and Stott were quite impressed, too. If Skinner's rich uncle was materialising at last, Skinner was a fellow worth cultivating.

"Well, where is he?" said Snoop, as half a dozen passengers alighted from the train.

Skinner scanned the passengers eagerly. He had never seen his uncle, but he expected to see some family resemblance to his father.

A little old gentleman, in a shiny frock-coat and silk hat, blinked round the platform through a pair of large steel-rimmed glasses, and came towards the three Removites. Skinner's heart sank a little. Was this his uncle? He had expected to see someone got up regardless of expense. This old gentleman was decidedly shabby. He had a silk hat that wanted brushing, his frock-coat had been good once, but it was very shiny at the seams. His trousers were baggy at the knees, and his waistcoat was rumpled and had spots of

grease on it. He wore high-heeled boots, doubtless to increase his stature, which was naturally a little more than Skinner's own, and the high heels made him walk awkwardly. His face was sun-tanned in hue, and adorned with a fringe of sandy-coloured whiskers and a straggling beard. He carried an umbrella that could only be described as a gamp.

"My word!" murmured Snoop, closing one eye at Stott. "Is that the merchant? Looks like an old clo' man, if you ask me!"

The little old gentleman blinked at Skinner & Co. through the steel-rimmed glasses.

"Is one of you my nephew?" he asked, in a cracked, wheezy voice, somewhat like that in which Mr. Punch addresses Mrs. Judy.

Skinner stammered. This was his uncle, then—his rich uncle from the Riviera! He looked like a third-rate insurance-collector. But he was rich—there could be no doubt about that—all the Skinner family knew it, and there was much family bitterness in that happy family on the subject of the ultimate destination of the old gentleman's wealth. Whatever he looked like, he had plenty of cash; and that, after all, was the main thing—from the Skinner point of view. Skinner pulled himself together.

"Uncle Joseph!" he exclaimed.

"Are you Harold?"

"Yes, uncle. Don't you know me?" said Skinner affectionately. "The mater sent you my photograph."

"I think I should have known you," said the old gentleman, blinking at him. "You are very like your father; the same foxy expression."

Skinner gulped. Snoop and Stott turned away their faces. They could not help grinning. Their idea was that Skinner would have earned his fiver by the time he got it, at this rate.

"Ahem!" gasped Skinner. "I—I—I'm jolly glad to see you, Uncle Joseph. It's so kind of you to come and see me."

Mr. Skinner grunted.

"These chaps are my friends," said Skinner. "Snoop and Stott, uncle. They—they've been looking forward to seeing you."

"Huh!" said Uncle Joseph, staring at Snoop and Stott for a moment, and then ignoring them. "Where is the school?"

"I'm going to take you there, Uncle Joseph."

"Then lose no time."

"Oh, certainly!"

Skinner led the way from the station with his uncle. Snoop and Stott followed, grinning.

"My hat!" murmured Snoop. "I'd swap that old gorgon for Linley's pater any day—what?"

"What-ho!" said Stott fervently.

Mr. Skinner halted outside the station as Skinner was piloting him away.

"Is there no vehicle here?" he rasped out. "Do you think I can walk great distances at my age? Huh!"

"Here's the hack, uncle."

"Let us take it, then."

"Certainly!"

Skinner opened the door of the hack for his uncle, and followed him in. Snoop and Stott would have entered too, but Mr. Skinner stared at them grimly.

"There is no room for four here!" he snapped.

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Skinner.

"What did you say, Harold?"

"N-n-nothing, uncle. You fellows won't mind walking, will you?"

The hack rolled away, and Snoop and Stott were left staring at one another.

"Great pip!" said Snoop. "Skinner's welcome to his uncle. Did you ever hear of such an uncivilised old Hun?"

"Kaiser Bill is a gentleman beside him!" growled Stott. "We've got to walk. Of all the Hunnish old rotters! Br-r-r!"

Snoop and Stott walked. Skinner was not feeling happy as he rolled away in the hack with his uncle. Even the prospect of a fiver and the prospect of future tips could not make Uncle Joseph's company enjoyable.

"Don't twiddle your thumbs!" rapped out Uncle Joseph suddenly.

Skinner ceased to twiddle his thumbs.

"Can you keep your feet still, or can you not keep your feet still?" inquired Uncle Joseph, after a few minutes' silence.

Skinner kept his feet still.

"So that is Greyfriars?" grunted Uncle Joseph, when the old school came in sight.

"Yes, uncle," said Skinner meekly.

"Huh!"

The hack stopped at the gates. Harry Wharton & Co. were still there, and Billy Bunter was with them. Bunter was determined to make the acquaintance of Skinner's rich uncle. The old gentleman alighted and blinked at the juniors. Harry Wharton & Co. raised their caps politely, but Uncle Joseph did not take the slightest notice of them. His manners certainly had not the grace of Vere de Vere.

The old cabby touched his hat.

"Pay the cabman, Harold!" snapped Mr. Skinner. "What are you dawdling about for?"

Skinner gasped.

"I—I—I——" he stuttered.

"I am waiting for you, Harold. I do not like standing about and being stared at by unmannerly boys."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Skinner was crimson. He had no money to pay the cabman. He had naturally expected his uncle to pay the fare.

"I—I—I haven't any tin, uncle!" he gasped at last.

"What!" squeaked Uncle Joseph. "You have taken a hackney vehicle when you have no money to pay the cabman? Shocking! Perhaps, Harold, you think that I shall pay the fare for you? I shall do nothing of the sort. You may settle this matter for yourself. I am ashamed of you!"

And Mr. Skinner trotted on into the quadrangle, leaving Skinner at his wits' end. He turned his flushed face to the grinning Co.

"For goodness' sake, lend me half-a-crown!" he pleaded.

"I'm a-waitin', sir!" said the cabman emphatically.

Dick Rake tossed a half-crown to Skinner, with a chuckle, and the unhappy Skinner paid the cabman. Then he hurried after his uncle.

But he was not feeling elated now. Fiver or no fiver, he wished that Uncle Joseph was at the other end of the earth. But Uncle Joseph was fairly planted on him now, and Skinner dared not offend him, and he had to make the best of it.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.
Awful for Skinner!

"WELCOME to Greyfriars, sir!"

Mr. Skinner stopped as Billy Bunter addressed him in the quad. He turned to his nephew, who came up red and breathless.

"Who is that fat boy?" he asked.

"That's Bunter, sir."

"I hope that that gross, over-fed, unhealthy young rascal is not a friend of yours, Harold?"

"Oh, no, uncle!"

"I am glad to hear it," snapped the old gentleman. "Send him away! His face has a most unpleasant effect on my nerves."

"Cut off, Bunter!" growled Skinner.

Billy Bunter blinked at the old gentleman in speechless rage. Mr. Skinner walked on with his nephew. Mark Linley was coming away from cricket practice, with his bat under his arm. He raised his cap civilly to the old gentleman as he passed. He took him for a relation of Skinner's, and he was not likely to act as Skinner had acted towards Mr. Linley. The old fellow paused.

"Who is this boy, Harold?" he asked.

"Oh, a scholarship bounder!" said Skinner disdainfully. "Chap who worked in a factory once, and sneaked in here on a scholarship."

"So you are a pitiful snob, Harold?"

"Eh?" gasped Skinner.

"I am ashamed of you, Harold!"

"Oh! I—I—I——"

"The lad looks very decent and agreeable," said Mr. Skinner, looking after Mark. "I should be glad to see you more like him, Harold. Tell him I wish to speak to him."

"I—I——"

"Will you do as I tell you, or will you not?"

"Yes, yes! Oh, yes!" stuttered Skinner.

He ran after the Lancashire junior.

"Linley! I say, Linley!"

"What do you want?"

"My—my uncle wants to speak to you," gasped Skinner.

"To me?" repeated Mark, in surprise.

"Yes. He—he's a rather rum old codger," muttered Skinner. "I can't offend him. I—I say, come and speak to him, will you? And—and be civil. I'd take it as a great favour."

Mark gave him a quiet look. After Skinner's conduct towards his father, the request was decidedly cool.

"I'll come," said Mark.

"I—I say, you'll be civil?" said Skinner anxiously. "I—I'm sorry about—about——"

"Never mind that. Of course I shall be civil."

"Thanks!" said Skinner, great relieved, if not grateful. He knew what he deserved at Mark Linley's hands.

Mark returned to where the old gentleman was standing.

"You wished to speak to me, sir?" he asked respectfully. A good many juniors were looking on from a distance, some of them grinning at Uncle Joseph's shabby clothes and antiquated topper, and his queer appearance generally. But Mark's manner was quiet and respectful.

"Yes," rapped Uncle Joseph. "Are you in my nephew's Form here?"

"I'm in the Remove with Skinner, sir."

"I should like you to take notice of my nephew sometimes, and encourage him to grow a little more like yourself," wheezed Mr. Skinner. "At present he is a weedy and slacking waster and a miserable snob. I think your example might do him good!"

"Oh!" ejaculated the astounded junior, while Skinner ground his teeth with rage.

"That is all," said Uncle Joseph. "Come on, Harold! What are you dawdling about for? Take your hands out of your pockets, you sloven!"

Skinner breathed fury as he followed his uncle, Mark looking after them in astonishment. Undoubtedly Mr. Skinner was a "rum old codger," as his dutiful nephew described him.

"Great Fisher!" murmured Bolsover major. "Is that rummy card Skinner's uncle—his rich uncle? If he's rich, I should think he'd buy some new trousers!"

"And a new hat!" chuckled Temple of the Fourth.

"Where did he dig up that coat?" chortled Hazeldene. "Look at his tie! Look at his chivvy! My hat!"

"Poor old Skinner!" grinned Ogilvy. "He won't jaw about other fellows' relations after this, I should say."

"Linley's pater is a swell beside that awful old codger," said Bolsover major. "Fancy Skinner running down Linley's pater when he had an uncle like that himself! His clothes haven't been brushed since he bought them, and I'll bet that was forty years ago!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, Wharton, seen Skinner's uncle?"

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"Isn't he a corker?" grinned Rake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Snoop and Stott came in at the gates, dusty and annoyed, as the juniors were discussing Skinner's uncle.

"Seen the old codger?" asked Snoop. "Ain't he a specimen? I don't believe he's rich at all; it's all Skinner's swank! He bought his clothes from a ragman, to judge by the look of him!"

"Old beast left us to walk!" growled Stott. "Skinner can have his uncle to himself; I'm not taking any! Horrid old Hun, I think!"

"I say, you fellows, what do you think of Skinner's specimen?" giggled Billy Bunter. "Ain't he a brute? Blessed old ragbag—what? Skinner's trying to keep him out of sight, but the old boy won't go to the study. He's making Skinner show him round."

"I'm going to watch him," said Bolsover major. "You don't often see a specimen like that off the cinema!"

"Here they come!" howled Billy Bunter. "Don't Skinny look joyful!"

Skinner had succeeded in getting his shabby uncle into the house, hoping to plant him out of sight in the study. But the old gentleman had a will of his own. He came out into the quadrangle again, Skinner following him with burning cheeks. Uncle Joseph was talking in a loud voice, and everybody could hear his remarks.

Fellows were gathering from far and near to look at Skinner's uncle. That the unfortunate Skinner was ashamed of his relative was not difficult to perceive, but there was no sympathy for Skinner. Even his own dear pals, Snoop and Stott, were enjoying his discomfiture. After all Skinner's swank on the subject of his rich uncle who lived on the Riviera, the sight of that shabby and queer-mannered old gentleman tickled the juniors immensely.

It was not that he had bad manners—he had no manners at all. On a close inspection it could be seen that his finger-nails were black, and he did not even wear gloves. He dropped "h's" occasionally, which worried Skinner very much. Skinner had predicted that Linley's pater would strew Greyfriars with dropped "h's," and Linley's pater hadn't dropped one; Skinner's uncle was doing it instead.

From the old man's stinginess in the matter of the cab fare, Skinner had almost given up hope of a tip. But he dared not offend Uncle Joseph. He knew that his people would expect him to ingratiate himself with the old gentleman when they heard of this unexpected happy meeting. But Skinner wondered desperately how long he would be able to stand him. Not a single smile or chortle was lost on the snob of the Remove. He simply writhed under them.

"Very pretty place," said Mr. Skinner, in his loud, cracked voice. "I should think you are 'appy 'ere, 'Arold?"

It seemed to Skinner that the old wretch was dropping more "h's" than ever, and doing it purposely to worry him.

"Poor old 'Arold!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Yes, uncle!" groaned Skinner.

"I never had chances like this when I was a boy," went on Uncle Joseph, apparently unconscious of the fact that half Greyfriars could hear him. "It was different when your father and me was boys, 'Arold!"

"Oh, dear!"

"Who'd have thought in them days," continued Uncle Joseph reminiscently, "that you would ever come to a public school, 'Arold? But I 'ope the young gents treats you well, and don't 'old it against you that your folks rose in the world!"

"Oh, did they?" murmured Snoop, with a wink at Stott. "We're hearing some news about 'Arold—what?"

"Good old 'Arold!" gasped Stott, almost choking. "Won't he be 'appy after this!"

"The awful old beast!" thought Skinner. "I believe he's doing it on purpose to show me up. He can see I don't like it. He wasn't dropping 'h's' like that at first, the beastly old hunk! I've offended him somehow!"

"What a change!" went on Uncle Joseph. "What a change from the fried-fish shop, 'Arold!"

"The—the what?" gasped Skinner.

"Ah, you don't remember that!" said Mr. Skinner affectionately. "You wasn't born when your father kept the fried-fish shop in the Mile End Road!"

"He—he didn't!" howled Skinner.

"What!" thundered Uncle Joseph.

"I—I mean, I've never heard of it before!" groaned Skinner. "I—I thought our people were always well off, uncle?"

"I s'pose that's the way your father's brought you up!" snorted Uncle Joseph. "There's nothing to be ashamed of in keeping a fried-fish shop, is there?"

"N-n-no!"

"Don't be a snob, 'Arold!"

"Oh, dear!"

"Many and many's the time," continued Uncle Joseph, "when I've dropped into that shop in the Mile End Road for a talk with your father, and 'im in his shirt-sleeves, selling the fish. They was good old days, 'Arold, though I s'pose your father don't care to talk of 'em, since he's rose in the world!"

Skinner's face was burning.

He was learning some hidden family history; for certainly the fried-fish shop had never been mentioned at home, and if it had ever existed, it had been kept exceedingly dark by the Skinner family. The snob of the Remove wondered wretchedly how many more family secrets were to be told to all Greyfriars.

"These 'ere young gents your schoolfellows, 'Arold?" said Uncle Jospeh, stopping as he came near the group of Removites.

"Yes, uncle."

"Glad to see you, my boys!" said Uncle Joseph. "Glad to see that you're kind and polite to my nephew 'Arold, considering what he come from!"

Skinner would have given a term's pocket-money at that moment for the earth to open and swallow him up. But the earth didn't.

"Some fellers," Uncle Joseph went on, "would think it a piece of imperence for my nephew to come to a school like this, considering. But I'm a democrat, I am! 'Arold ain't a gentleman, but he can afford to live among gentlemen now that his father's made 'is money! So why shouldn't he?"

"The whyfulness is terrific, esteemed sahib!" grinned Hurree Singh.

"We've all made our bit, us Skinners!" said Uncle Joseph, who seemed in quite a communicative mood. "I don't mind saying so! Look at me!"

"We are looking—rather!" murmured Bolsover major.

"Won't you come and see the cricket-field, uncle?" groaned Skinner.

"I'm talking to these young gents, 'Arold! They don't mind talking to me, though I'm a self-made man! Do you, young gentlemen?"

"Not a bit, sir!" said Wharton.

"We're enjoying it, sir!" said Bob Cherry.

"The enjoyfulness is terrific!"

"Look at me!" said Mr. Skinner complacently. "Do I mind ownin' up that I started in a fried-fish shop with 'Arold's father—me buyin' the fish at the market, and 'Arold's father selling it over the counter? Not a bit! I'm proud of it! Ain't I able to live abroad in me old age now, combining business with pleasure? Look at me—what started life with 'arf-a-crown in my pocket, and now the 'ead of the biggest pawnbroking business on the Riviera!"

"Oh, crumbs!" yelled Snoop.

It was a little too much.

Skinner's rich uncle was supposed to spend his days in luxurious idleness on the sunny Riviera, basking in the sun at Nice and Cannes and Monte Carlo. The discovery that he ran a pawnbroking business at those fashionable resorts put the lid on, so to speak.

It was a discovery to Skinner, too; his people had never told him that.

"If I'd known I was goin' to see you, 'Arold, I'd 'ave brought you a little present, selected from the unredeemed pledges!" said Mr. Skinner.

Skinner groaned.

"Now show me round the place, 'Arold! It's a real pleasure to see what you've rose to through your father sticking to the fried-fish business when he was a young man!"

Mr. Skinner trotted off with Harold Joseph, the latter feeling positively murderous. The Removites simply gasped.

"Poor old Skinner!" gasped Squiff. "He ought to get a gag for that old johnny! It's a shame to give him away like that!"

"We're learning something about Skinner!" chuckled Bolsover major. "He's never mentioned the fried-fish shop to me!"

"Nor the pawnbroking business!" grinned Snoop.

"I rather fancy Skinney will get fed-up with his rich uncle," said Vernon-Smith. "I don't think I'd own that old codger if he was a billionaire!"

Quite a little army of juniors accompanied Mr. Skinner in his peregrinations around Greyfriars. They were interested in Skinner's uncle. Certainly, Skinner had one distinction to boast of—if he chose—his uncle attracted more attention than any fellow's relation had ever attracted before!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Lesson for a Snob!

THAT walk round Greyfriars was a long-drawn horror to Harold Skinner.

A fellow who was not snobbish at all might have felt considerably uncomfortable in his situation. A shabby old man, with dirty finger-nails, who talked ungrammatically, and revealed hidden family secrets in the most reckless manner, might have tried the endurance of any fellow at a big school. But it was specially hard on Skinner, after his swank on the subject of his rich uncle, and his snobbish conduct towards Mark Linley. Skinner would have given a year of his life to have had his uncle even remotely resemble Linley's father.

How was he ever to hold up his head in the Remove after this? There was revenge enough for Mark Linley, if he chose to take advantage of it. But Skinner knew instinctively that Mark would never make a single reference to his weird uncle. It was from fellows of his own kidney that he had most to fear—Snoop, and Stott, and their like. They would certainly never let him forget his uncle's visit to Greyfriars.

Skinner's crimson face drew smiles from all quarters. But the crimson died away before that walk was over. Skinner was quite pale when he came back to the School House with his uncle.

He was relieved to find that Mr. Skinner manifested no desire to interview the Head or his Form-master. Skinner felt that he would have expired with shame if the old gentleman had been seen by the Head. He was afraid that Mr. Quelch might appear, in which case he would have had to introduce his uncle, and he was glad to pilot the old gentleman up to the Remove passage at last, out of harm's way.

"Getting a bit peckish, 'Arold," remarked Mr. Skinner. "I suppose the 'Ead will arsk me to dine with 'im?"

Skinner shuddered.

"Wouldn't you rather have a snack in the study, uncle?" he pleaded.

"Oh, do, sir!" said Vernon-Smith. "Here's our study. 'Arold's my study-mate, you know."

"Werry kind of you to 'ave 'Arold for a study-mate," said Mr. Skinner. "You're a young gentleman. But 'Arold's as well off as if he was a gentleman. It's a real pleasure to me, 'Arold, to see that you ain't looked down on 'ere. Do you think I ought to call on the 'Ead, 'Arold?"

"Oh, no!" gasped Skinner. "The Head's awfully busy!"

"'E won't think it rude like?"

"I'm sure he won't."

"Well, I'll leave it to you, 'Arold, considering that you 'ave mixed with gentlefolk, and I s'pose you knows best."

"Oh, dear!"

"P'r'aps the 'Ead wouldn't care to dine with me, me being a pawnbroker," said Mr. Skinner reflectively. "What do you think, 'Arold?"

The Remove passage was crowded with juniors, and every word was heard by all of them. Skinner longed to sink through the floor.

"Come into the study, uncle," he said.

"Well, if this young gent 'ere don't mind, I will. You won't take it as a liberty, sir?" asked Mr. Skinner, addressing Vernon-Smith.

"Quite a pleasure," said the Bounder politely. It was a pleasure, in a sense. The Bounder found great amusement in watching Skinner's face.

"Thank you kindly, young gentleman! 'Course, I ain't used to mixing with gentlefolks, like 'Arold 'ere, and I'm sure you'll make allowances for me."

"Ha, ha! I mean, yes, sir."

Mr. Skinner entered the study at last.

"Bring some of your friends in to tea, 'Arold," he said. "I don't like heating alone. You come in, and you and you and you." Mr. Skinner beckoned to Removite after Removite, and they cheerfully accepted his invitation. The Famous Five came in, and Rake and Micky Desmond and Morgan and Mark Linley. The latter was hesitating, when the old gentleman took his arm and pulled him in. "You come in, my lad. I want you to be friendly with my nephew 'Arold. I 'ope he may grow up to be a gentleman like you, sir! 'Course, there ain't much sign of it so far, but you never know, and 'Arold may turn out a gentleman in the long run, I 'ope."

Mark did not look at Skinner's shame-stricken face. He pitied the unfortunate snob deeply at that moment. His manner to Mr. Skinner was quite respectful—respect was due to age, at least, though the old gentleman was certainly very tactless.

Mr. Skinner sat down in the armchair, with his back to the light, and blinked genially at the company through his glasses.

"Now, wot about some grub?" he said. "I'm 'ungry. I was thinkin' of dinin' with the 'Ead; but, 'course, 'tain't to be expected, 'im being so 'igh-class. What's the matter with you, 'Arold? You look low-sperrited."

"I—I—I'm all right," stammered the miserable Skinner.

"Don't stutter like that, 'Arold!"

"I—I——"

"I can't abear stuttering, and think of these young gents, too, though they are so kind and polite to you," said Mr. Skinner. "You must remember you're among the gentry now, 'Arold, and be'ave according."

Skinner looked half demented. The misery in his face might have touched the heart of a Hun. But Uncle Joseph did not seem to notice it.

The table was quickly spread, and Uncle Joseph started tea. His table manners were striking. He ate sardines with his fingers, and drank his tea from a saucer, and picked his teeth with a fork. He wiped his greasy fingers on Skinner's jacket. He talked almost incessantly, and his talk ran in the early days of Skinner's father and himself, and the experiences in the fried-fish shop, and a summons for non-payment of rates, and how lucky Skinner was to be at a school for the sons of gentlemen. And his remarks were intermingled with admonitions to Skinner to remember that he was among gentlefolk, and behave accordingly. Mr. Skinner seemed to have no misgivings as to his own manners, but he was very anxious that his nephew should behave well in the presence of the young gentlemen who were so kind as not to look down on him on account of his origin.

Skinner sat with a white, wretched face, only longing for the terrible old man to be gone, so that he could rush away and hide himself from the sight of his schoolfellows.

"Are—are you catching a train, uncle?" he stammered at last, as the old gentleman showed no signs of moving.

"Jolly near calling-over!" remarked Rake.

Uncle Joseph started.

"My hat! Then it's about time to chuck it," he remarked, in quite a different voice.

Skinner jumped.

He gazed at his uncle like a fellow in a dream.

For Uncle Joseph spoke no longer in the wheezy, cracked tones of Mr. Skinner; he spoke in a ringing young voice which certainly sounded like a boy's.

"Why, what——" exclaimed Mark Linley, in amazement.

"'Ave you 'ad a pleasant arternoon, 'Arold?" went on the old gentleman, in that changed voice.

And Skinner gave a wild yell.

"Wibley!"

He gazed at Uncle Joseph, dumbfounded.

Uncle Joseph cheerfully pulled off his sandy whiskers and his scraggy wig, and rose to his feet.

"Wibley!" gasped Vernon-Smith.

The impersonator was not recognisable, but they knew now that it was Wibley. There was a roar of laughter in the study. Harry Wharton & Co. knew the secret already; but it came as a surprise to Vernon-Smith and Mark Linley—and, above all, to Skinner.

"Wibley!" exclaimed Mark, in amazement.

"Yours truly!" said Wibley cheerfully. "How have you enjoyed your afternoon, Skinner, old chap?"

Skinner panted.

"Wibley! You rotten—you rotten trickster! Hang you—hang you! You spoofing beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rather a lesson for a snob—what?" said Wibley complacently. "I've been enjoying your face, Skinner."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner gasped with relief. That awful old man wasn't his uncle, after all—he wasn't even an old man at all! His uncle was still on the Riviera, and he wasn't a pawnbroker, and the story of the fried-fish shop was a figment of Wibley's fertile imagination. It was a tremendous relief after all Skinner's sufferings that afternoon.

"Oh, you rotter!" he gasped.

"Ripping idea, wasn't it?" grinned Wibley. "You won't be in a hurry to send spoof telegrams again, now you see two can play that game!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner uttered a yell, and rushed at Wibley. "Uncle Joseph" rolled on the floor in Skinner's furious clutch.

"I'll smash you!" roared Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The door opened, and Bolsover major looked in. The roars of laughter from the study rang the length of the Remove passage.

"What's the joke?" asked Bolsover. "Hallo! My hat! Skinner going for his uncle! Well, I'm not surprised!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a rush of juniors to see the combat. Nobody was surprised that Skinner had gone for his uncle, in the circumstances. But there was a surprise when the uncle rose from the combat in the person of Wibley of the Remove, leaving Skinner gasping on the carpet.

"Wibley!" howled Bolsover major. "Why—what—where's Skinner's uncle?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gentlemen, Skinner's uncle has disappeared, as it's time for calling-over," grinned Wibley. "It was a little game—entirely for Skinners good—a little lesson for a silly snob! I hope Skinner will benefit by it. Come and help me get this clobber off, Rake."

And Wibley walked cheerfully out of the study.

Skinner scrambled to his feet.

He shook a furious fist at the howling Removites.

"You rotters! You were all in this!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you rotters!"

"Shush!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Remember, you're among gentlefolks now, 'Arold, and be'ave according."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the juniors streamed out of the study almost in hysterics, leaving the snob of the Remove gasping with rage.

. . . . . .

Skinner, when he came to think of it, could almost forgive Wibley for his jape in his relief at knowing that the terrible Uncle Joseph was not the genuine article. And certainly the snob had had a severe lesson, though whether it would do him good was another matter.

THE END.

(Do not miss "RAKE'S RIVAL!"—next Monday's Grand Story of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars, by FRANK RICHARDS.)

BRIEF NOTICES
To Readers of THE "MAGNET" LIBRARY.

Cricket and Football.

Fitzroy F.C. (average age, 17) want home and away matches for coming reason. Ground, Boston Manor, Chelsea.—Hon Sec., P. A. Jones, 16, Meek Street, Chelsea, S.W.

St. Mary's C.C. (average age 14-15) want games with other clubs in their district.—Hon Sec, H. Akers, 34, Morley Road, Lewisham, S.E.

For Correspondence, Etc.

Miss Grace Evans wishes to thank heartily all those who wrote to her in response to her appeal, and hopes to answer them all in time.

Will girls wishing to become members of D. M. Collins' Correspondence Club please write to the M.E. and C.C. Girls' Representative Office, 94, Kendall Road, Colchester?

O. Spires, 24, Kempshead Road, Albany Road, Camberwell, S.E., would much like to hear from L. H. Spires, whose photo appeared in a recent number.

Private R. McC. Russell, A.M.C., No. 11 Australian General Hospital, Caulfield, Melbourne, Australia, would be glad to correspond with readers either in the other Colonies or in the United Kingdom.

Lewis Wadsworth, 163, Oxford Street, Church Gresley, near Burton-on-Trent, would like to correspond with some boy readers.

A. Bidwell, 6, Lordship Road, Cheshunt, would like to hear from A. W. Churcher, Boys' Service, R.E., Chatham.

Will Vienny Higgins, of Harrogate, write to her old friend, S. J. Senior, at 31, Stanmore Road, Burnley, Leeds?

Herman Aguirre, c.o. Mr. G. A. C. Day, P.O. Box 417, Lima, Peru, would like to hear from some of his friends lately at Woolwich Polytechnic Secondary School.

Corporal Hannigan, 7573, 9 B Ward, A Block, Wharncliffe, War Hospital, Sheffield, would be glad to have letters from readers.

S. M. Mulley, Bell Grove Cottage, Welling, Kent, wants to join a correspondence club—one near him preferred.

Miss Rose Brennan, 14, Chaseley Street, Stepney, E., wants to correspond with some girl readers.

J. C. Oliphant, 5, Walter Street, Nottingham, will be glad to send particulars of a first-class correspondence club on receipt of stamped and addressed envelope.

Pioneer J. Maughan. 31345, 234th Field Co. R.E., 4th Sec., 39th Division, B.E.F., France, would be glad to correspond with some of our older boy readers.

Re Leagues.

Montague R. Young, 9, Westbourne Road, Barnsbury, N., wishes to form a local "Gem" and "Magnet" League, and would be glad to hear from anyone interested. Stamped and addressed envelope, please.

Wm. Knapp, 8, Firbank Road, is forming a "Gem" and "Magnet" League open to anybody in the United Kingdom. Stamped and addressed envelope, please.

Leonard Caine, 3, Farmside, The Cross, Hyde, Cheshire, wants to form a league in his locality for the purpose of sending soldiers and sailors parcels of the Companion Papers. Stamped and addressed envelope, please.

James Gibson, 10, Carlisle Street, Southdown Lane, Liverpool, wishes to form a "Gem" and "Magnet" League, and would be glad to hear from any reader with a hand-press who would care to join, with the idea of running a small weekly paper.

A. R. Colbeck, Vale Cottage, 9, Northern Road, Aylesbury, wishes to form a Correspondence Club for readers of the "Gem" and "Magnet" anywhere. Stamped and addressed envelope, please.

G. Llewellyn, 268, Main Road, Darnall, Sheffield, wishes to form a "Gem" and "Magnet" League for boys, and hopes to run a magazine in connection with it. Please write, or call between five and six.

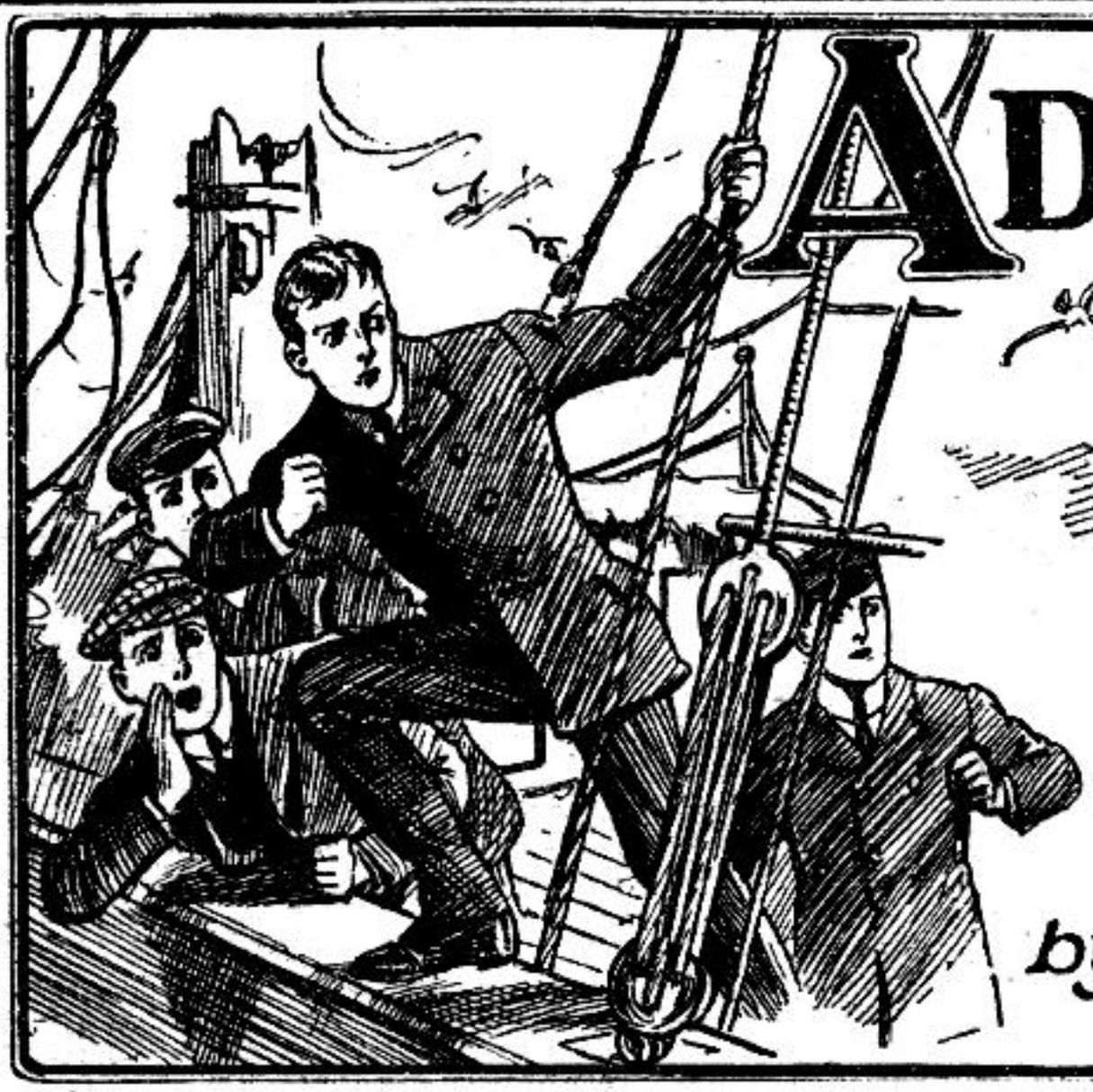
George F. C. Land, 12, Windsor Place, Plymouth, would be glad to hear of any "Gem" and "Magnet" League in his locality.

E. Henry, 29, Raleigh Road, Penge, S.E., wishes to form an International "Gem" and "Magnet" League. Will overseas readers please enclose international coupons (or stamps if these are unavailable) for postage?

A. Samson, 1, Adelaide Street, West Croydon, would like to hear from the secretary of any "Gem" or "Magnet" League in his neighbourhood.

(Readers will find a further List of Notices on cover, page ii.)

Our Magnificent Adventure Serial Story. START TO-DAY!



ADVENTURERS FOUR!

A Story of Strange and Thrilling Adventures in an Amazing Quest

by ALEC G. PEARSON

PREVIOUS INSTALMENTS BRIEFLY TOLD.

Hal Mackenzie receives a mysterious message, urging him to come out to the Southern Andes and learn the secret of the Tower of the Golden Star. He sets out upon the voyage accompanied by his chums, Jim Holdsworth, Bob Sigsbee, and Pat O'Hara.

After exciting experiences in the hands of a treacherous captain, they arrive at Buenos Ayres.

They proceed upon their journey into the mountains, and eventually arrive at the Black Sentinel—a rock cut in the figure of a huge man.

They march on again, later making a halt to hunt for food, when Jim discovers the skeleton of a man. Near by he comes upon a wallet containing an old parchment which tells how the man, Guzman Cavallo, of Santiago, Spain, had set out 150 years previously in quest of the Golden Star.

At the end of another three days' journeying they arrive at the Valley of the Shadows spoken of by the Spaniard, and of which Aymara, the daughter of a native chief, had told them. Here they encamp for the night. They are aroused some hours later by a shot from Sigsbee's gun. A conflict begins with unseen foes, the darkness being intense. The adventurers are powerless against a number of metal barbs, between four and five inches in length, and weighing about half a pound, which commence flying about their heads. They are anxiously waiting for the moon to rise, when a bank of fog rolls across the valley, still further intensifying the darkness.

(Now read on.)

The Half-Breeds.

"Gad, you're right!" exclaimed Hal. "It's as thick as pea-soup, and will be all over the valley in about ten minutes."

In less than ten minutes it had filled the valley, blotting out everything from sight. A man could not have been seen three paces away. It enveloped them in its clammy folds, thick and evil-smelling.

"My aunt!" said Jim. "It niffs worse than a regular London pea-souper, and they're pretty rotten at times."

"But 'twill be giving us an advantage," asserted Pat O'Hara.

"I don't see that," replied Hal. "Seems to me it will be giving our foes an advantage. They must know every inch of the valley, and the fog won't hamper them. But we're strange to the place, and if we moved away from the camp we should be lost."

"It's meself could foind my way back again, by the feel av the ground," declared O'Hara. "And I mane to thry and locate thim shadows what's having it all their own way wid the shootin'. I'll just creep out and listen, and whin I hear where they are I can do a bit av sniping."

"Don't be a fool, Pat!" said Hal.

"Best stay where you are," advised Sigsbee.

But the Irishman was restless, and lying down quietly when attacked, without being able to make any sort of return, didn't meet with his approval at all. Pat's notion of a fight included hitting back. A waiting game didn't suit him.

The metal barbs began to fall again, by twos and threes now, and from several different directions at once. And the aim was now more accurate, despite the fog. Perhaps the unseen attackers had drawn closer. In any case, the ridge was no longer a safe cover, as they were shooting the barbs in from the sides now as well as from the front.

"We've got to shift our position," Sigsbee observed, "or presently we'll get shot full of holes with them barbs."

"There's a fairly deep hollow somewhere behind us," said Jim, "just about big enough to hold the mules and all. I think I can find it."

He did find it, and the kicking, squealing animals were led down into this place of greater safety. But one of them was killed before they reached there. It was the pack-mule. A barb struck it between the eyes and entered its brain. It dropped dead in its tracks.

"Lucky it wasn't one of us!" said Hal. Then he broke out fiercely: "I can't take this lying down much longer! I must do something! Fire at the brutes, whether I can see them or not! I can understand how Pat O'Hara feels!"

"By the way, where is he?" exclaimed Jim. "Pat!" he called out.

There was no reply.

"He may have been hit," said Hal. There was anxiety and fear in his voice. It was not any fear of what might happen to himself, but a dread that the gallant Irishman, best and cheeriest of comrades, had been killed. "We must go back to the ridge and look for him."

But although they crawled all over the camping-ground, at considerable risk to themselves, for the barbs were striking the earth all round them, no trace of Pat O'Hara could be found.

"He's gone out to try and locate some of these Valley-men," Sigsbee declared, "and get a shot at them—same as he said he would."

They returned to the hollow. By this time the moon had risen, for whenever the fog thinned a bit a faint radiance was visible overhead. But as a rule the mist was too dense for the moonlight to penetrate it in the slightest degree.

Suddenly a shot rang out, apparently about a quarter of a mile away, and it was immediately followed by a sharp cry. Then silence again.

"Pat has bagged one of them!" exclaimed Jim. "Good old Pat! I say, couldn't we go out and lend him a hand?"

"I should like to," replied Hal.

"You wouldn't find him in this smother," declared

Sigsbee; "and it won't do to leave the camp unprotected. If these skunks, who swarm in the fog, were to capture our mules and outfit, we'd be properly done in."

This was true, so very reluctantly they had to remain where they were. But O'Hara's shot—for it could only have been him who fired—had a remarkable effect. The fusillade of barbs, which had almost been continuous for the past half-hour, suddenly ceased.

It was a welcome respite, for their nerves were beginning to get on edge.

Yet the silence which now reigned was, in a way, almost as trying. No other shot did O'Hara fire, and no more barbs fell into the little encampment. It was strange.

An hour passed in this dead stillness, and O'Hara had not returned. Then all at once a slight rustling sound fell on their ears.

"That'll be him creeping back," said Jim. "I'll give him a hail!"

But Sigsbee clapped a hand over his mouth.

"Hush!" he whispered. "Listen!"

The slight rustling was heard again, but it came from three different points now. O'Hara couldn't be creeping back to camp from three different directions at the same time.

"The Valley-men," said Hal, in a low voice. "They're coming to close quarters at last!"

"Thank goodness!" murmured Jim. "Anything's better than being shot at without being able to retaliate."

"Look out!" cried Hal.

Over the rim of the hollow a face had appeared. Without bringing his rifle to his shoulder he fired. The face vanished. It was indeed but half a face that slid out of sight. The rest had been blown away.

At the same instant a hand and arm—the hand grasping a knife—was thrust forward almost into Sigsbee's eyes. The arm was raised to strike, when the American gripped hold of it, and hauled with all his strength.

A man came tumbling into the hollow.

Sigsbee's temper was up. He, too, was glad to get at grips with the enemy. Seizing the man by his neck and one leg, he swung him shoulder high, then hurled him with terrific force down on to the ground again.

The man laid still, for his neck was broken.

Sigsbee bent over him.

"A half-breed!" he exclaimed. "Now we know who we're up against. The breeds! The very worst of all the foes we've met, or are likely to meet!"

Pat O'Hara Holds His Own.

When O'Hara slipped away from the camp, "to do a bit av shootin' on me own account," as he put it, he made his way through the fog in the direction where he supposed some of the enemy to be in ambush. For two or three hundred yards he crept along on all fours; then, coming to a dip in the ground, he straightened himself up and walked, for he argued that the missiles would now pass over his head. In this he was right.

So he progressed for another three hundred yards or so, stopping with the utmost caution, and making no sound. Then the ground rose again, and he found himself stumbling among some small boulders of rock. Like a fox, he went to earth in among the boulders.

He listened with strained attention. Quite a short distance away from him he could hear the low muttering of voices, and some sounds as of men moving about stealthily.

These sounds seemed to be coming nearer.

"The first wan that shows himself will get a lead pill," he murmured. "I'll aim for his stummick, so as he'll be saved the throuble av swalleying it."

He never gave a thought to his own danger. That the shot might have the effect of bringing a score or more of the enemy rushing down on top of him did not worry him in the least. Probably he never gave the matter a thought.

Presently the fog thinned a little for a few moments, and he caught sight of a figure looming up through it, not more than thirty yards away. Instantly he took aim and fired.

The figure let out a yell, staggered a few paces, and dropped. It was that shot, and the man's cry, that O'Hara's comrades had heard in the camp.

The fog closed down again as thick as ever. But there was no rush on the part of his strange foemen; they had methods of fighting of their own—crafty, stealthy methods, which roused the Irishman's contempt.

Yet in this gloomy valley, every stone and bush of which they were familiar with, it made them formidable adversaries. It is hard to fight an enemy who contrives for the most part to remain concealed. For some little time Pat didn't hear another sound, and as he got tired of remaining in the same position he crept forward again. It was curiosity as much as anything which urged him onward now; he wanted to have a look at the man he had shot.

He knew he had fallen by the side of a small bush. He found the bush, but the man was not there. Possibly he had been carried away by his companions; but if this was the case, the silence with which they moved was little short of marvellous.

"Faith, 'tis a quare counthry here among the mountains," muttered O'Hara, "an' anywan's welcome to my share av it—if so be I have a share!"

Tired of crawling, he rose to his feet, and walked on slowly. He had lost all sense of direction, and, despite his boast that he would be able to find his way back to the camp "by the feel av the ground," he realised now that such a feat was impossible in a place so utterly strange to him.

With his opponents it was different. They must have possessed the instincts of wild animals for finding their way about.

For about half an hour Pat O'Hara wandered aimlessly, and then he came to the foot of a low hill. He climbed to the top, and, to his surprise, found himself up against a stone wall, not more than six feet in height. It was a wall built by human hands; he could tell that by the feel of it. The stones were smooth, and all much of the same size, with the edges closely joined together.

He felt his way along it, and came to a door, which he cautiously pushed open. Then he took a step forward. But he did this incautiously, for he stepped on nothing, and, not being able to recover himself, toppled over into space.

However, he hadn't far to fall—a matter of three feet, no more—yet for a few moments it dazed him. Then suddenly the place into which he had tumbled was flooded with light. Instinctively he grabbed up his rifle, which he had dropped, and then stared about him.

He was in a large, oval-shaped room, which was furnished with a table and some chairs of mahogany, richly carved, a charcoal brazier, which had no fire burning in it then, and a camp-bed. Some dressed skins of animals were lying on the floor.

The bed was occupied. A man was sitting on it, who was gazing at O'Hara partly in surprise and partly in sardonic amusement. He was a sallow-complexioned man, with black hair and a thin black moustache. A ring with a large diamond set in it glittered on the forefinger of his right hand.

O'Hara guessed at once that he was a half-breed, one of those fierce and cruel semi-savages they had been warned against. This one was apparently a leader, and, so far as his manner was concerned, he seemed to be as civilised as any South American of the cities.

He was handsome, in a way, but his good looks repelled because of the lurking evil in his eyes, and the lines of cruelty about his mouth.

"I was not expecting a visitor," he said blandly in Spanish, "or I would have prepared a more fitting welcome for you. I had the ladder removed from the doorway. It is unfortunate, as it caused you a fall. I trust you are not hurt? But"—he paused a moment, and then added—"it may be you don't speak Spanish."

"I speak English betther," replied Pat, getting on his feet, and staring hard at the man on the bed. He couldn't quite make him out. The half-breed was suavely polite, and talked in quite a friendly fashion. Yet, if he belonged to the band that had been stealthily attacking them all night, he was clearly an enemy.

Pat glanced round the room in search of weapons. There was one that looked something like an air-gun. It had a short, wide barrel. On the floor close to it were several metal barbs of exactly the same pattern as the hundreds which had been shot into the camp.

That seemed proof enough that the man was an enemy, and his pleasant manner was only a blind, perhaps, to gain time and secure an advantage over his unexpected visitor.

"Bueno! I then will speak in English," said the half-breed. "I find it convenient to know more than one language. You are a stranger, and it is so seldom that strangers come to the valley that I am curious to know why you are here."

"Just having a look at the counthry," replied Pat carelessly. "Some parts I loike, some parts I wouldn't take at a gift."

"Ah!" The breed smiled in a peculiar way. "If you go further, you will like it less. Now, if one may ask your name? It is so much better to know the name of a friend, or——"

"An inimy, you were going to say," interposed the Irishman bluntly. "Well, I'm not ashamed av me name. 'Tis Patrick O'Hara. Now, a fair exchange is no robbery; suppose you tell me yours?"

"I was about to do so. You may perhaps have heard it before. I am known as Captain Garotte!"

(Continued on page iv of cover.)

Printed and published by the Proprietors at the Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, England. Agents for Australasia: Gordon & Gotch, Ltd., Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane, and Wellington, N.Z.; for South Africa: Central News Agency, Ltd., Cape Town and Johannesburg. Subscription, 7s. per annum. Saturday, August 12th, 1916.

MISS SHIRLEY KELLOGG'S ADVICE ON HAIR BEAUTY.

Beautiful Exponent of Revue says "Harlene Hair-Drill" is Ideal.

1,000,000 FOUR-FOLD HAIR-BEAUTY GIFT OUTFITS TO BE DISTRIBUTED GRATIS.

EVERY READER MAY RECEIVE FREE OF CHARGE:

1. A Trial Bottle of "Harlene" for the Hair.
2. A Packet of "Cremex" Shampoo Powder.
3. A Sample Bottle of "Uzon" Brilliantine.
4. The Secret "Hair-Drill" Manual.

OF all the beautiful and talented exponents of Revue, perhaps none have made their mark so indelibly on the British public as charming Miss Shirley Kellogg.

Thousands upon thousands of people have thronged to pay their tribute to her charming winsomeness, and it is this talented actress who to-day gives a delightful lesson to all who desire Beautiful Hair.

READ THIS STRIKING LETTER.

Here is Miss Shirley Kellogg's letter:

"*To Messrs. Edwards' Harlene Company.*

"*Dear Sirs,—I feel it is only right that I should acquaint you with my very satisfactory experience of your 'Hair-Drill.' Although I have tried many other hair preparations, until I was persuaded to try 'Harlene Hair-Drill' I was never satisfied with the results I obtained.*

"*Now, after a quite prolonged trial, I am pleased to say that 'Hair-Drill' more than exceeds my expectations. I am indeed gratified for the always immediate good that 'Hair-Drill' produces, and am quite certain that your principle not only maintains hair in vigour, beauty, and abundance, but that it will restore weak and deficient hair to fulness and strength.*

"*Without any hesitation I most heartily recommend 'Harlene Hair-Drill' to all ladies.*

"*Yours sincerely,*
"*(Signed)*
"*SHIRLEY KELLOGG.*"

Photo] **MISS SHIRLEY KELLOGG,** *[Arbuthnot.*

whose success in Revue has been perhaps the most remarkable feature in theatrical news, advises everybody who desires Hair Beauty to follow her example by adopting "Harlene Hair-Drill." Fill in and post the form given below, and you receive a Four-fold Hair Beautifying Outfit Free.

THIS IS YOUR FREE GIFT.

Simply write your name and address on the coupon below and post with 4d. stamps to cover carriage to Edwards' Harlene, Ltd., and you will receive the following outfit:

1. A BOTTLE OF "HARLENE," a true Liquid Food for the Hair, which stimulates it to new growth, building up the very substance of the hair itself. It is a Tonic Food and Dressing in one.

2. A PACKET OF THE MARVELLOUS HAIR AND SCALP-CLEANSING "CREMEX" SHAMPOO, which prepares the head for "Hair-Drill."

3. A BOTTLE OF "UZON" BRILLIANTINE, which gives a final touch of beauty to the hair, and is specially beneficial to those whose scalp is inclined to be "dry" or where powdery scurf exists.

4. THE SECRET "HAIR-DRILL" MANUAL, giving complete instructions for carrying out this two-minutes-a-day Scientific Hair-Growing Exercise.

You may at any time obtain further supplies of "Harlene" from your chemist at 1s., 2s. 6d., or 4s. 6d. per bottle; Solidified "Harlene" (for travellers, etc.), 2s. 9d. per tin; "Uzon" Brilliantine at 1s., 2s. 6d.; "Cremex" at 1s. per box of seven shampoos (single 2d. each).

If ordered direct from Edwards' "Harlene," Ltd., 20, 22, 24, 26, Lamb's Conduit Street, London, W.C., any of the preparations will be sent post free on remittance. Carriage extra on foreign orders. Cheques and P.O.s should be crossed.

HAIR TROUBLES FOR EVER BANISHED.

If *you* are troubled with:

1. Scalp Irritation,
2. Complete or Partial Baldness,
3. Thin or Falling Hair,
4. Splitting Hairs,
5. Scurf or Dandruff,
6. Loss of Colour,
7. Unruly Wiry Hair,

simply send the coupon at the foot of this page for your free-of-cost-and-obligation Hair-growing and Hair-beautifying Gift, and at once you can commence, without spending another penny, *to prove for yourself*, in a few delightful moments each morning, how easily and conveniently you can overcome every hair-trouble, or that discomforting scalp irritation that is always a sign of deadly hair poverty.

POST THIS GIFT COUPON

To EDWARDS' HARLENE LTD.,
20, 22, 24, 26, Lamb's Conduit St., London, W.C.

Dear Sirs,—Please send me your Free "Harlene" Four-fold Hair-growing Outfit, as described above. I enclose 4d. stamps for postage to any part of the world. (Foreign stamps accepted.)

Name .....

Address .....

 .....

ADVENTURERS FOUR.

(Continued from page 20.)

Yes, Pat had heard it before. Aymara had mentioned it as the name of the dreaded leader of the half-breeds, more treacherous and cruel than the worst of his followers, and they were unmatched in treachery and cruelty.

"Captain Garotte!" echoed O'Hara. "Then 'tis you who are the chief av the dhirty skugs who've been shooting those things at me and my frinds most av the night. Afraid to show yourselves, and foight like men."

A blaze of fury leaped into Captain Garotte's eyes, but it was gone in an instant. Yet in that instant the black soul of the man showed itself. When he spoke it was in the same tone of mocking politeness.

"You talk rashly, Senor Patrick O'Hara," he said. "My followers fight according to my orders. You and your friends have ventured into a part of the country, where I rule supreme, without my permission. You will not be allowed to go any further. As a warning to you that you had better go back the way you came, I ordered a silent attack, as it was carried out to-night. It was a warning only. But two of my men have been killed. That makes it different. A life for a life. Therefore, only two of your comrades will be allowed to leave the valley—alive. You will be permitted to draw lots as to who shall have that privilege, and who shall be left to pay the penalty."

"You've got to make them prisoners first," retorted O'Hara; "and you won't foind that aisy."

"It will be quite easy," replied the half-breed leader. "To begin with, you are a prisoner now, for you walked very foolishly into a trap."

"Meself a prisoner!" O'Hara laughed. "Whin I have you at my mercy! By just pressing the trigger av me rifle I could kill you!"

"Again you are hasty, Senor O'Hara," said Captain Garotte. "Look behind you!"

"I'm not to be had loike that!" jeered the Irishman. "'Tis an ould thrick."

Captain Garotte shrugged his shoulders. Then he picked up a large mirror, and raised it.

"Look into the mirror," he said, "and you will see the reflection of what is behind you. There is no trickery in that."

What Pat saw were three barrels of the weapons from which the metal barbs were fired sticking through three narrow loopholes in the wall. They were pointed straight at his back, and as they were not more than five yards off it was impossible that the holders of the weapons could miss him.

"It's as you say," he admitted. "There's something behoind me which 'tis as well for me to know is there."

But his glance into the mirror had revealed something else to him, which was that between him and the wall there was a clear space. No article of furniture, no obstacle of any sort intervened. In a flash he made up his mind how to act.

He was a good jumper, and he decided to make a jump for the wall. If he was close up against it the weapons couldn't be depressed sufficiently to do him any harm. But to jump backwards was by no means so easy as to jump forwards. Still, it was only a matter of five yards. He braced himself for the effort.

"I am glad that you realise your position," said Captain Garotte. "You will now be good enough to place your rifle upon the floor."

Pat O'Hara stooped as though to obey the order, but instead of doing so he made the backward leap, and had the satisfaction of feeling his shoulders hit the wall. He crouched low, then glanced up and saw the barrels of the weapons over his head. But he was safe from them.

Captain Garotte was for a moment taken by surprise. Then he reached for the thing that looked like an air-gun.

"Hands off it," ordered Pat, "or I put a bullet into your black heart!"

Captain Garotte obeyed, and resumed his sitting position on the bed. And he forgot his "Spanish grandee" manner, on which he prided himself, and snarled out an imprecation.

He was fond of theatrical effect, and he had it now, though not to his taste. His was a curious nature, only to be found among those who belong neither to the white race nor the coloured.

He hated his Indian mother because she was an Indian, and years ago he had tried to associate on equal terms with white people. But they would have none of him, and the consequence was that he hated his white father, and all the white race, even more bitterly than he did the Indians on his mother's side.

And he had inherited the evils of both races, but none of their virtues. So it will be seen he was about as bad a type of man as ever was let loose to work mischief in the world.

And he was the more dangerous because he was well educated. His followers were of the more roughly brutal type, but crafty to a degree.

"Well, here we are," went on Pat O'Hara. "I see there's no more loopholes in the wall, so your snuff-an'-butther-coloured assassins can't get me covered from anywhere now. And if wan av thim opens the door for so much as an inch, you'll be a dead man that instant. Tell them so."

Captain Garotte spoke a few words rapidly in Spanish to the men who were at the loopholes, standing unseen outside the wall of the stone hut.

The weapons were withdrawn, but O'Hara felt quite certain that the men were still there, watching through the loopholes, ready in an instant to send a barb through him, if, fancying himself secure, he moved away from the wall.

Captain Garotte rolled and lit a cigarette.

"You have gained a slight advantage, Senor O'Hara," he said. "What, then, do you propose to do next?"

"I'll answer ye," returned O'Hara, "in the words av an iminent statesman—'Wait and see.'"

— ——

Outnumbered!

After Sigsbee had hauled his assailant over the rim of the hollow and dashed him senseless to the earth, discovering when he bent over him that the man was a half-breed, there was a pause in the attack. Only two of the enemy had shown themselves, and they were disposed of. The rest seemed to be hanging back.

"Half-breeds!" exclaimed Hal. "Well, I suspected as much. And now they're going to give us a taste of their quality at close quarters."

"They don't seem anxious to continue the experiment," said Jim. "Didn't like the reception they met with."

"Oh, they haven't done with us yet," replied Hal. "We shall have 'em here again sooner than we want 'em. What I'm afraid of is that they'll come in swarms. If they do——"

"They're here now!" shouted Sigsbee. "Blaze away!"

As the words left his lips a score of figures appeared on the edge of the hollow, and leaped down on to them. Others followed, more and more of them, until the cup-shaped hollow was full of men.

Most of them were simply in each other's way, and could do nothing but crush in on the foremost of their companions. The hollow had become a seething pit of fiercely-struggling human beings and kicking, plunging mules.

The three gallant defenders had kept up a rapid fire from their revolvers, until the pressure was so great around them that they were unable to raise their arms. A dozen of the half-breeds had fallen under the hail of bullets, but they were trodden under foot by the others, who made no effort to pick them up or help them in any way. They were all armed with short clubs, but fortunately they were not able to use them with any particular effect, owing to the number of men fighting, or attempting to fight, in the limited space.

"This is a jam-up, if you like!" panted Jim, vainly endeavouring to get his arms free. "Hang it! I can do nothing but stamp on their toes!"

"We haven't got a dog's chance in this blamed ratspit!" growled Sigsbee. "I'm sorry now we ever came down here."

It was as he said; they hadn't a chance. Outnumbered by ten to one in the pit itself, and with a crowd of other breeds standing on the edge looking down on the conflict, the result was a foregone conclusion.

The gallant three, fighting desperately to the last, were eventually overpowered, disarmed, and bound hand and foot. Then they were hoisted on to the backs of the mules like so much baggage, and, escorted by fifty of their captors, the whole party set off across the valley.

"I don't think their chief—the man that Aymara referred to as Captain Garotte—can be with them," said Hal, as the mules were driven along side by side. "It seems to me these fellows must have received orders to capture us alive, as they had plenty of chances to kill us if they had wanted to."

"That's a poor consolation if we're being kept for some unpleasant form of death," replied Jim. "The inhabitants of this mountain region are rather given to the habit of torturing their prisoners, I fancy. Those snake-worshippers gave you a sample of their tastes in that line."

"Cheer up, Jimmy!" said Hal. "We're not dead yet, anyhow. And, from what we've gone through on this adventure, and on previous ones in other countries, I've come to the conclusion we're not easily killed!"

"These breeds don't seem to talk much," said Jim. "Can you gather any idea of where we're being taken to, by what little they do say?"

"They speak of a house or a hut," replied Hal; "but where it is, or whether we are being taken to it, I can't make out. Their Spanish is mixed up with a lot of Indian words which I don't understand."

(There will be another grand instalment of this exciting story in next Monday's issue of THE "MAGNET" LIBRARY Order your copy in advance.)