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"FUN IN THE FIFTH!"



**ASTOUNDING INTERRUPTION TO THE CRICKET MATCH!
THE NEW BOY'S ARRIVAL AT GREYFRIARS!**

(A Great Scene in the Magnificent New Long Complete School Tale in this Issue.)



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Fun in the Fifth!

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

By FRANK RICHARDS.

The trio stopped short in horrified amazement as the enlarged photograph of Horace Coker sailed through the doorway and crashed to the floor. "What the thump——?" began Potter. (See Chapter 6.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Furious Five!

"HOW do I look, you fellows?" It was Bob Cherry who asked that rather tactless question as he came into Study No. 1 in his cricket-flannels, and posed for his chums' inspection.

"With your eyes, I suppose!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Don't be a funny ass!" said Bob Cherry. "Seriously, how do I look?"

"No worse than usual, old man," said Frank Nugent. "You can thank your lucky stars it doesn't happen to be the Fifth of November!"

"Why?"

"Because you'd be fed to the flames of the bonfire, and all the fags would be yelling, 'Another guy!'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry glared at his humorous chums.

"Look here!" he said wrathfully. "What's wrong with my appearance?"

"My dear old chump," said Harry Wharton, "a detailed criticism of your appearance, if it were written down, would take up about fifty reams of impot-paper!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you——" spluttered Bob, giving a vicious twist to the necktie in his cricket-shirt. "What don't you like about these flannels?"

"Oh, the flannels are all right; but the smartest flannels in the world couldn't lessen the ugliness of a chivvy like yours!"

Bob Cherry clenched his hands, and he would probably have committed assault and battery upon the captain of the Remove had not Hurree Singh

seized him by the shoulder and swung him back.

"Leggo!" roared Bob.

"S-hush, my worthy chum! The fair Phyllis is approachfully coming!"

"Oh!"

Bob Cherry dropped his hands to his sides and crossed to the window.

A well-proportioned, athletic-looking girl, attired in a neat summer costume, was in the act of crossing the Close. She was Phyllis Howell, of Cliff House.

Phyllis had bestowed a great honour upon the Famous Five of the Greyfriars Remove by consenting to come over and watch them at cricket-practice. It was Wednesday afternoon, and a half-holiday.

"My hat, doesn't Phyllis look stunning!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "I shall feel a perfect tramp beside her! If what you fellows say is any criterion, I look perfectly awful!"

"Rats!" said Johnny Bull. "You look awfully perfect!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Handsome as a young Greek god—I don't think!" chuckled Nugent.

Bob Cherry was not, as a rule, fastidious about his appearance. He was not a "nuttish" individual, like Lord Mauleverer, or Temple of the Fourth. His boots always seemed too big, and his curly hair straggled and strayed over his forehead.

But on this auspicious occasion Bob wore a pair of spotlessly-white cricket-boots, and his hair had been plastered back firmly over his head. He did not wish to appear slovenly in the eyes of Phyllis.

There was a tap on the door of Study No. 1, and five voices chanted, in unison:

"Come in!"

Phyllis Howell greeted the juniors with her pleasant smile.

"Am I in time?" she asked.

"Bags of time, Miss Phyllis!" said Wharton. "It's awfully decent of you to come over and give us your encouragement!"

"Yes, rather!"

Phyllis Howell glanced curiously at Bob Cherry.

"Gracious, Bob!" she exclaimed. "What have you been doing to your hair?"

"Mum-mum-my hair?" stammered Bob, colouring to the roots of it.

"Yes. It's as flat as a pancake!"

"I—I've been trying to tame it," muttered Bob.

"Well, if it looks like that when it's tame, I should much prefer to see it run wild!" said Phyllis frankly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob ran his fingers through his hair and restored it to its normal condition.

"That's better!" said Phyllis approvingly. "And now for the cricket."

The Famous Five collected their bats and stumps, and proceeded to escort Phyllis Howell to Little Side.

Before they had proceeded many yards along the passage they met with an obstruction, in the person of Billy Bunter.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Stand clear, porpoise," growled Johnny Bull, "or I'll brain you with the business end of my bat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Bull—— Quelchy wants you!"

"Me?" said Johnny, forgetting his grammar in his surprise.

"All of you!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"What's he want us for?" asked Nugent.

"No idea!" said Billy Bunter. "I asked him, but he wouldn't tell me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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It was not altogether surprising that Mr. Quelch had declined to take Bunter into his confidence.

"P'r'aps you wouldn't mind going on without us, Miss Phyllis?" said Wharton. "We'll be along presently."

Phyllis nodded, and made her way to Little Side, whilst the Famous Five, greatly wondering, went along to the Remove-master's study.

"Just like Quelch, to send for us on a half-holiday!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Hope it isn't a licking!" said Nugent, calling to mind many recent misdemeanours. But Nugent's apprehensions proved false.

Mr. Quelch was actually smiling as the Famous Five entered his study.

"Ah! Come in, my boys! I wish to ask a favour of you."

Bob Cherry groaned audibly. "Are you ill, Cherry?" asked Mr. Quelch, in some concern.

"Nunno, sir!"

"But I heard you make an articulation of distress. I trust you are not in pain?"

"It—it was just a fleeting spasm, sir," said Bob.

"I should advise you to see the matron, Cherry, as soon as you have returned from the station."

"The—the station, sir?" stuttered Bob.

"Yes. I desire you boys to go to the station to meet a new boy who is arriving this afternoon. He will in all probability be on the train which gets in at three o'clock."

The Famous Five made heroic efforts to conceal their disappointment, but they were not very successful.

"It is a very pleasant afternoon," said Mr. Quelch genially, "and the walk will be most beneficial to you, my boys."

Harry Wharton & Co. reflected that the benefits of walking were not to be compared with those of cricket.

"I am entrusting this task to you five boys," continued Mr. Quelch, "because you are the recognised leaders of the Form. The name of the new boy is Howell, and it is probable, though not certain, that he will enter the Remove."

The Famous Five pricked up their ears at the mention of the name Howell. They wondered if the new boy would prove to be Phyllis Howell's brother.

"Will you be good enough, my boys, to meet Howell, conduct him to the school, and—er—entertain him to the best of your ability?" said Mr. Quelch.

The request was so nicely put—so nicely that it would have been churlish to refuse.

"Certainly, sir!" said Harry Wharton.

"With the greatest of pleasure, honoured sahib!" added Hurree Singh.

Mr. Quelch smiled.

"Thank you, my boys!" he said.

And then he returned to the evergreen task of compiling his "History of Greyfriars"—the history which, like the brook, was destined to go on for ever.

The Famous Five quitted the Form-master's study. Out in the passage they exchanged doleful glances.

"No cricket this afternoon!" groaned Wharton.

"And it's good-bye to Miss Phyllis' company!" said Nugent.

"Quelch hasn't an ounce of savvy!" growled Johnny Bull. "He might have known we wanted to play cricket. Why couldn't he have chosen somebody else to go and meet this new kid?"

"Curious that the fellow's name should be Howell," said Harry Wharton. "What a lark if it turns out to be Archie."

"No such luck," said Bob Cherry. "Phyllis would have told us if her brother had been coming to Greyfriars."

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"The name's just a coincidence," said Nugent.

Had the newcomer been Archie Howell the Famous Five would have gone forth willingly to meet him. They had seen Archie before, when he had been holiday-making in the vicinity of Greyfriars, and quite a friendship had sprung up between them and Phyllis Howell's brother. But, obviously, it was not Archie who was now on his way to the school, or Phyllis would not have failed to mention the fact.

The Famous Five made their way to the cricket-ground.

Practice was in progress, and Phyllis Howell was seated on the grass, looking on. Dick Russell, Ogilvy, and Micky Desmond, of the Remove, were entertaining her with merry chatter.

"Cricket's off, so far as we're concerned, Miss Phyllis," said Harry Wharton, coming on the scene with his chums.

"Off!" echoed Phyllis. "Why, how's that?"

"We've got to go to the station to meet a namesake of yours—a new kid," said Bob Cherry.

"I suppose your brother isn't coming to Greyfriars, by any chance?" said Johnny Bull.

Phyllis shook her head.

"No. Archie's at home with his tutor, as far as I know."

"You wouldn't care to come along to the station with us?" ventured Wharton.

Before Phyllis could reply, Dick Russell answered on her behalf.

"Miss Phyllis is quite comfy here, thanks!" he said.

"And she's awfully interested in the cricket—aren't you, Miss Phyllis?" said Ogilvy.

Phyllis nodded and smiled.

"Cheer up, Harry!" she said, noting Wharton's despondent look. "You'll be back in time to have some practice."

"Hope so," said Wharton.

And he and his chums set off on their mission.

The train was signalled when the Famous Five stepped on to the little platform at Friardale station.

"We haven't long to wait, that's one blessing," said Nugent.

A moment later the three o'clock train swung into view round a curve.

"Now for the new merchant," said Johnny Bull.

As the train rumbled to a halt, the juniors separated at intervals of a few yards and scanned the carriages.

Only one carriage-door was opened, and out of the compartment stepped an ancient, bearded farmer.

"That's not the new boy," said Bob Cherry.

"In fact, he's a decidedly old boy," said Wharton.

"Yes, rather!"

The farmer was the only passenger to alight from the train, which, at a signal from the guard, rumbled on its way.

The Famous Five exchanged dismayed and furious glances.

"This is the absolute giddy limit!" exclaimed Nugent. "The new kid hasn't arrived."

"He's coming by the next train, I suppose," grunted Johnny Bull.

"And what time does that get in?"

"Half-past four."

"Oh, help!"

The prospect of waiting an hour and a half on the desolate platform was anything but pleasant. And yet the juniors had no alternative. It would not be worth their while to go back to Greyfriars and make another journey to the station later.

"We'll stick it out," said Harry Wharton. "And when that fellow Howell

does arrive, I shall feel inclined to tell him what I think of him."

"Same here!"

The Famous Five would have been more appropriately termed the Furious Five at that moment. They were furious with Mr. Quelch for having sent them on a fools' errand. They were furious with Russell, Ogilvy, and Desmond for having monopolised the society of their girl chum. And they were furious with the new boy for having robbed them of an afternoon's cricket.

But they had promised to carry out Mr. Quelch's wishes, and the Famous Five's word was as good as their bond. So they seated themselves on the bench near by, and awaited the new boy's pleasure.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Meeting the New Boy!

"HERE she comes!" said Bob Cherry at last.

He was not referring to a member of the other sex, but to the four-thirty train, which was now approaching.

Weary of their long wait, the Famous Five rose to their feet and stretched their cramped limbs.

"Supposing the new kid isn't on this train?" said Nugent.

"I shall feel like smashing things," said Wharton.

"Same here!" said Bob Cherry. "I shall blossom forth into a giddy Bolshevik!"

The train jolted to a standstill, and out of a first-class compartment stepped a weedy, demure-looking youth in Etons.

In spite of the fact that it was a sweltering day, his spare form was enveloped in a heavy overcoat, and a muffler was entwined round his neck.

"Regular mummy's darling, isn't he?" said Nugent contemptuously.

"And this," said Johnny Bull, in sulphurous tones—"this is what we've been waiting for for an hour and a half!"

The weedy-looking youth blinked up and down the platform through his big spectacles. His gaze finally lighted on the Famous Five, and he advanced towards them.

"Are you looking for me, my dear fellows?" he asked meekly.

"We've been looking for you ever since three o'clock," growled Harry Wharton. "We expected you by the earlier train."

"Alas! I was unable to board it in time. I was sandwiched by a struggling mob at Charing Cross. These holiday crushes are appalling! I should not have been able to board this train had I not been propelled bodily into the carriage by the surging crowd behind me. It was a nerve-racking experience! I consider that people should be compelled to take their holidays in January—"

Harry Wharton cut short the weedy youth's remarks.

"Is your name Howell?" he asked.

"Yes, my dear fellow."

"Where's your luggage?"

"It is coming on by a later train."

"I suppose you're feeling peckish?" said Bob Cherry.

"Well, I could certainly do with a snack."

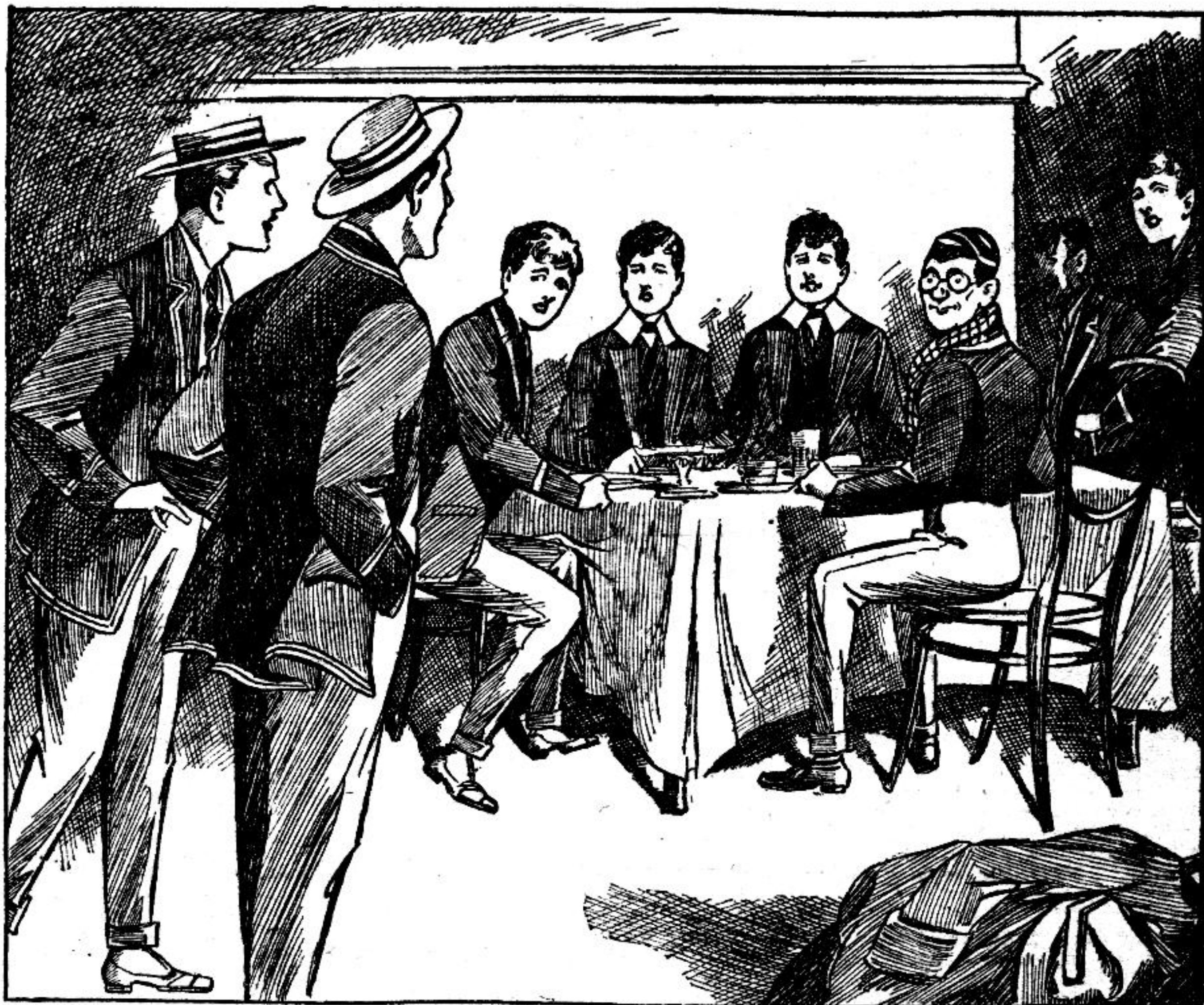
"Come on, then!"

The Famous Five took the new boy in tow, and escorted him from the station. He was such an inoffensive specimen that it was impossible to be angry with him.

"It was extremely kind of you to come and meet me, my dear fellows," said Howell.

"Rats!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Where?" said the new boy, backing



“Hallo, dear boys!” said the Caterpillar, nodding cheerfully to the Greyfriars juniors. “Entertainin’ the stranger within the gates?” “Yes!” grunted Harry Wharton. “You don’t seem very bucked about it,” said Courtenay. (See Chapter 2.)

away in alarm. “I have a horror of rodents!”

“I didn’t mean rats, you duffer!” said Johnny. “I meant ‘Rats!’”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Johnny’s not very explicit,” said Wharton, laughing. “He meant ‘Bosh!’”

“Oh!” said the new boy, looking greatly relieved. “But, really, it was extremely good of you—”

“Cut it out!” said Nugent. “And come and have some grub.”

The Famous Five led the way into the bunshop.

“We shall have to keep an eye on our fragile friend,” murmured Bob Cherry, “or the wind will blow him away!”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

The little party seated themselves at one of the tables, and Harry Wharton ordered refreshments for six.

Although a very weedy youth, the new boy—like a good many weedy people—possessed a voracious appetite. Indeed, when he started to eat, he gave the impression that he was never going to finish.

The Famous Five contented themselves with tea and toasted scones. But Howell merely regarded the toasted scones as stepping-stones to higher things.

“I think I could eat a veal-and-ham pie,” he announced.

“A whole one?” said Bob Cherry.

“Of course!”

The manner in which the new boy disposed of the veal-and-ham pie when it was brought was worthy of Billy Bunter at his best.

The Famous Five looked on in astonishment, mingled with apprehension. They were beginning to wonder whether they would be able to foot the bill.

“You fellows are not eating!” remarked Howell, looking up from his plate.

“We prefer to watch you,” said Nugent. “How do you manage it?”

“Eh?”

“Where do you contrive to stow it all?”

The new boy suspended operations on the veal-and-ham pie, and focused his gaze on Frank Nugent.

“Are you trying to be rude to me?” he asked.

“Nun-no!”

“That is extremely fortunate—for you!”

“What?” gasped Nugent.

“Because if you were to insult me I should be under the painful necessity of thrashing you!”

Frank Nugent stared at the new boy in speechless amazement.

“As you will probably have gathered from my physique, I am a powerful fighting-man,” said the new boy.

“Why, you champion ass,” said Bob

Cherry, “Frank would make shavings of you!”

Howell smiled.

“On the contrary,” he said, “if I dealt him one of my smashing straight lefts it would be necessary to summon the ambulance. But we will not speak of such matters now. I have other things to discuss—jam-tarts, for instance. Would you be good enough to pass me that dish, Berry?”

“My name’s Cherry!” said Bob wrathfully.

“And don’t you forget it, old fruit!” said Johnny Bull.

“Ha, ha, ha!”

Bob Cherry passed the dish of pastries, and the new boy continued his amazing orgy.

Shortly afterwards Frank Courtenay and the Caterpillar, of Highcliffe, strolled into the bunshop.

“Hallo, dear boys!” said the Caterpillar, nodding cheerfully to the Greyfriars’ juniors. “Entertainin’ the stranger within the gates?”

“Yes!” grunted Wharton.

“You don’t seem very bucked about it,” said Courtenay.

“Neither would you if you were in our shoes!” growled Bob Cherry.

The two Highcliffe juniors seated themselves at the next table, and they took a lively interest in the comedy which was being enacted close at hand. But

although it was a comedy so far as Frank Courtenay and the Caterpillar were concerned, the Famous Five were inclined to regard it as a tragedy.

"Is the merchant never going to stop?" groaned Johnny Bull, as the new boy started on his seventh tart.

"He believes in your English proverb which says that you cannot partake too muchfully of a good thing," murmured Hurree Singh.

But all things come to an end, and at last Howell leaned back in his chair, with a smile of contentment.

"Do they feed you well at Highcliffe, my dear fellows?" he inquired.

"At—at Highcliffe?" gasped Wharton.

"Yes."

"You'd better ask Courtenay. He's a Highcliffe chap."

The new boy glanced in Frank Courtenay's direction.

"But—but he is not wearing the same kind of cap as you fellows!"

"Of course not!" said Bob Cherry.

"Those are the Highcliffe colours."

"Then—then what are yours?"

"Greyfriars, of course!"

The new boy rose to his feet with a startled expression on his face.

"I fear that a misunderstanding has arisen," he said.

The Famous Five rose to their feet also.

"You—you mean to say that you're not coming to Greyfriars?" stuttered Nugent.

"Oh dear no! My destination is Highcliffe!"

"My only aunt!"

The Famous Five were thunderstruck.

"But you—you said your name was Howell!" gasped Wharton.

"So it is—at least, that is my Christian name. My full name is Howell Davies."

"Great Scott!"

Harry Wharton & Co. could scarcely find words to express their astonishment and indignation.

Acting upon Mr. Quelch's instructions, they had entertained the new boy. But it was the wrong new boy!

"Well, I'm jiggered!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Carry me home to die, somebody!"

Johnny Bull gave the new boy a gentle push, which sent him careering against the next table.

"This is your property, Courtenay!" he exclaimed. "We thought it was coming to Greyfriars, and all the time it was a candidate for your precious home for incurables!"

Frank Courtenay's face was a study; and so was the Caterpillar's. They had been much amused at the sight of the new boy being entertained by the Greyfriars fellows. But now that they themselves were about to be saddled with the freakish Howell Davies their amusement evaporated.

"I suppose," said the Caterpillar, turning to Harry Wharton & Co., "you're not expectin' us to pay for what this tame boa-constrictor's eaten?"

"Well, you ought to, considering he belongs to Highcliffe!" said Bob Cherry. "But we won't be too hard on you. Supposing you go halves?"

"Oh, all right!" grunted Frank Courtenay.

It was extremely fortunate for the Famous Five that they were only called upon to pay half the bill, otherwise they would have found themselves, in vulgar parlance, in the soup.

"What a ghastly sell!" muttered Bob Cherry as he accompanied his chums into the street. "We've entertained a Highcliffe bounder unawares!"

"But—but where on earth has our own new kid got to?" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Give it up!" said Wharton. "This is the queerest mix-up I've known for whole terms!"

The Famous Five were puzzled and exasperated. Their afternoon had been completely spoilt. The fellow whom they had been detailed to meet at the station had not turned up, and they had frittered away the best part of their half-holiday in standing treat to an undesirable alien. It was a maddening thought.

"Let's get back to Greyfriars!" growled Johnny Bull.

"But the new kid——" protested Nugent.

"Blow the beastly new kid! We're not going to hang about for him till midnight!"

And the Famous Five tramped back to Greyfriars empty-handed, and, what was worse, with empty pockets.

The exploits of Howell Davies had taken toll of their resources!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Dramatic Arrival!

"WOULD you like to take a knock, Miss Phyllis?" asked Vernon-Smith.

Phyllis Howell thanked the Bounder, and accepted the proffered cricket-bat. Then she took her stand in front of the wicket.

Dick Penfold was bowling, and he didn't trouble to take a preliminary run. He simply trickled the ball along the ground at a funeral pace.

Phyllis laughed as she tapped the ball back to the bowler.

"I suppose you think girls can't stand up to ordinary bowling?" she said, with a touch of sarcasm.

"You—you want me to bowl my level best, Miss Phyllis?" said Penfold.

"Of course!"

"Here goes, then!"

And the cobbler's son sent down the best ball he knew. Phyllis got the full face of the bat to it, and it went speeding away over the level turf.

"Well hit, by Jove!" said Dick Russell.

"We didn't know you were such a hot-stuff cricketer, Miss Phyllis!" said Ogilvy.

Phyllis laughed breathlessly.

"It seems to be the general opinion here that girls are helpless creatures, who don't know one end of a bat from the other!" she said. "Well, I'm going to try to alter that opinion."

And Phyllis succeeded. She remained at the wicket for ten minutes, hitting out vigorously, before she was bowled; and she received quite an ovation from the lookers-on.

"I say, Miss Phyllis," said Billy Bunter, who was hovering near, "that was a jolly fine performance, you know! Of course, most of the hits were flukes, but one or two were quite genuine. I know how to size up anybody's display, because I'm such a brilliant player myself. Have you ever seen my form?"

"I can see it now," said Phyllis, gazing at Billy Bunter's huge bulk. "And it blots everything else from my view!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, Smithy," said the fat junior, "can I have a whack?"

"Certainly!" said Vernon-Smith cheerfully.

And, picking up a stray cricket-stump, he brought it down heavily across Billy Bunter's tight-fitting trousers.

"Yarooooooh!"

"What are you making that row for?" asked the Bounder in wonder.

"Yow-ow-ow! Gerraway, you beastly, bullying Bolshy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, you asked if you could have a whack, and I obliged," said Vernon-Smith. "Talk about black ingratitude!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I meant a whack with the bat!"

"Oh! Here goes, then!" said the Bounder, picking up a bat and making a rush at the Owl of the Remove.

Billy Bunter fled in terror from the pursuing Bounder. But he was flabby and out of condition, and he would undoubtedly have been captured had not a dramatic interruption occurred at that moment.

There was a reverberating rumble overhead, and everybody instinctively gazed upwards.

"My hat! It's a seaplane!" exclaimed Bunter.

"Evidently, porpoise, you can't see plain!" said Dick Russell, perpetrating a frightful pun. "It's a two-seater aeroplane!"

"And it's coming down!" said Ogilvy, in great excitement.

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The juniors were of the opinion—though they were too polite to say so—that Archie Howell's big hit had been an equally big fluke. But this theory was knocked on the head when the batsman smote the very next ball on to the roof of the pavilion. (See Chapter 4.)

"By Jove, so it is!"

The rumbling noise had ceased now. The engine had been shut off, and the aeroplane glided swiftly and gracefully down to terra firma.

"Look out!" panted Vernon-Smith.

The cricketers jumped back out of range as the 'plane descended, and "taxied" across the ground before coming to a standstill.

"Who's the merry pilot, I wonder?" said Peter Todd.

"And why the thump has he landed on our cricket-ground?" ejaculated Monty Newland.

The pilot, judging by that portion of him which was visible—his eyes, nose, and mouth—was quite a young fellow—a mere boy, in fact. And his companion was younger still.

Vernon-Smith hurried towards the machine, and assisted the passenger to alight.

"Are you for Greyfriars?" asked the Bounder, wondering where he had seen the boy passenger's face before.

"Yes."

"You want to see somebody here?"

"I'm the new kid."

"What!"

"Hand out my gladstone bag, Jimmy!"

The pilot obeyed, with a grin.

As for Vernon-Smith, he was utterly dumbfounded.

New boys had often arrived at Greyfriars in novel circumstances. One fellow had rolled up in a luxurious Daimler car; another had arrived in a sack, having fallen a victim, on the way, to jaspers from a rival school. And there was a case on record of a junior who had arrived in state on a wheelbarrow.

But this was the very first occasion on which a new boy had come to Greyfriars by aeroplane.

This particular new boy was an aristocratic-looking fellow, not unlike the Caterpillar, of Highcliffe, in appearance. And as Vernon-Smith stared at him, the newcomer's face seemed more and more familiar.

"I'm positive I've met you before!" said the Bounder, when he had recovered in some measure from his astonishment.

"Sure you have, dear boy!" was the cheerful reply. "Hallo! Here's Phyllis!"

With an exclamation of amazement, Phyllis Howell advanced towards the new boy.

"Archie!"

And then Vernon-Smith understood. "My only aunt!" he ejaculated. "It's Miss Phyllis' brother!"

Archie greeted his sister cordially, and then waved his hand towards the pilot.

"This is cousin Jimmy, of the Civil Aviation Corps!" he explained. "He was good enough to give me a lift. Very decent of him, begad! Saved me a small fortune in railway-fares."

In a dazed sort of way Phyllis Howell shook hands with her cousin, whom she had not seen for several years. When they had last met, Jimmy had been a small boy in a knickerbocker suit. Now he was a fully-fledged pilot.

"I—I'm knocked all of a heap!" stammered Phyllis. "Why have you come to Greyfriars, Archie?"

The new boy gave a chuckle.

"I've come to stay, Phil!" he said.

"To—to stay! You don't mean to say you're coming here as a pupil?"

"Exactly, dear gal!"

Phyllis became more and more bewildered.

"Why did you not tell me you were coming, Archie?" she exclaimed.

"I wanted it to be a surprise."

"Well, you've certainly achieved your object. I was never more surprised in my life!"

"Matter of fact," said Archie, "the pater didn't definitely decide where to send me until yesterday. It was a toss-up between Greyfriars an' St. Winifred's—the school on the river, you know. An' Greyfriars had it."

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"But I am astonished that father has sent you away to school! What's become of the tutor you had?"

"He handed in his notice. Said I was too much of a handful for him. An' he told the pater that the only thing that would lick me into shape was a public school education. The pater was impressed, an' he arranged for me to come here, an' here I am—all alive an' kickin'!"

And Archie Howell beamed at his sister, and at the astonished Greyfriars juniors.

"I say, you fellows—" Billy Bunter elbowed his way to the fore. "This is a jolly fine bus, you know! I should like a trip in her!"

"Better ask cousin Jimmy to oblige," said Archie.

Billy Bunter turned to the pilot. "Will you take me for a joy-ride?" he asked.

Cousin Jimmy shook his head. "Couldn't be done," he said. "Why not?"

"Load not to exceed fourteen tons," said the pilot calmly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter was inwardly very relieved that cousin Jimmy had declined to take him up. He had no desire whatever to sample the risks which attended a passenger flight in an aeroplane. He had merely said he should like a trip for the purpose of looking big. That was Bunter's way.

To the fat junior's consternation, however, the pilot beckoned to him.

"Come along, my barrel-like friend," he said. "I'll give you a five-minute flight!"

The juniors, with many chuckles, propelled Billy Bunter towards the aeroplane.

"Go it, Bunt!"

"In you get!"

"And mind you don't break your neck!"

The possibility of such a calamity taking place had already occurred to Billy Bunter. His knees were fairly knocking together.

"Ahem! I—I'm not a selfish sort of chap!" he muttered. "I don't go round grabbing up all the pleasure that's going. Would you like to go up instead of me, Smithy?"

"No, I wouldn't!" said the Bunder frankly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Buck up!" said cousin Jimmy impatiently.

The perspiration stood out in beads on Billy Bunter's brow. He was quaking with alarm and apprehension.

"Don't show the white feather, Bunter!" said Phyllis Howell.

"Oh, crumbs! I—I'm sure you'd like to go up in my place, Miss Phyllis," said the fat junior. "Ladies first, you know."

"I'll have a flight as soon as you come down," said Phyllis. "I just want to see, for my own satisfaction, whether you survive all right."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was no escape for the Owl of the Remove. He pretended that he didn't feel well—that sudden spasms had come over him. And so they had—spasms of fear!

But Bunter's protests went unheeded. He was bundled into the passenger's seat, and Vernon-Smith, who knew something about aeroplanes, swung the propeller.

The machine glided swiftly across the cricket-ground, and presently it commenced to soar.

"Off she goes!" said Dick Russell.

"Hurrah!"

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"Mind your specs don't fall off, Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cousin Jimmy was a very experienced pilot, and he took no risks.

There was no "stunting," no daring manoeuvres for the benefit of the sight-seers down below. The pilot contented himself with circling round and round the cricket-field.

Even so, it was an appalling experience to Billy Bunter.

The fat junior, who was not of the stuff of which heroes are made, was yelling at the top of his lungs.

"Yaroooh! Help! Chuckit! I'm going giddy! I shall be kik-kik-kik-killed!"

Above the roar of the engine came cousin Jimmy's philosophic reply:

"You've only got to die once!"

Billy Bunter sat tight, not daring to peep over the side of the fuselage. He felt as if he were in the throes of a ghastly nightmare. His mind was assailed by countless fears.

Supposing the plane were to crash? Supposing—Bunter knew that such things did happen at times—a wing fell off?

The prospect of some remote meadow being bestrewn with little pieces of Bunter was anything but pleasant.

Cousin Jimmy was a prey to no such imaginings. His mind was tranquil. To him flying was a glorious game—the greatest game of all. And the aeroplane was as a toy in his hands.

"Stop that row, for goodness' sake!" he bellowed. "It's enough to frighten the inhabitants of Mars!"

Billy Bunter's yells subsided to a dismal whimper.

"Ow-ow-ow! I—I'm seasick!" he groaned.

"We're going down now," said cousin Jimmy.

And they did. And the pilot's skilful landing on the Greyfriars cricket-ground was loudly applauded.

When Billy Bunter stepped out of the aeroplane his countenance was almost green.

"What's up, porpoise?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"Gerooooogh! I—I feel quite ill! It must have been those doughnuts I had just before I went up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Doughnuts aren't exactly a fittin' preparation for an aerial trip," said Archie Howell. "How many did you have, Grunter?"

But the Owl of the Remove did not reply to that question. With a look of anguish on his face, he turned, and scuttled away towards the building. And as he went he registered a mental resolve that he would never again, under any consideration, indulge in the doubtful joys of a passenger flight in an aeroplane!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Splendid Capture!

"YOUR turn now, Phyllis!" said cousin Jimmy.

Phyllis Howell was not at all averse to a trip in the aeroplane.

"It's really time I was going," she said, glancing at her watch. "Could you take me over to Cliff House?"

"Is there a decent-sized ground there, suitable for landing purposes?"

"Oh, yes! Our sports ground is nearly as large as this."

"Good!"

Archie Howell assisted Phyllis into the passenger's seat, and then cousin Jimmy said good-bye all round. He explained

that he would be unable to return to Greyfriars, as he had to be getting back to his aerodrome.

"Thanks awfully for bringin' me along," said Archie, as he shook hands.

"Don't mench, dear boy! Mind you keep your end up at Greyfriars!"

"Trust me!" said Archie. "Au revoir, Phyl! I shall be seein' you again soon, I s'pose?"

"Of course!" said Phyllis.

Vernon-Smith again swung the propeller, and the aeroplane skimmed across the grass and rose like a bird. The juniors stood gazing after it as it soared over the trees which skirted the cricket-ground.

At that moment the Famous Five of the Remove arrived on the scene.

Harry Wharton and his chums nearly fell down when they caught sight of Archie Howell.

"What the merry dickens!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"It—it's Archie!" murmured Nugent, in far-away tones.

The new boy made a polite bow.

"At your service, gentlemen!" he said.

"What—what are you doing at Greyfriars?" stammered Wharton.

"Nothin' at present, dear boy. But I'm hopin' you'll let me join you in a game of cricket shortly."

The captain of the Remove stood blinking at Archie Howell's gladstone bag, which reposed on the grass.

"You—you don't mean to say you're coming here to stay?" he exclaimed.

"That's so," interposed Vernon-Smith.

"He's a new kid!"

"Not so much of your 'kid'!" said Archie. "I'm old enough to be your father!"

"What's your age?"

"Fifteen."

"Same here! So you needn't pretend that you're a blessed Methuselah!"

The Famous Five were fairly staggered. They stood gaping at Archie Howell as if he were a ghost.

"Why didn't Phyllis tell us you were coming?" blurted out Johnny Bull at length.

"She didn't know herself. I kept it a deep, dark secret, you see," said Archie.

"But—but how did you get here?"

"I flew," said Archie. "I find it a lot quicker than walkin'."

"You came by aeroplane?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Yes. My cousin Jimmy was good enough to bring me in his machine."

The captain of the Remove clenched his hands.

"You—you—" he spluttered.

"What's wrong?" asked Archie, in surprise. "Not goin' into a fit, I hope?"

"We—we've fooled away our afternoon waiting for you!" howled Wharton.

"Quelchy asked us to go and meet the new kid, who was expected to arrive on the three o'clock train!"

"That's the train I should have come by if I hadn't had the good luck to run up against cousin Jimmy," said Archie.

"There was no sign of a new kid on the three o'clock train," said Bob Cherry, "so we waited for the four-thirty. And then we discovered a merchant who said his name was Howell, so we took him along to the bunshop and allowed him to stuff himself at our expense."

"And then he had the nerve to tell us that his name was Howell Davies, and that he was bound for Highlife!" said Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fellows seem to have had a lively afternoon!" chuckled Vernon-Smith.

"I'm awfully sorry to have been the unwillin' instrument by which you were

robbed of the best part of your half-holiday," said Archie Howell.

"Bless your sorrow!" growled Johnny Bull. "What on earth did you want to come by aeroplane for?"

"You might have broken your neck!" said Nugent.

Archie grinned.

"Fortunately for the human race in general, I'm still sound in wind an' limb," he remarked. "An' now for some cricket while the light holds good."

"Aren't you feeling fagged?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Of course not! One doesn't get fagged sittin' in an aeroplane. I'm simply bristlin' with energy!"

So saying, Archie removed the overcoat which he had worn during his flight, and slung it across his gladstone bag. Then he divested himself of his Eton jacket, and rolled up his shirtsleeves.

"What mighty biceps!" said Bob Cherry, surveying the new boy's thin arms. "They remind me of a sparrow's ankles!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He will have his little joke, bless him!" murmured Archie. "You can take it from me, my curly-headed critic, that my muscles, although not visible to the naked eye, are all there!"

And then the Famous Five remembered that Archie Howell, despite his slim build, was a very capable fighting-man. He had licked Bolsover major of the Remove on one memorable occasion. And a fellow who could administer the knock-out to Bolsover major was not to be despised.

At the same time, it didn't follow that because Archie Howell was a good boxer he was also a good cricketer. Indeed, he looked anything but a cricketer—until he handled a bat. And by the very manner in which he handled it the juniors saw that he was no novice.

Archie posed elegantly in front of the wicket, and waited for the bowlers to get busy.

"Now, then, Inky," said Bob Cherry, "put your beef into it!"

Hurree Singh took off his coat, and deftly caught the ball which Archie Howell tossed to him.

"Are you ready?" he asked.

Archie nodded. And Hurree Singh, commencing his run with a couple of hops and a jump, sent down a deadly ball.

The rest of the juniors looked on with cheerful grins. They fully expected to see the batsman's middle-stump start performing revolutions.

But their expectations were not realised.

The middle-stump remained in its place, and so did the others. And the only thing which travelled any distance was the ball, which Archie Howell despatched over the distant railings.

The juniors gasped. And Bob Cherry asked the familiar question:

"Where did that one go to?"

"Got another ball?" asked Archie calmly. "I rather think I've lost that one!"

There was another ball handy, and Hurree Singh returned to the attack.

The juniors were of the opinion—though they were too polite to say so—that Archie Howell's big hit had been an equally big fluke.

But this theory was knocked on the head when the batsman smote the very next ball on to the roof of the pavilion.

"My only aunt!" ejaculated Frank Nugent. "The fellow's a giddy Jessop!"

"He certainly knows how to hit!" said Harry Wharton.

"I say, what a capture for the Remove!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith.

"Yes, rather!"

The presence of a batsman like Archie Howell in the Remove eleven would tremendously improve the side. The team, as it stood, was quite a capable one; but there was room for improvement, and Archie would supply that improvement.

The new boy continued to go great guns. And Hurree Singh nearly wept. Never before had his bowling been subjected to such indignities.

After a time Harry Wharton took a turn with the ball. But he could make no impression upon Archie, who got the full face of the bat to the ball every time, and sent it speeding away over the green turf.

Before he had been at the wicket five minutes the juniors were convinced that Archie Howell was every bit as good a cricketer as he was a fighting-man.

Although he had scarcely been half an hour at the school, the new boy was already regarded as an acquisition to the Remove.

Other bowlers tried. Some of them Archie treated with respect, others he punished unmercifully. But none of them succeeded in breaking through his defence.

"You're the real goods, Howell!" was Harry Wharton's enthusiastic comment, when Archie laid aside his bat. "Can you bowl?"

"A bit," said Archie modestly.

"Have a go at me, then."

The new boy was not quite such a success in the bowling department. At the same time, he was very good. He was dead on the wicket every time, and Wharton could take few liberties with him.

"Archie," said Bob Cherry, as the cricketers strolled towards the building, "you're worth your weight in lump sugar!"

"Hear, hear!" said Nugent. "Where did you learn your cricket?"

"My late lamented tutor, whom I succeeded in driving off his dot, was an old county cricketer. He used to play for Somerset. I got him to give me a few wrinkles."

"Well, he's made a first-class batsman of you!" said Harry Wharton. "You'd like to play for the Remove, I take it?"

"Nothin' would please me better."

"Good! You shall turn out against Highcliffe on Saturday."

"Thanks!"

"We'd like to take you along to the study for late tea," said Frank Nugent. "But—"

"What's the worry?"

"We're broke. That bounder we met this afternoon fairly cleaned us out."

"That's all right," said Archie. "It's my treat. I'll leave my bag an' overcoat in the hall, an' we'll come along to the tuckshop."

The new boy proved himself to be the soul of generosity. And Harry Wharton & Co. had quite forgiven him, by this time, for having been thoughtless enough to come to Greyfriars by aeroplane.

Supplies of tuck were ordered on a lavish scale at Mrs. Mimble's little shop in the Close, and it was a very merry party that sat down to tea shortly afterwards in Study No. 1.

The Famous Five were delighted to find that Archie Howell was such a talented sportsman, and they told themselves that the Remove had, indeed, made a great capture!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Crushing Blow!

"WHICH study are you going into, Archie?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"Don't know, dear boy."

"Haven't you seen Quelchy yet?" asked Harry Wharton.

"No."

"But you've seen the Head, surely?" ejaculated Johnny Bull.

"Not yet."

"Then I should advise you to go along and see him now," said Frank Nugent. "All new kids are supposed to report to him on arrival."

"Beastly bore, interviewin' these head-masters!" said Archie, with a sigh.

"If you go right away it'll be quite a pleasant interview," said Wharton. "But if you leave it till to-morrow, it's likely to be a dashed unpleasant one!"

"Yes, rather!"

Having refreshed himself to his satisfaction, Archie rose to his feet.

"Will the old buffer ask me many awkward questions?" he inquired.

"He'll just put you through a short test, to see if you're good enough for the Remove," said Bob Cherry. "Come and tell us how you get on."

Archie nodded, and quitted the study. After an interval of twenty minutes or so, he returned.

"What luck?" asked Wharton. "Was the Head decent?"

"Nice as pie!" said Archie.

"I suppose he asked you the usual rigmarole: 'Where does the Thames rise?' 'How many wives did Henry the Eighth have?' 'Where do the flies go in the winter-time?' and 'Who killed Cock Robin?'" said Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He asked me a few posers, an' tried to catch me nappin', but there was nothin' doin'," said Archie.

"You got through all right?" said Johnny Bull.

"Yes, dear boy."

"Did the Head say you were to report to Quelchy?" asked Nugent.

"No; to Prout."

"Prout!" ejaculated Wharton, in astonishment. "Why Prout?"

"Because he's my Form-master, I s'pose."

"But Prout's the master of the Fifth!" protested Bob Cherry. "You're not going into the Fifth, surely?"

"Yes," said Archie.

"M-m-my hat!"

Not for the first time during that eventful afternoon the Famous Five were completely flabbergasted. It was as if Archie Howell had suddenly exploded a bomb-shell in Study No. 1.

The juniors had naturally concluded that the new boy, being of their own age, would be assigned to the Remove. They would have been very surprised to learn that he had been put in the Upper Fourth, which was one stage higher than the Remove.

But the Fifth—

It was astounding, incredible!

"The—the Head must be clean off his rocker!" exclaimed Wharton.

"I asked him if he hadn't made a mistake," said Archie, "an' he replied that he wasn't in the habit of makin' mistakes. 'Your scholastic attainments, Howell,' he said, 'are of a high standard, sufficiently high to warrant your entry into the Fifth Form. You will report to Mr. Prout, who will allot you to a study.'"

The Famous Five groaned. Their hopes of numbering Archie Howell as one of themselves were ruthlessly shattered.

It was not the Remove Form that would gain the benefit of Archie's services on the cricket-field. It was the Fifth!

The new boy regarded the Famous Five curiously.

"You fellows seem to be quite upset," he remarked.

"We are!" said Wharton frankly. "We were counting on your coming into the Remove. We didn't dream you'd go into a higher Form."

"You want me in the Remove?" said Archie, and there was a note of eagerness in his tone.

"Of course!" said Bob Cherry.

"We're ever so disappointed that you're going into the Fifth," said Nugent.

"Awfully, fearfully disappointed!" said Johnny Bull.

Archie Howell was visibly impressed.

"I had no idea I was in such demand," he said. "You can set your minds at rest, dear boys. I shall be in the Remove within a week."

"But how on earth—" began Wharton.

"Leave it to me!" said Archie. "I'll wangle it, somehow. Matter of fact, I'd much rather be in the Remove than the Fifth. The majority of the Fifth-Formers, from what I've heard of 'em, are a set of stuck-up, silly asses! Give me the Remove every time!"

The Famous Five brightened up, though they could not understand how Archie Howell was going to effect a transfer from one Form to another. The Head had decreed that he should go into the Fifth. And the Head's word was law.

Archie turned to the door.

"I must be goin' now," he said. "I've got to interview the Prout-bird. So-long, dear boys!"

"So-long!" said the Famous Five.

Archie went along to Mr. Prout's study. Several curious glances were cast upon him as he went, but he paid no heed to them.

The master of the Fifth looked up from his desk with a frown as the new boy entered, in response to his "Come in!"

"Please, sir, I've come!" said Archie demurely.

Mr. Prout's frown deepened.

"Who are you, boy?" he thundered.

"Howell, please, sir."

"You are a new boy?"

"Yes, please, sir. I'm awfully sorry," added Archie apologetically.

"What do you want with me?" snapped Mr. Prout.

"Dr. Locke told me to report to you, please, sir."

"Do not address me in that fawning manner, boy!" rumbled Mr. Prout. "It is only necessary to say 'sir.' The constant reiteration of the word 'please' makes you appear effeminate. Do you understand?"

"Yes, please, sir."

Mr. Prout snorted.

"Your stupidity is appalling!" he exclaimed. "Why did Dr. Locke send you to me?"

"Because I'm coming into the Fifth, sir."

"Wh-a-a-t!"

Mr. Prout could scarcely believe his ears.

"Are you presuming to jest with me, Howell—to pull my leg, as the saying goes?"

"Nunno, sir! I'd rather jest with my grandmother than with you, sir."

The master of the Fifth compressed his lips.

"It seems as though some mistake has

been made," he said. "How old are you, boy?"

"I've seen fifteen summers, sir, and fourteen winters," said Archie.

Mr. Prout looked hard at Archie; but there was no suggestion of impertinence in the new boy's manner.

"I will proceed to test your knowledge, Howell," said the Form-master. "Which is the longest river in England?"

"No idea, sir," said Archie. "P'r'aps you can enlighten me?"

Mr. Prout looked astounded.

"Why, you cannot answer a simple geographical query!" he exclaimed.

"History's my strong point, sir," said Archie.

"Very well. Which of the English monarchs was beheaded?"

"King John, sir!" was the prompt reply.

"Nonsense!" snapped Mr. Prout.

"Why do you say King John?"

"Because, when he was forced to sign the Magna Charta, sir, he fairly lost his head!"

Mr. Prout grew purple in the face. He appeared to be on the verge of an apoplectic fit.

"Your stupidity and density are deplorable, Howell!" he fumed, as soon as he could find his voice. "Remain here a moment, whilst I go and consult Dr. Locke concerning the absurd mistake which appears to have been made."

Mr. Prout hurried away to the Head's study, whilst Archie, with a chuckle, dropped into the form-master's armchair.

"Well, Prout?" said Dr. Locke, as his visitor entered.

"I have called to see you, sir, with reference to Howell, the new boy. A preposterous blunder appears to have been made. The boy informs me that you instructed him to report to me, with a view to entering the Fifth Form."

"That is so," said the Head.

"Sir!" gasped Mr. Prout, in astonishment.

"I quite fail to understand why you should look so thunderstruck, Prout. Howell is a boy who possesses ability far

above the average. Indeed, he is as intelligent as a good many members of the Sixth Form."

"Intelligent, sir?" almost shouted Mr. Prout. "Why, the boy is a dunderhead—an ignoramus! He cannot answer questions on the most elementary subjects! You have made a fatal error, sir, in assigning him to my Form."

The Head frowned.

"Do you presume to criticise my judgment, Prout? I subjected Howell to a severe test, and I am more than satisfied with his attainments."

"I repeat, sir, he is an ignoramus—a dunce—a blockhead! His stupidity is unrivalled by any boy of my acquaintance—with the exception of Coker."

"I regret I cannot agree with you, Prout," said the Head tartly.

"Are you in earnest, sir, when you speak of placing Howell in my Form?"

"Most emphatically!"

"I beg of you to reconsider the matter, Dr. Locke—"

"I am not in the habit of reversing my decisions!" was the reply.

And the Head waved his hand towards the door to signify that the interview was at an end.

Mr. Prout was about to make a further protest, but he caught sight of the expression on Dr. Locke's face, and wisely refrained. Without another word, he left the Head's presence, and went back to his own study.

"Howell!" he thundered. "How dare you disport yourself in my armchair?"

"Tired, sir," said Archie briefly.

"Been playin' cricket."

"My study is not a haven of rest for weary cricketers!" roared Mr. Prout. "Get up, sir—get up at once!"

Archie rose leisurely to his feet.

"It is with deep regret," continued the master of the Fifth, "that I learn that you are indeed to become a member of my Form. If you display the same stupidity in the Form-room that you have displayed here, I can hold out little hope for your future! You may go."

"Are we to part so soon?" murmured Archie.

"What did you say, boy?" demanded Mr. Prout.

"I said prep would start soon, sir," said Archie calmly, "and I've got no study to do it in."

"Bless my soul! I had quite overlooked the matter of a study. You will go into—let me see—Study No. 10. It is at present untenanted."

"Very good, sir."

"And I trust, Howell, that you will make an earnest endeavour to add to your scanty store of knowledge."

"I'll do my best, sir, in spite of the handicap."

"What handicap, boy?"

"Of having you for a Form-master, sir," said Archie coolly.

It was pure insolence, and Mr. Prout recognised it as such. He picked up a cane.

"You are an impertinent young rascal!" he exclaimed. "Distasteful though it is for me to have to chastise a new boy, you have given me no alternative. Hold our your hand!"

Archie obeyed, and Mr. Prout administered three stinging cuts.

"Now go!" he thundered. "And do not dare to address me in that manner again!"

"I'm sorry, sir," said Archie frankly. "I ought not to have spoken as I did. It was jolly rude of me."

And Archie meant it. He had intended to pull Mr. Prout's leg, so to speak, but he realised that he had gone altogether too far, and that it was up to him to apologise.

LIGHTING-UP TIME FOR THIS WEEK.



JUNE.

21st Monday	- - -	9.48 p.m.
22nd Tuesday	- - -	9.49 "
23rd Wednesday	- - -	9.49 "
24th Thursday	- - -	9.49 "
25th Friday	- - -	9.49 "
26th Saturday	- - -	9.49 "
27th Sunday	- - -	9.49 "



"It seems as though some mistake has been made," said Mr. Prout, compressing his lips. "How old are you, boy?"
 "I've seen fifteen summers, sir, and fourteen winters," replied Archie. (See Chapter 5.)

The master of the Fifth melted at once.

"I am glad to hear you express contrition for the way you spoke, Howell," he said. "We will say no more about it. I trust you will be comfortable in your study. You will find it at the far end of the passage."

"Thank you, sir!" said Archie.

And he went along to his new quarters.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Rather Drastic!

STUDY No. 10 in the Fifth Form passage could scarcely be styled a home away from home.

It was a bleak and cheerless apartment, utterly destitute of furniture, save for a rickety chair, over which countless generations of Greyfriars fellows had played leapfrog.

There were no curtains to the window, there was no carpet on the floor. The study had not been occupied for a number of terms, and a chain of cobwebs depended from the ceiling.

"Pleasant sort of show—I don't think!" murmured Archie Howell. "I don't know if Prout imagined I was going to cart all my own furniture down here!"

Whilst the new boy stood on the threshold surveying his allotted quarters with extreme disgust, a rat scuttled across the floor.

"Groo!" muttered Archie. "I'd rather live in the lumber-room!"

At that moment a tall form loomed up in the doorway behind Archie, and an authoritative voice exclaimed:

"Who are you, kid?"

Archie spun round.

"An' who are you?" he retorted.

"Sorry I can't give you my card," was the cutting reply. "I'm Blundell—skipper of the Fifth. And one of my duties is to rid this passage of all undesirable aliens!"

"Hadn't you better shift, then?" suggested Archie.

Blundell glared.

"That's enough of your cheek!" he said loftily. "You're the new merchant who arrived by aeroplane this afternoon—what?"

Archie nodded.

"Well, you'd better take another flight now! Go back to the Second or the Third, whichever Form you're in!"

"I'm in the Fifth, old top," said Archie.

Blundell looked grim.

"There was once a fellow who pulled my leg," he said. "They buried him in Courtfield cemetery. If you're not jolly careful, you'll share the same fate!"

"I'm not pullin' your leg," said Archie.

"I'm in the Fifth, I tell you. If you don't believe me, ask Prout. And if you don't believe Prout, ask the Head."

Blundell's amazement was no less than Mr. Prout's had been. He saw that the

new boy was stating a fact, and he gave vent to a low whistle.

"Phew! Well, if this isn't the limit! Fancy planting a fag like you in the Fifth! The Head must be potty!"

Archie made no reply to this outburst. "Which study are you going into?" asked Blundell.

"This one."

Blundell glanced into Study No. 10, and burst into a roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha! They might as well have shoved you in the coal-cellar, and done with it."

"I quite agree," said Archie. "This is a rotten hole. Even in these days of house shortage, when people line up in queues to buy an unfurnished barn, nobody would live in a beastly cupboard like this!"

"This study's been unoccupied for ages," said Blundell.

"Except for the spiders—an' the rats."

"My hat! You don't mean to say there are rats here?"

"I saw quite a fat fellow scuttle across the floor just now."

"Groo!"

"I wouldn't dig in this study for a pension!" said Archie. "I think I'll ask Prout to put me in Study No. 1."

Blundell gave a snort.

"You'll do nothing of the kind, you cheeky young cub! Study No. 1 belongs to me and Bland, and we're not going to turn it into a home for stray fags!"

Archie sighed.

"This study question is most distractin'," he said. "Where am I to rest my weary bones?"

"Try Study No. 4," said Blundell, with a grin.

"Who are the present tenants?"

"Coker, Potter, and Greene. They're charming fellows, and they'll soon make you at home. See if you can persuade Prout to let you dig in with them."

"All serene," said Archie.

And he went back to the Form-master's study.

Blundell gazed after the new boy's retreating form with a chuckle.

"I can see breakers ahead!" he muttered. "That kid will be well advised to insure himself against accident and sudden death, before he calls on Coker."

Meanwhile, Archie Howell tapped on the door of Mr. Prout's study, and entered.

"Well, Howell?" said the master of the Fifth, not unkindly.

"I'm not in the habit of makin' complaints, sir," said Archie, "but I've got a genuine grievance now. Study No. 10 isn't fit for a pig to inhabit, sir!"

"Bless my soul!"

"It's overrun with rats, and there's a network of cobwebs reachin' from the floor to the ceilin'. I'm not fastidious, sir, but I couldn't possibly live, an' move, an' have my bein' in a hovel of that sort."

"Really, I had no idea that the study in question was in such a disgraceful condition!" said Mr. Prout. "I will make arrangements for it to be made habitable. Meanwhile, you had better go into another study. Have you any preference, Howell?"

"Yes, sir. I've a sneakin' regard for Study No. 4."

"But that has three tenants already, and—"

"Oh, they'll squeeze me in all right, sir!" said Archie confidently. "I don't take up much room. There's not enough of me to cause any inconvenience."

"Very well, Howell," said Mr. Prout. "You may make your temporary abode with Coker, Potter, and Greene; and in the meantime, I will see that Study No. 10 is put in order."

"Thanks awfully, sir!"

Archie Howell went along to his newly-allotted quarters.

There was nobody at home in Study No. 4.

Coker, Potter, and Greene had set out early in the afternoon for a joy-ride, and they had not yet returned. It was more than probable that Coker's celebrated motor-bicycle had suffered a breakdown. Coker himself had been at the helm, so to speak; Potter had squeezed his lanky form into the sidecar; and Greene, with reckless abandon, had perched himself on the carrier at the back. In this way, the three Fifth-Formers had started on their adventurous journey; and it was generally believed that, at this moment, they were either wallowing in the depths of a duckpond, or receiving attention at the cottage hospital.

Archie Howell stepped into the deserted study, and surveyed the apartment with a critical air.

"Not bad," he murmured. "But there's plenty of room for improvement. I don't like the pattern of the wallpaper, an' the ceilin' needs whitewashin'. Those pictures will have to come down, too! They're an eyesore."

Archie did not pause to reflect that Coker & Co. were probably quite satisfied with the present appearance of the study. He removed his coat, and rolled up his shirtsleeves; and then he got busy.

"First of all," he murmured, "I'll

strip the walls, an' I'll order a new sort of wallpaper from the village."

But it was no easy matter to remove the existing wallpaper. Archie hacked at it with his penknife, but it came away in small quantities, instead of in long strips.

"I shall have to have another shot at this later," muttered Archie. "Think I'll bag some whitewash, an' make that ceilin' look a bit more respectable."

So saying, the new boy clambered through the open window, and dropped down into the Close. The descent was only a matter of a few feet.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry, coming up with the other members of the Famous Five. "How did you get on with old Prout, Archie?"

"Not too bad," was the reply. "The burnin' question of the moment is, where can I get some whitewash?"

"Eh?"

"An' a pair of steps?"

The Famous Five stared. Archie Howell seemed to have a mania for springing surprises on them.

"Not setting up in business as a whitewasher, are you?" asked Wharton.

"Hardly! But I've got a job of work to do in my study."

"Which is your study?" inquired Nugent.

"Study No. 4."

"Why, that's Coker's!" gasped Johnny Bull.

"Exactly! An' I'm his new stable companion."

"My hat!"

"What's this job of work you are babbling about?" said Bob Cherry. "Not going to try your hand at whitewashing Coker, surely?"

"No; I'm goin' to do the ceilin'."

"Great pip!"

"Where shall I find some whitewash, an' a pair of steps?"

"In the woodshed," said Wharton.

"An' where's the woodshed? I'm a stranger in a strange land, you know. Haven't had time to get my hearin's yet!"

"Follow your uncles!" said Bob Cherry.

The Famous Five led the way to the woodshed, where Archie unearthed a pail of whitewash, a brush, and a pair of steps.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "Comin' along to give me a hand, you fellows?"

"If Coker comes along, you duffer,

he'll give you a boot!" said Johnny Bull.

"Rats! Coker will be so grateful to me for puttin' his study to rights that he won't be able to find words to express himself!"

"We'll come along," said Wharton, "but we won't take an active part in this business."

"Why not?"

"We should be absolutely pulverised if we started wrecking a Fifth Form study!" said Nugent.

"But I'm not goin' to wreck the study. I'm goin' to improve it!"

The Famous Five chuckled. They had their doubts on that score.

Armed with the steps and the whitewash-pail, Archie Howell led the way to the scene of his operations.

Harry Wharton & Co. followed, taking care to keep out of range of the splashes of whitewash which shot out of the swinging pail.

Arrived at his destination, Archie pushed the table to one side, and reared the pair of steps in the centre of the study.

"I'll do the middle of the ceilin' first," he explained.

The Famous Five looked on aghast.

"Aren't you going to move all the furniture out, before you start slap-dashing?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Too much fag," said Archie.

"But the chairs and things will be smothered with whitewash!" protested Wharton.

"Rats!"

Perched on the top of the steps, Archie commenced his work of renovation, which the onlookers preferred to regard as a work of destruction.

The brush was wielded with great vigour, and a shower of white spray descended upon the heads of the onlookers, who promptly retreated into the passage.

"You—you clumsy ass!" roared Bob Cherry. "You've ruined my togs!"

"My dear old thing," said Archie, slapdashing away as if for a wager, "you shouldn't have stood in the line of fire, you know!"

"You—you're splashing that stuff all over the place!" gasped Wharton.

"Coker will simply murder you, when he comes along!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Chuck it, you chump!"

But Archie was thoroughly enjoying himself. He continued to whitewash the ceiling—and, in the process, he whitewashed a good many other things as well!

It appeared as if a snowstorm was in progress in Coker's study. Splashes of whitewash fell in all directions. The chairs, the table, the carpet, and even the bookcase were smothered.

As for the amateur workman, he presented a very curious appearance. He was covered with whitewash as with a garment. It was in his hair and on his clothes, and a further avalanche descended upon his upturned face.

The Famous Five surveyed the scene from the passage. Not for worlds would they have entered the study just then.

Having completed the middle of the ceiling to his satisfaction, Archie Howell turned his attention to the remaining portions.

"I shall want some more whitewash," he remarked. "Pail's nearly empty."

"Stow it, you mad idiot!" growled Johnny Bull. "This has gone far enough! I can see old Coker having several sorts of a fit when he turns up."

"He'll sling you out on your neck," said Nugent.

But Archie seemed to have no appre-

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ensions so far as Coker was concerned. He considered that the great Horace ought to be extremely grateful to him for having "improved" the appearance of Study No. 4.

"I'll go an' fetch some more white-wash in a jiffy," said Archie. "Meanwhile, these atrocious pictures can come down!"

Coker's collection of pictures was both rare and valuable—in Coker's opinion. In Archie's opinion, the pictures were appalling. He took them down one by one, and hurled them out into the passage.

Crash! Crash! The Famous Five sprang clear as the pictures came hurtling through the doorway.

The last of the pictures to alight on the floor of the passage was an enlarged photograph of Coker. And it landed at the very feet of Coker himself!

The three tenants of Study No. 4 had just returned from their joy-ride. And they were not in the best of tempers.

Coker's motor-bike had broken down six miles from the school, and the Fifth-Formers had been obliged to finish their excursion on foot.

The trio stopped short, in horrified amazement, as the enlarged photograph of Coker sailed through the doorway and crashed to the floor.

"What the thump—" began Potter. "This is where we melt away," murmured Bob Cherry.

"Yes, rather!"

And the Famous Five promptly beat a retreat to their own quarters. They had seen the expression of ferocity which came over Coker's face; and they decided that the Fifth-Form passage was hardly the safest place at Greyfriars, at that moment! So they decamped, leaving Archie Howell to face the music.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Coker's Curious Conduct!

FOR a full minute Coker & Co. stood rooted to the spot. Then, uttering a sort of bellow, Coker rushed into his study, and Potter and Greene followed.

Archie Howell turned calmly to greet them. He was covered with whitewash, but not with confusion. Indeed, he seemed to be quite proud of his recent achievements.

"I think you'll agree, gentlemen," he said, "that I've made this study a place fit for heroes to live in!"

"You—you—" spluttered Coker, clenching his hands.

"You seem slightly ruffled," said Archie, in wonder. "Anythin' wrong?"

"Anything wrong?" repeated Potter, in tones of frenzy. "Oh, no! Not at all! Our study's wrecked, and our pictures have been chucked out into the passage; but there's nothing wrong! Perish the thought!"

Coker glared at Archie Howell as if he would eat him.

"Who—who are you?" he demanded.

Archie furnished his name and address, and was about to enlighten Coker on the subject of his ancestry, when the Fifth-Former cut him short.

"Before I start wringing your neck," he said, "have you any explanation to offer?"

Archie raised his eyebrows.

"An explanation?" he said innocently.

"Yes; you've ruined my study—"

"Pardon me; but it's as much my study as yours!"

"Eh?"

"Prout said I was to come in No. 4."

"But you—you don't mean to say that

you belong to the Fifth?" exclaimed Coker, his astonishment exceeding his anger.

"Right on the wicket!" said Archie. "An' you belong to the Fifth, too, judgin' by your appearance—the Fifth of November!"

"Slay the cheeky young cub, Horace!" growled Potter.

Coker hesitated.

"Is it a fact that you're in the Fifth, and that Prout said you could share this study with us?" he asked, turning to Archie.

"Yes—honour bright!"

"And you say your name is Howell?"

Archie nodded.

"You're no relation to Miss Phyllis Howell, of Cliff House, I suppose?"

"Brother," said Archie briefly.

"My hat!"

Coker's attitude towards the new boy underwent a startling change.

The great Horace had a genuine regard for Phyllis Howell. For months he had employed every art and artifice—though not with much success—to get into her good graces. He had repeatedly invited her to tea: he had haunted the outskirts of Cliff House in the hope of seeing and conversing with her; and he had even gone so far as to address poems to "Dere Fillis."

Coker had met with many rebuffs, but he was not easily discouraged. One of his chief ambitions was to establish himself in Miss Phyllis' favour—to win her friendship and encouragement.

It occurred to Coker that here was a splendid opportunity of achieving his object. By chumming up with Phyllis' brother, he might soon be permitted to chum up with Phyllis herself. If, on the other hand, he made things unpleasant for Archie, Phyllis might get to hear of it, and he—Coker—would sink still lower in her estimation.

Coker pondered on these things for a while. Then he laid aside the cricket-stump.

Potter and Greene stood blinking at their leader in amazement.

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"Aren't you going to lam the little beast?" exclaimed Potter.

"No."

"You—you're going to let him go scot-free?" gasped Greene.

"Yes."

"Well, I'm beat!"

Coker addressed himself to Archie Howell.

"I don't altogether approve of your methods, kid," he said. "You've made this study in a fine old mess. But I'm not the sort of fellow to bear malice. If you'll hang those pictures up again, and shift these steps and things, I'll say no more about it."

"All serene," said Archie cheerfully.

"Sure you wouldn't like me to finish the ceilin'?"

"If you attempt to finish that ceiling," roared Potter, "we'll jolly well finish you!"

"That's enough, George Potter!" said Coker sternly. "Young Howell must be regarded as a guest—and I don't allow my guests to be spoken to like that!"

Potter nearly fell down. He was quite overcome.

"You—you mean to say you're going to overlook what this young brat's done?" he exclaimed.

Coker nodded.

"You're not going to pitch him neck-and-crop out of this study?"

"Certainly not!"

"Then I'll do the chucking-out myself!" said Potter wrathfully.

"And I'll give you a hand!" said Greene.

Coker threw himself into fighting attitude.

"I warn you, George Potter," he said, "that if you attempt to lay a finger on this kid I'll wipe up the floor with you! Same remark applies to you, William Greene!"

Potter and Greene hesitated. They had a wholesome respect for Coker as a fighting-man. On more than one occasion their noses had come into violent contact with Coker's sledgehammer fist, and they had no desire to renew that painful experience.

"Is this atrocious new kid going to remain in the study?" demanded Potter, at length.

Coker replied in the affirmative.

"Then I'm off!" growled Potter.

"Same here!" said Greene. "We'll find fresh quarters until Coker comes to his senses!"

Archie Howell waved his hand to the exasperated Fifth-Formers.

"Fare thee well, an' if for ever, then for ever fare thee well!" he chanted. "Mind the step!"

Potter and Greene stamped furiously out of the study. And Coker made no attempt to call them back.

"Those fellows are always getting huffy over trifles," he explained to Archie. "They'll get over it by the morning."

"They wanted my blood," said Archie. "It was decent of you to place me under your protectin' wing."

"Well, I'm a decent sort of chap, you see," explained Coker modestly. "I'm misunderstood in certain quarters, at Cliff House, for instance. It's rather rough on me, because I like to stand well with the girls. But I won't bore you with my troubles. I say, kid, it's a great honour for you to be planted in the Fifth, amongst brainy fellows like me!"

Archie nodded.

"I feel like a worm in the presence of such a great man!" he said.

"Of course, you'll find yourself up against it at the start," continued Coker.

"Fellows who are older than you, and in lower Forms, will resent your being

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shoved up above them. But if there's any trouble you've only to come to me. I'll see you through all right."

"Thanks!" said Archie gravely.

"And if you want any help with your lessons—if you're stumped how to spell a word, or anything of that sort—don't hesitate to ask me. I'm a recognised genius at lessons. I know all the subjects from A to Z. You seem to me to be a decent kid, except for a slight tendency to get out of hand"—Coker's gaze roved round the whitewashed study—"and I shall be only too willing to help you."

Once again Archie expressed his thanks. Then he brought the pictures in from the passage, and rearranged them on the study walls. After which, he gathered up the pair of steps and the whitewash pail, and took them back to the woodshed.

The Famous Five, who were taking a sprint in the Close before calling-over, halted as Archie Howell staggered into view.

"Hallo! Here's Archie!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"And he's still in one piece!" said Bob Cherry, in wonder.

"I never expected to see him alive any more," said Nugent. "What did Coker do to you, Archie?"

"Nix."

"He—he didn't lam you?"

"No."

"My hat!"

"He swore—"

"Oh, I guessed he'd do that!" said Harry Wharton.

"Ass! He swore eternal friendship!"

"Well, I'm jiggered!"

The Famous Five were amazed to learn that Coker had taken no action against the study-wrecker.

"Is he going to allow you to stay in his study?" inquired Johnny Bull.

"Of course!"

"And what about Potter and Greene?"

"They've gone off in a huff. They can't understand Coker's attitude."

"Well, it wants some understanding!" said Wharton. "Dashed if I know why he let you off!"

"I think I know!" said Bob Cherry.

"Coker's anxious to chum up with Miss Phyllis, and he's using Archie as a means to the end."

"In that case," said Archie, with a chuckle, "Coker will be unlucky!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Archie went on his way. The Famous Five gazed after him with amazement and wonder.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Shock for the Remove!

ARCHIE HOWELL had a good deal of "barracking" to put up with in the Fifth Form dormitory that evening.

Some of the fellows, who were a couple of years older than Archie, resented his presence in the Fifth.

"It makes us look cheap!" said Tomlinson major. "I can't think what the Head was about, to shove a giddy Lilliputian in the Fifth!"

"Anybody would think we were a kindergarten!" growled Hilton.

Not since Coker minor had made a dramatic entry into the Sixth Form had there been such a sensation at Greyfriars.

All manner of taunts were flung at Archie Howell as he undressed. But the new boy did not heed them. He was fagged out after a day which had been packed with incident, and his one desire was to get to sleep.

When Archie, attired in a suit of silk pyjamas, was about to get into bed, Fitzgerald hailed him.

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"Come here, kid!"

"Why?" demanded Archie.

Fitzgerald winked at his companions.

"It's the custom," he said, "for every new recruit to the Fifth to be tossed in a blanket on his first night."

"Hear, hear!" said Potter.

"Sorry to disappoint you," said Archie; "but I'm afraid the custom can't be continued at my expense."

"You—you cheeky young cub!" roared Fitzgerald. "Come here!"

"Rats!"

Fitzgerald, who was Irish and quick-tempered, made a rapid stride in the direction of Archie's bed. But an obstruction loomed up in his path, in the person of Horace Coker.

"Stand aside!" shouted Fitzgerald.

But Coker did not budge.

"He's my study-mate," said Coker, "and it's up to me to protect him from any bullying cads!"

Fitzgerald's face flushed crimson.

"I'm a bullying cad, am I?" he demanded hotly.

"If the cap fits, wear it!" was Coker's retort.

Smack!

Fitzgerald's open palm came with a sounding report across Coker's cheek.

"Go it!" said Tomlinson major approvingly. "Knock him into fits, Fitz!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The next moment Coker and Fitzgerald were fighting like tigers. No quarter was asked or given, and the thudding of hard body-blows resounded through the dormitory.

The majority of the fellows were in bed, and they sat up and gave encouragement to their favourite. And the favourite, in nearly every case, was Fitzgerald.

"Go it, Fitz!"

"Pulverise the bounder!"

"Knock him into the middle of next week!"

But Fitzgerald's attack was being worn down, and it was Coker who held the upper hand.

Despite the fact that one of his eyes was closed, and that his nose presented a very bulbous appearance, Archie Howell's champion was going great guns. He drove his opponent back towards the door, and then, sailing in, he delivered a smashing upper-cut, which knocked Fitzgerald backwards, and laid him at the feet of Mr. Prout, who had just arrived on the scene.

The master of the Fifth halted on the threshold in astonishment and wrath.

"Coker. Fitzgerald! How dare you? How dare you brawl in this unseemly manner? You will each take five hundred lines!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"And if there is any further disturbance in this dormitory, Blundell, I shall hold you responsible! As captain of the Form, it is your place to put down acts of hooliganism. I warn you that if you continue to neglect your duty there will be serious trouble!"

And having delivered himself of this threat Mr. Prout withdrew.

Coker and Fitzgerald returned to their respective beds, and Archie Howell realised that he was safe from further molestation that evening. He turned over on his side, and went to sleep; and one by one the other occupants of the dormitory followed suit.

When Archie awoke the sun was streaming in at the high windows, and the birds were carolling joyously.

"Glorious mornin'!" murmured Archie. And he started to dress.

"Where are you going, kid?" demanded Blundell, sitting up in bed.

"Early mornin' dip," was the reply.

"Can you swim?"

"Just a little."

"There's a treacherous current in the Sark," said Blundell. "Unless you know the right place to bathe you're liable to be swept down to the weir. I think I'll come along, in case of accidents."

"Same here!" said Bland. "I feel just right for a dip!"

A few moments later Archie Howell, armed with his towel and bathing-cos-tume, accompanied the two bigger fellows to the river.

Blundell and Bland regarded Archie as a very young and inexperienced person, who needed looking after. But they soon found that the new boy was quite capable of looking after himself. He was the first of the trio to take a header into the sparkling water, and as he struck out with a speedy side-stroke his Form-fellows saw that he had nothing to learn from them, so far as swimming was concerned. Indeed, they had never seen any fellow shoot through the water so gracefully as Archie.

"That kid's hot stuff!" murmured Blundell.

"Absolutely!" said Bland, hovering on the brink.

Neither Blundell nor Bland remained long in the water. Blundell was the last in and the first out.

Archie Howell, however, swam down to the boathouse and back before he joined his Form-fellows on the bank.

As soon as they had dried and dressed themselves the trio strolled back to the school. And as they went Blundell revised his opinion of Archie Howell. Hitherto he had regarded the new boy as a worthless upstart, but he now saw that Archie would be quite an acquisition to the Fifth. He seemed a good sportsman; and after all, Blundell reflected, it was not Archie's fault that the Head had pitchforked him into the Fifth Form.

"We've half an hour to kill before rising-bell," observed Bland. "What about some cricket?"

"Good wheeze!" said Blundell.

Archie's display at the nets opened his Form-fellow's eyes more than ever. His bowling was good, his batting was masterly.

Blundell did not attempt to conceal his delight at having discovered so promising a player.

"I'll put you down to play against the Remove on Saturday, Howell," he said.

"Thanks!" said Archie. "But I understood the Remove were playin' Highcliffe?"

"They were; but Highcliffe have scratched, so they're playing the Fifth instead."

"Last time we played the Remove," said Bland, "we were licked. So we shall have to put our beef into it on Saturday. Two lickings off the reel would be unthinkable!"

"Set your mind at rest," said Archie. "The Fifth won't lose."

Blundell's action in including the new boy in the Fifth-Form side was severely criticised, as was only to be expected. But the captain of the Fifth resolutely refused to reverse his decision. Deputations were sent to him; petitions were drawn up; loud and indignant protests were made. But Blundell remained firm.

Saturday came at length, and the liveliest enthusiasm was manifested in the match.

Phyllis Howell came over from Cliff House, and she brought several of her girl chums with her.

For once in a way the girls were not whole-heartedly in support of the Remove. They wanted to see Archie Howell put up a good display.

And they were not disappointed.

It was a single-innings match, and the Remove batted first.

Harry Wharton & Co. were in excellent form, and they punished the bowling without mercy.

The feature of the innings was the brilliant partnership of Bob Cherry and Mark Linley. These two were together for an hour, hitting out vigorously, until a smart catch by Archie Howell sent the Lancashire lad back to the pavilion.

Blundell's countenance was decidedly gloomy, and no wonder, for the Remove's score at this stage was 155 for four wickets.

"We haven't an earthly!" growled the captain of the Fifth.

"Not the faintest, foggiest chance!" agreed Bland.

"Nil desperandum!" said Archie Howell. "Don't chuck up the sponge. That sort of thing's awfully feeble. If I were a bettin' man I'd be prepared to wager that the Remove won't top the two hundred!"

And Archie would have won his wager. He went on to bowl himself, and the remaining Remove batsmen gave little trouble. They were skittled out one after the other, and the innings closed for 190.

All the same, that was a tremendous score. The Fifth would need to be on their very best behaviour in order to stave off defeat.

The faces of Harry Wharton & Co. were radiant. They considered that the match was already as good as won. They did not under-estimate the batting ability of Archie Howell; but, as Nugent pointed out, it would take more than one star batsman to save the Fifth from a crushing defeat.

"You made a big mistake, Blundell," said Coker, who had been watching the game from the pavilion. "You ought to have put Howell on to bowl at the start, before the mischief was done."

"I know," said Blundell contritely. "I sha'n't make the same mistake again."

After a brief interval Blundell and Bland opened the Fifth-Formers' innings. They played careful, cautious cricket,

much to the disgust of the crowd, who "ragged" them incessantly.

"Don't slog too hard, Blundell," yelled Bolsover major, "or you'll bust the bat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And then an ironical cheer went up as the captain of the Fifth scored a single.

A good many batsmen would have been tempted to hit out recklessly, regardless of the consequences. But not so Blundell and Bland. They continued to "stonewall," scraping a run here and there, and in this way the score eventually mounted to 50. Then Bland was cleverly caught at the wicket.

Archie Howell, who had been chatting merrily with his sister, went in to take Bland's place.

It was a very great honour for a new boy to be placed so high up on the batting list, and Archie resolved to show his appreciation of that honour by playing a worthy innings.

There was nothing of the stonewaller about Archie. He despatched his very first ball to the boundary. And other boundary hits followed thick and fast.

The Remove fieldsmen began to look anxious. And their anxiety increased as the game went on.

Encouraged by Archie Howell's vigorous display, Blundell changed his tactics, and began to hit out. And presently the 100 went up.

Harry Wharton put on a couple of fresh bowlers, with the result that the rate of scoring was increased.

Blundell narrowly escaped being caught out on several occasions; but Archie Howell's innings was faultless. He did not give a single chance. He kept the ball low, and he drove with tremendous power. Vernon-Smith, down whose cheeks the perspiration was streaming, was having quite a busy time in the long-field.

The Fifth-Formers who had criticised Blundell's selection of Archie Howell were now swift to applaud it.

"The kid's a giddy marvel!" declared Fitzgerald.

"Looks as if he and Blundell will win the match between them!" said Hilton. "I very much doubt if we shall get an innings."

Hilton's prediction proved correct. Archie Howell and Blundell were still together when the Remove's total was passed.

It was Archie who made the winning hit, and the shout of applause which greeted his effort might have been heard all over Greyfriars.

The match was over, and the Fifth had triumphed by the substantial margin of nine wickets!

Archie Howell had made 90, and Blundell 75.

Weary from their exertions, Harry Wharton & Co. almost crawled off the field. But they were not too weary to congratulate Archie Howell on his magnificent display.

"You were great, by Jove!" said Johnny Bull.

"A Jessop and a Jack Hobbs rolled into one!" declared Bob Cherry.

"If only you were in the Remove!" said Harry Wharton, with a sigh.

Archie laughed breathlessly. "You remember what I told you the other day?" he said. "I declared I should be in the Remove within a week. That giddy declaration still holds good."

But the Famous Five looked doubtful. They could not see how Archie Howell was going to effect a transfer from one Form to another. And they told themselves that he would always be known as Howell of the Fifth.

Archie, however, was quite confident that before many days were over he would be Howell of the Remove.

Whether this would be the case—or otherwise—remained to be seen.

THE END.

(There will be another grand long story of Harry Wharton & Co. next week, entitled "THE REMOVE'S RECRUIT!" Avoid disappointment by ordering your copy of the MAGNET LIBRARY now.)

READERS' NOTICES.

Correspondents Wanted and Back Numbers for Sale and Required.

E. Farradini, 12, Wellington Terrace, Morecambe, Lancs., wants "Penny Populars" (new series), 1-45. Will exchange for 45 "Companion Papers."

William Martin, 5, High Cross Cottages, N. 17, has a large number of the "Companion Papers" for sale. Send list of numbers wanted.

C. Wayman, 119, Caledonian Road, London, N. 1, has for sale "Penny Populars," 1-12, and "Greyfriars Heralds," 1-24.

E. J. Owen, 32, Morgan Street, Gadbys, Aberdare, Glam., S. Wales, has for sale a number of the "Companion Papers."

C. W. Martin, 75, Kingsland Road, Plaistow, E. 13, has for sale MAGNETS, Nos. 412 to current issue. Also "School and Sport." Write first.

M. G. Siddall, 60, Southbank Road, Southport, has for sale a number of MAGNETS and "Gems." Send for list.

A. A. Walters, 72, High Street, Totnes, has for sale MAGNETS, Nos. 48-620; "Gems," Nos. 8-620; "Boys' Friends," 919-970; "Penny Populars" (old series),

1-20 (new series), 1-50; and "Greyfriars Heralds," 1-30.

W. H. Neate, The Nidus, High Street, Burnham, Bucks, wants MAGNETS before 375, also has for sale MAGNETS from 468; "Gems," from 487; "Penny Populars," 272, 273, 276 (old series), and 2-68 (new series); "Boys' Friends," 836, 851, 856, 863, 929, 975-7, and 986; "Sexton Blakes," 77, 87, 105, 116; "Boys' Friend" 4d. Libraries, 433-4, 437, 443, 477, and 480 and "Nelson Lee" No. 192.

L. Keeble, 23, All Saints Street, Nottingham, has for sale MAGNETS, Nos. 1-105 in four bound volumes, 12s.; 240-300 (3 vols.) 8s.; 300-400 (loose), 10s.; 465-620, 10s.; "Gems," 476-620, 10s.; "Penny Populars," Nos. 227-285, 5s.; 1-52 (new series), 3s. 6d.; also odd numbers. Write for particulars.

F. E. Wade, Glenthorne, Farleigh Road, Warlingham, Surrey, has for sale 150 "Companion Papers," "Union Jacks," etc., also 12 3d. and 4d. Libraries. What offers?

H. Thorp, 18, Chapel Street, Rhodes, Manchester, offers 44 "Boys' Friends," 4s. 5d.; 34 "Prairie Libraries," 3s. 7d.;

28 "Gems," 3s.; "Holiday Annual," 4s. 6d.; 86 "Hobbies Weekly," including double numbers and large designs, post free, 11s. 6d. Write first.

Clifford Pass, 130, Park Street, Oldham, will be pleased to send "Holiday Annual" free to any reader of the "Gem" on the understanding that the copy will be kept clean and returned when read.

James Clegg, Railway Hotel, Lydgate, Todmorden, wants readers for his amateur magazine, competitions, etc. 1½d. post free.

W. H. Beech, 59, Court Road, Balsall Heath, Birmingham, with a reader living in the same town with a view to spending a holiday by the seaside together in August.

W. E. Griffiths, Police-station, Pant, Dowlais, Glam., South Wales, wants correspondence with a French boy in France who is able to speak English.

E. Smith, 17, Arthur Street, Old Kent Road, London, S. E. 15, wants members for his "B. F. and P. P." General Correspondence Club, age 12-18. Fee 2d. a month.

Cyril Walsh, 14, Stockwell Park Road, Brixton, S.W., with readers anywhere, age 18-24.

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THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 646.

"THE SILENCE!"

FIRST INSTALMENT

A STRANGE STORY OF
:: THE FUTURE. ::

By EDMUND BURTON



SOME STIRRING INCIDENTS IN THIS INSTALMENT.

Foreword.

IT must be said at the outset that the following tale is not intended to foretell what is sure to happen, or what will probably happen in the future. At the time of writing, China is quite friendly disposed towards the rest of the world, nor is there any reason to expect that she will be otherwise later; but the "Yellow Peril," which has repeatedly been discussed by thinking men, is certainly a possibility, and on this I have based my story. China's teeming millions afford

sufficient proof of what could occur were she, with the natural cleverness and love for "things that are strange" of "John Chinaman," suddenly to throw aside her cloak of mystery and make war upon mankind.

It is said that "the East has forgotten more than the West has ever learnt," and when one dwells upon the history of China, the supreme cleverness of her people—which has been handed down through all the ages—and her rapid advance in the ways of the "white devil," one must admit that the subject should be given more than a passing thought.

"John Chinaman" is everywhere. In London, in Liverpool, in New York, 'Frisco, and Chicago—indeed, it is safe to say that there is scarcely a city on the face of the globe where the yellow man does not move and have his being. The Chinese works like the proverbial nigger, and for next to nothing; yet he seems to thrive strangely well upon what he gets.

Leaving aside the huge, ever-growing population of "The Land of the Willow Pattern" itself, those numbers scattered broadcast throughout the earth are constantly being added to, so much so, that in certain quarters of many alleged

"White" cities you could walk for a considerable time without catching a glimpse of any but yellow faces—faces so calm, expressionless, and inscrutable, that the keenest thought-reader would be baffled in his attempts to learn what lay behind.

And so I begin my story, taking for its partial foundation what is already known, and building the remainder on the product of my own imagination. I have dealt with several strange inventions which may at first thought seem far-fetched—but can anything be so termed to-day? This is the age of scientific wonder and progress. A century back, if you had prophesied that one day men would fly like birds, or speak to each other across miles of space without any visible means; that mechanical machines would talk and sing like humans, or that pictures would be endowed with life—what would have been the result? Not only would the notions have been termed impudently outlandish, but it is safe to say you would have been dubbed insane! And yet—through the agency of the aeroplane, the Marconi apparatus, the gramophone, and the cinema—these things to-day are as common to us as the Sedan-chair or coach were to our ancestors. This being so, then, what even greater wonders may we not see a few years hence?

For instance, I am indebted to the editor of "Pictures for the Picturegoer" for permission to publish the following, taken from the review of an extraordinary film based on Jules Verne's famous story, "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea":

"There is no question that this great submarine photo-drama will prove a world-wide success, and as an educator it will be of enormous value.

"When Jules Verne wrote the novel from which the picture is produced, all the world wondered at the author's brilliant and versatile fancy. 'Great snakes!' everybody cried out. 'That fellow is crazy! Brilliant as he is in his imagination, he is as mad as a March hare!'

"But fifty years after Jules Verne's book was given to the world we see its predictions more than fulfilled. The wild fancy of the brilliant Frenchman has become an everyday reality, so familiar that we have ceased to wonder.

"In looking at 'Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea,'" writes a critic, 'the spectator is led to ask himself the question, "Is there any limit to man's inventive genius, any end to the achievements of his brain? Will not man go on from triumph to triumph until he has Nature completely under his control, until the word 'miracle' shall have been eliminated from the vocabulary on the ground that everything will have become miraculous.'"

EDMUND BURTON.

PROLOGUE.

A.D. 1923.

I.—Headley Park.

WITH the close of the great World War—which had seen Germany's hopes shattered, her armies defeated, and her fleet, or what was left of it, handed over to Britain, to meet with an inglorious end on the bed of Scapa Flow—a sense of security had settled upon these islands such as had not been felt since the day Nelson swept the foe from the seas at Trafalgar. The German menace had always been an ever-growing cloud on the horizon; but now that cloud had vanished, although, as invariably follows

a gigantic upheaval such as that which had raged for four bitter years, the world was still shaken—but the deadliest danger of all had passed down into history.

One bright evening, towards the end of June, a small car rolled up the drive at Headley Park, stopping before the wide porch, and disgorging a pair of well-knit young fellows—one attired as a Naval cadet, the other neatly dressed in blue serge, who gaily ran up the white steps, almost knocking over the stately footman, who was just then in the act of swinging back the door.

A very important-looking personage this, with his velveteen toggery and graceful calves, the stockings of which seemed to have been starched stiff, so devoid of any wrinkle were they.

His face flushed a deep crimson, and he emitted a grunt as the elbow of one of the newcomers caught him just amidships; but next instant a cheerful smile flooded his countenance, and he bowed obsequiously—the smile becoming a broad grin as his flabby biceps were seized in a playful pinch, and a cheery voice sounded through the hall:

"Hallo! Sorry, 'Jeames'! I hardly noticed you!"

The flunkey again tried to look dignified, but failed miserably when his eyes rested upon that laughing face, and a fresh smile broke over his own.

"All right, sir! Only boyish impetuosity, I'm sure. Pleased to see you back again, Master Tom!"

"Same to you, Samuel!" said the lad. "Come along, Dick! Here's the pater, and the mater, and the dater—I mean, daughter! Allow me to present you. Mr. Richard Elliott—Admiral Sir Headley Hope, Lady Hope, and Miss Marjorie Hope, all at one another's service! Don't kiss, but be friends!"

Dick Elliott grinned as he greeted the laughing trio, nodding in agreement as Sir Headley remarked gruffly:

"Same box of crackers as usual, the young dog! 'Pon my soul, I believe Tom will go bang for good one of these days, and we won't be able to find the bits! Is he ever serious?"

"Not to my knowledge, sir," answered Dick. "If he was we wouldn't have known him at St. Mary's—I mean, it would have seemed quite out of order!"

It must be explained that Tom Hope had left college some years before to join the naval one at Osborne, from which he eventually went to Dartmouth to complete his training as a midshipman.

Dick Elliott, his bosom chum, had stayed on, finally passing through the "Sixth"; but, until this occasion, the lads had seen very little of each other since they parted, and for that reason, Tom happening to be just then on leave, Lady Hope had asked Elliott to spend a little while at the Park ere proceeding to his own people up North.

"Well, they won't know either of you there again," said the admiral, "as this finishes your last term, friend Dick. Are you sorry to leave?"

"Well, I am, in a way. College isn't such a bad place, you know."

"Carried unanimously!" chimed in young Hope. "You hate to go back after vacation, yet you're jolly sorry to shunt for good. And how's everybody here?"

"Just as you see." Madge spoke for the first time, her blue eyes dancing, and her pretty face aglow with health. "We don't look exactly on our last legs, do we?"

"Well, no. But, not being a doctor, I can't say for certain. Dad looks a bit oldish, though, doesn't he?"

The admiral smiled, but there was a good deal of gravity in his expression for all that.

"I'm not surprised, lad," he answered grimly. "Great Britain has passed through the fire with a vengeance, and fellows in my position felt our responsibilities pretty keenly, I can tell you!"

"And now I hear you're First Sea Lord?"

Sir Headley nodded.

"Yes, I was appointed last month; but, hold on! You didn't bring your chum on a visit to hear me talk shop, so don't start asking professional questions, youngster! Come along! I believe there's a snack of something waiting for us."

A move was made towards the dining-room, where an appetising repast was quickly "made little of," in a sense. Both lads had been travelling for several hours, and felt that the ordinary railway refreshments do not adequately meet the requirements of a healthy appetite.

"And what do you intend to become, my lad?" asked Sir Headley, thoughtfully regarding Dick's alert face over the glowing end of his cigar, as coffee was served. "My boy's going into the Service, as you see, but you—well, you've got the look of a brainy chap—"

"Do you mean, dad, that only fools join the Navy?" cried Tom, irrepressible as ever.

"No; I do not mean any such thing, you young ruffian!" grunted the other. "Just you close your hatch now, and be quiet! I was thinking that our friend here has the cut of a lawyer, or a detective, or—or an inventor— Oh, well, you know what I mean! Look at that long face of his—the deep-set eyes and broad forehead! See?"

"Inventor!" echoed Tom. "Why, that's exactly what he is—or was! Once blew the windows out of the college laboratory, so he did, making some giddy mixture. My! You should have seen the Head's face when he found old Dick had escaped by a miracle. I don't know whether he was glad or sorry; don't believe he knew himself. Anyway, few of us knew Dick when he appeared; his eyebrows and front hair were singed for months!"

"Yes," agreed Elliott; "I did make the stuff rather strong, didn't I? Only for the canister-opening facing towards the window I'd have been in a pretty mess. But I nearly did it."

"Nearly did it! By Jove, you couldn't have done it better!"

"I mean, I nearly found what I was looking for—a mixture of—"

"Oh, here, don't reel off any of that chemical flapdoodle, for goodness' sake! Suffice it to say that you nearly found something, and we found the shattered glass on the lawn!"

The rest of the company had been laughing heartily at this passage of arms between the two boys. Presently Sir Headley flicked the ash from his cigar and turned again to Elliott.

"So that's how the land lies, is it? Well, I wasn't so far off the mark, after all. And do you intend to continue your investigations? It's a risky business, you know—both for your body and your pocket. There's a lot of inventors knocking about, but the majority are not too well fed!"

"I know that, sir, so be sure I'm not going to make a fool of myself. I love research, and all that, but one can't live on it."

"Then what's the next best thing?" "Well, I have a hankering for flying," said Dick, after a brief silence; "so that's what I've practically decided to turn my attention to."

Sir Headley nodded approvingly.

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"Good!" he said. "There are fine opportunities in that line for youngsters like you, and I wish you the best of luck! Perhaps, indeed, in the future we shall hear of some extraordinary new invention being given to the aeroplane world by Richard Elliott, Esq.—eh?"

"Perhaps, sir!" laughed the boy. "But don't stake all your money on it! I'm going to fly, and I'm going to study every detail of the profession, but as to — Well, if I see my chance of doing funny things, be sure I'll do them!"

"Well, my lad, as you seem decided on the matter, I don't suppose a word or two in the right quarter from me would come amiss. I'll bear you in mind."

"Thank you, sir!" said Dick gratefully. "I'm sure I'm much obliged!"

2.—Ah Ling.

NEXT afternoon, as the boys were returning from a long ramble, an appetising odour proceeding from the kitchen-wing, which they were then passing, assailed their noses.

"H'm! That's a queer sniff, Dick! What the dickens is it? Some new concoction of Bridget's, I'll be bound!" Tom's nostrils dilated as he glanced towards the open door. "Jove! It's jolly good, anyway! Come in, and let's investigate."

Bridget O'Hara—a buxom Irishwoman, and cook to the Hope household—smiled broadly as the pair entered her domain. It was the first time she had seen Tom since his latest homecoming, and her face reflected her feelings. Young Hope was a hot favourite with everyone.

"Sure, 'tis glad I am to see ye, sorr!" cried Mrs. O'Hara, in a rich brogue. "Somehow or other, ye seem to brighten up the ould place—not as I'm complainin' at all, at all. But we always miss ye when ye go, so we do, an' as for Samuel upstairs— Eh, sorr? Ye look puzzled."

"I am!" said Tom. "What on earth is that smell?"

"That? Oh, that"—Bridget burst out laughing—"that, sorr, is one o' Ling's choicest dishes! Smells good, don't it? Though I'm blest if I know, where he gits his ideas from!"

"Ling? Ling, did you say? Who is—"

"Oh, o' course; I forgot ye wouldn't know who he was!" explained the cook. "He's me furrin assistant. Come since ye were here last."

"An alien! My stars!"

"Oh, I don't mean a Hun, or a Turk, or anythin' like that!" continued Mrs. O'Hara. "Ah Ling's a Chink."

"A Chinaman?"

"Yes, sorr. I'll tell ye how it was. Lady Selwyn, over at Highlands, got a Chinese cook, an' ever since has been praisin' him up to the blessid skies. She's a special friend o' yer mother's, ye know, an' nothin' 'ud do her but to worrit my lady into followin' her example. So the long an' short of it is, that Ah Ling was dumped down undher me nose three weeks ago."

"And how do you feel about it, Bridget?"

"Oh, I'm all right, though at first I thought a lot o' nasty things; but ye see, the critter is really a wonderful spalpeen, altogether! Bedad, I b'lieve he'd make an omelette out of a pavin'-stone, so I do!"

"Then I suppose we'll have to live on birds'-nests and buried eggs while this

new boggar's here!" Tom made a wry face. "It's a pretty state of affairs!"

"Indade, ye needn't turn up yer nose, sorr!" exclaimed Mrs. O'Hara indignantly. "Ye got a couple o' tit-bits yesterday that tickled yer palates, I'll swear; an' I'll also swear ye didn't know what they were made of!"

"Well, we're decently fed, if that's what you mean!"

"Just so! That's Ling; an', though he's a Chink, I'm proud of him. Works like a nigger for sorra much more than his board an' lodgin'. Ye couldn't kape a tortoise chaper!"

At that moment another door opened, and a tall man, clad in spotless white, entered the kitchen. He was strongly built, broad-shouldered, and long of arm; but it was his face which specially attracted the boys' attention. Yellow as a piece of old parchment, the skin was drawn tight over the high cheek-bones, and lent the newcomer an appearance of age which his powerful physique belied. His arms were bare to the elbows, revealing the tough muscles brought into play by the weight of a large bucket of water he was carrying in each hand, and which he presently set down by the range.

"Ling, ye rascal, this is the young mather an' his friend. Savvy, ye yaller divil?"

The Chinaman's eyelids raised themselves instantly, showing a pair of dark pupils beneath; then the lids drooped again, resuming their customary position as he made a low bow.

"Ah Ling velly pleased to see young maste an' his fiend! Ling like dem—yes."

Tom grinned at the quaint pidgin English, and then let his eyes rove again over the man's form, finally resting his gaze on a curiously-shaped mark just below the right elbow. It was a white weal, left by an old wound, and was almost semicircular in formation. Then he noticed the long pigtail, which Ling, contrary to the present custom adopted by many of his countrymen, had not discarded.

"Must find it a bit of a fag doing his back hair," Hope muttered, nudging Elliott. "Don't you wish you were a heathen Chinee?"

"Whist, sorr!" whispered Mrs. O'Hara hastily. "Ye'll be afther insultin' his dignity."

But Ah Ling did not hear the remark, apparently, for all his attention was now given to emptying the contents of his buckets into a huge copper. With him, it was seemingly: "Do your duty, and don't mind anything else!" For he paid not the slightest heed to the boys after that first brief salutation.

Presently the pair withdrew, nor did they see much more of the new assistant, whose business kept him to the kitchen, where they seldom penetrated.

Then came the day when Dick Elliott was due to depart for home. The small car rolled up to the door, and a little group stood on the steps bidding him farewell. Only three on this occasion, for Sir Headley Hope had now returned to the Admiralty.

"But we'll see you again, sha'n't we?" said Madge, holding out her hand, and Tom, the villain, gave his chum a sly pinch which caused him to redden to the roots of his hair.

"Oh, yes!" he said haltingly. "Perhaps—perhaps I'll fly over here some day, and—and take you for a cruise. Good-bye now, and thanks for a jolly time!"

The chauffeur let in the clutch, and the little car shot down the drive, swiftly disappearing round a bend in the track. "Well, mater," said Tom, as they turned back into the hall, "there goes our future flight-commander, and here's your coming First Sea Lord, if I can persuade myself to remain good enough and quiet enough to reach that station!"

THE STORY.

A.D. 1924.

"The Silence!"

SINCE Seahaven became the principal base for the Home Fleet in 1921, that comparatively unimportant town had gradually assumed the pretensions of a city. New buildings had sprung up as though by magic, three different railway companies had extended their systems to link the place up with other busy centres, and a fine tram service had now been added. A natural bay, flanked by high, rocky promontories, formed an ideal anchorage for a large number of vessels, and here could be seen, practically at all times, super-dreadnoughts and battle-cruisers, battle-ships, armoured cruisers, and torpedo-craft, their numbers and formation constantly changing, and each separate unit further convincing the onlooker that Britannia ruled the waves as surely today as she did when the German High Seas Fleet surrendered, shorn of its boasted prowess.

H.M.S. Unconquerable, fresh from a sojourn of several months on a foreign station, was now lying at the end of the long grey line. She was one of the Navy's "show-ships," vast in build, powerful in armament, a wonderful sight, truly, from her waterline to the top of her tripod-mast.

It was the Unconquerable's first visit to Seahaven, and a group of middies were eagerly looking forward to shore leave. They had heard a deal about the new base, and were anxious to investigate it for themselves. Presently they tumbled into the snorting, little pinnace, shooting away from their grey home towards the wharf steps.

One of them only concerns us just now—a lithe, curly-haired young fellow, who occupied the central position in the stern. His face was tanned with wind and weather, and his blue eyes alight with a gleam that bespoke a good-humour which nothing could damp. Indeed, Midshipman Hope had changed, but little since we last saw him just a year ago.

The brawny A.B. at the bow scraped his boat-hook along the granite until it found a firm resting-place in a ring. The pinnace reversed propellers, and the little group sprang ashore, Tom Hope bringing up in the rear.

Suddenly, just as he reached the head of the steps, a hand descended heavily on his shoulder, and he spun round to find himself staring into the well-remembered face of a lad about his own age.

"By James, Dick! Fancy you being here! This is good!"

"Been here two months now, old man," replied the other. "Saw your ship come in this morning, and guessed you'd get shore leave as soon as you could, not having seen Seahaven before. Fine spot, isn't it?"

Elliott swept his arm round, like a guide conducting a touring-party.

"On the right we see the new wireless station, gentlemen, and facing that is the mag-ni-fi-cent town hall!" he continued, in a sing-song voice. "Then, just yonder, we feast our eyes on the principal picture palace and tram-station——"

"Here, chuck it, you ruffian!" laughed Tom. "I'll find all those things out for myself presently. What have you been up to ever since?"

Dick indicated his smart uniform.

"Up to the skies and back again, several times," he answered. "I'm a crack flier, now. Got on slick enough."

"In the R.A.F., I see."

"Yes; your pater helped to work it all right, as you may have heard. But, come along! I want to hear your opinion on what everyone's talking about."

"What's that? I haven't had very much news in the past few months, bar some letters from home. The Unconquerable went foreign just after I joined her. What's the racket?"

"Phew! Fancy discovering anyone who doesn't know about the silence of America, Japan, and China! Why, the papers are full of it, asking stupid questions, suggesting equally stupid answers, and all that sort of thing, as they generally do."

"But what—— Here, let's have the yarn!"

"Well, the main part of the matter is this: No news has come from either China, Japan, or the States for nearly a month past. They seem to be cut off from the world. Wireless messages have been ignored, cables unanswered, and their own Consuls here are as puzzled as everyone else is. That's common knowledge now; and not only have we failed to communicate with these countries, but Europe and the rest of the world are seemingly in much the same fix."

"By Jove!" gasped Tom. "And what about the shipping?"

"All sailings from here stopped now," returned Dick, "as no craft have arrived. Every ship from America, Japan, and China is weeks overdue, and, consequently, no mails. There are, I believe, hundreds of Yankees stranded in London, tearing their hair because they can't get home."

"And no wonder! But what on earth is being done about all this?"

Dick Elliott looked even graver than before.

"Listen!" he said. "Here's perhaps, the most serious part of the whole business. About ten days ago, as soon as the situation began to impress the Government that something was really wrong, the Admiralty sent some fast cruisers on a mission of inquiry to New York, and, though our wise men have attempted to smother the truth, the fact has just leaked out that those ships have disappeared!"

"Eh? Well, I'm—— D'you mean to say that several cruisers have vanished into thin air?"

"Unfortunately, that's exactly what I do mean!" said Elliott grimly. "They signalled 'All well,' their last message, from somewhere in the Atlantic, but no news since."

"And our ships on the China and other Eastern stations, what about them? And what of Canada, Newfoundland, and——"

"Silent—all silent, old man!" cut in the other. "And yet the Chinese consul in London, from what I can gather, seems more hopeful than either the Jap or the Yankee."

"How so?"

"Well, according to the papers, he still persists in believing that the affair has a perfectly natural solution, as his country was peaceful and quiet when he last com-

municated with headquarters. He offers no explanation, however, and seems disinclined to discuss the matter at any length, which is different to the other two, who are at their wits' end, while he is quite unemotional."

"The Chinese are not a very excitable race," hazarded Tom.

"No. But wouldn't you expect a little more anxiety on his part? Or maybe he is anxious, but hides it under his native calm."

Hope took off his cap, and ran his fingers through his curly hair in perplexity.

"It beats me altogether!" he muttered. "But there's no use in us two hazarding guesses, so let's give it a rest for a bit. When did you see my people last? Are they well?"

"They're all right. At least——" Dick paused, and his chum gripped his sleeve tightly.

"Well," he said quickly, "what's wrong?"

"Nothing, so far as I know!" laughed Elliott. "I haven't seen them for about three weeks, and then," he continued, "Madge—er—didn't seem as bright as usual. I'm anxious, because she hasn't replied to a couple of notes I sent her."

"Oh! So you're corresponding, are you? Phew!"

Dick's colour deepened.

"Well—er—yes. You see—— Ah, I can see you do, so I needn't trouble to explain. I wasn't able to get over since, so I wrote twice; but, as I say, she didn't reply. I'm going across to-day to see if anything serious is wrong. Headley Park is only about thirty miles from here, you know."

Tom nodded.

"I'm going, too!" he replied. "I've got leave till to-morrow afternoon, as a preliminary. Come along and let's get a snack; then we'll make a start."

"H'm!" grunted the middy. "However, it's likely all right, and in any case we'll soon know for certain. Come along and let's get a snack; then we'll make a start."

They passed up the main thoroughfare, presently halting at a clean-looking restaurant. Tom glanced up at the sign-board, and laughed.

"Well, that's funny!" he exclaimed. "It's a Chinese cookshop, and we can't do better. I've not forgotten Ah Ling's concoctions at home. Is he still there?"

"Yes, I suppose so. I haven't heard of his leaving. But you secure a table, while I slip across to that newsagent's and get some papers. I've seen no further news to-day, so far. Back in a moment!"

The Hole in the Woodwork!

DICK hurried away, while Tom turned into the restaurant, passing up the long, narrow room in search of a vacant table. The place was set out in a rather secluded style—small cubicles, each separated from its neighbour by a high wooden partition—and plentifully decorated with palms and other shrubs, which lent an atmosphere of privacy to the scene.

The cookshop was well filled by a motley collection of diners, those of Eastern nationality predominating, and the only unoccupied table Hope could find was the very last one on the left, in a compartment built against a wooden wall which reached to the ceiling, and which contained a narrow door in the centre, at present closed. Here, amid the clatter of plates and buzz of strange conversation, he took up his position, his head resting against the woodwork at his back.

The minutes passed, but still Elliott did not put in an appearance, nor did anyone come to take Hope's order. Probably in the crowd the attendants had failed to notice his entry. Then by twos and threes the diners departed, until the place was practically empty.

"What in the name of conscience has happened to Dick?" Tom pulled out his watch, and saw that he had been there nearly a quarter of an hour. "He was only going across the street, and——"

The middy stopped short, his attention suddenly attracted by a few words which came seemingly from behind him. As I have said, his head was close to the woodwork, which acted as a sounding-board, and there was evidently a room of some kind behind. Hope turned slightly, his eyes encountering a small knot-hole, and—more from idle curiosity, and glad of anything which would serve to pass the time—he peered through. The inner apartment was a small one, lighted by one window, with a doorway close beside it. Close to the window two men were sitting at a table, deeply engaged in conversation—one a Chinese, the other apparently British.

"Yes, my friend," the Chink was saying in perfect English, and the words carried distinctly, "there will be little delay. You have been told your duties, and I—well, I have successfully finished mine. Let us return now and give a final look into matters, for in an affair of this nature one cannot be too attentive."

Now to Tom Hope, as to most other Europeans, the face of one Chinaman is hardly distinguishable from that of another. They all bear the same characteristics—almond-eyes, high cheek-bones, and inscrutability of expression. But as the occupant of that inner room waved his hand as he finished his wide sleeve slipped back, and Tom nearly gave himself away by the astonished exclamation which rose to his lips, for close to the elbow was a white, semi-circular scar!

"My goodness! Ah Ling!"

What on earth was the meaning of it all? Here was the Chinese cook, sure enough! There was no mistake about that. But why was he speaking in such perfect English, and what could be the import of his words? What duties had been performed, and who and what was his companion?

A step sounded behind the middy, and he turned round guiltily, expecting to find the long-delayed attendant at his elbow; but the new-comer was Dick Elliott, armed with a bundle of papers.

"Sorry, old man! Nearly every place was sold out," he began; but Tom held up his hand quickly.

"Not so loud! I've something to show you. Hist! Wait a minute or two."

A Chinese waiter, who had seen Elliott's entrance if he had missed Tom's, was hurrying up the room. He paused, bowed, and asked their pleasure in rather rocky English. When he departed Tom drew Dick to the spy-hole.

"Look there! Ah Ling and someone else. There's something funny going on——"

He was interrupted by a stifled gasp of amazement from his companion.

"Great Scott! Hanson—the chap who was kicked out of the Air Service, and nearly got quod as well! I say—Wait! They're going out!"

(There will be another splendid long instalment of this grand new serial in next Monday's issue of the MAGNET LIBRARY. Show this number to your friend, so that he does not miss the opening chapters.—ED.)

THE EDITOR'S CHAT.

Whom to write to "Editor, The Magnet," The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

For Next Monday:

"THE REMOVE'S RECRUIT!"

By Frank Richards.

When my chums have read "Fun in the Fifth" they will have a good idea of what next week's story is about.

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