

COMPLETE STORY OF
HARRY WHARTON & CO.

COMIC
PICTURES.

"BY NERO'S COMMAND!"
(Grand Serial Tale.)



The Magnet 1

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IN BORROWED PLUMES!



BILLY BUNTER IN THE GREAT "MISS GOSLING" SCENE!
(A Screamingly Funny Incident in the Grand Complete School Tale Inside.)



URGENT NOTE.

Owing to the greatly increased demand for

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readers are urged to place an advanced order with their newsagents.

THE 1921 HOLIDAY ANNUAL.

Compiled by Your Editor.

This week sees the publication of the second volume of the "Holiday Annual." It is a bumper book, an easy winner, and I want my chums to let me know that their opinion is the same as mine. Last year's "Holiday Annual" was, by way of eclipsing all past successes—I can't say all records, because, as No. 1, there was no record for it to beat—but it created a criterion.

The "Holiday Annual" will be on sale everywhere, and it contains so many attractive features that I am puzzled as to where to begin in order to give you some faint idea of its programme.

Of course, there are stories of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood. They figure largely on the bill. So does the long-desired and much asked for

WHO'S WHO?

There are many details respecting the life at the three schools. There is a budget of valuable information concerning the studies—particulars for which I am always being besieged. There are funny sketches and serious ones. Among the latter is a nature article by Clive Fern. There is a song which will interest all who are musically inclined—and most of those who are not. It is called

"I'LL TELL YOU WHAT'S THE PWOPAH THING TO DO!"

This gem of harmony is written by Martin Clifford, with music by Owen Dell.

A STORY BY MORTON PIKE.

Yes, you will find this in the "H. A." It is called "Winning His Name," and takes the reader back to the days when the Merry Monarch was on the throne of England. It is a notable yarn, and you will be interested in Gilbert, the stolen heir, who passes through stirring adventures in those ancient times when

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the plague emptied London, and the great fire destroyed so much of the old city.

DUNCAN STORM.

Our old favourite is here with a splendid romance, which is, I consider, one of that prince of writer's best.

In addition, we have useful papers—hints about holiday time, suggestions for hobbies, and so on, while the ever popular Bunter holds his own among many competitors.

MY TOUR OF GREYFRIARS.

This contribution is by YOUR EDITOR. I hope you will make a special note.

THE POLISH QUESTION AGAIN.



"Have you heard about the Englishman who went up in a balloon and came down a foreigner?"

"No."

"The balloon caught in the telegraph-wires, so the man came down a pole!"

WELL DONE!



Uncle: "I thought I told you not to eat your apple before dinner, Bobby."
Bobby: "More I haven't, uncle. Jack ate mine, and I ate his."

Poetry is well to the fore. Listen to this:

"We found him lying in the Close—
A porpoise, fat and sleek;
And as we crowded up to him,
He gave a fearful shriek!"

That is the Owl all over.

Well, the "Holiday Annual" is on sale. Now's your time. The price is six shillings. I doubt if there is one of my friends who will not say it is worth double the money.

POET AND ADVENTURE-SEEKER.

"I have wasted my opportunities," writes a chum from Northcote, Melbourne, "but who but a born fool could get up every morning at seven-thirty, catch the nine-ten train, the same old routine, year after year, when they can lie on their back upon a coil of manilla and blow clouds of smoke from a beautiful pipe, five years old, and dream, while the eternal chant of the half-dressed natives is wafted from the swampy shore?"

I am not going to give the answer to this tempting sort of question. Certainly the fellow of dreams and genius who sent me the letter was not intended for city routine. He has plunged into the romantic country. It is a land in which there are plenty of hard knocks and set-backs, but it brings a life full of splendid chances and compensations. The dweller in cities who lives by clockwork may get his dreams—he is to blame if he does not—but we can all sympathise with and admire the adventurous spirit who turns his life into a section of a poem by Kipling. My correspondent quotes a poet, though it is not Rudyard:

"The spring wind, brother,
With marching music blows,
Calling to one another,
Children of the mother,
We go where the wind goes.

"Through hilly lands and hollow,
From smoky towns afar,
Like our swift sister swallow,
Untrodden tracks we follow
To Mallacoota Bar."

The correspondent has been carried onward by a restless longing. He is coming to England one of these days. He is a genius without question. Perhaps we shall hear of him. Anyhow, thanks to him for his loyal support of the Companion Papers in all his roamings.

Your Editor



"Tell me, boys," cried the disguised Bunter, "is that man—this brother—this quaking worm—kind or brutal to you?" (See Page 15.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Gosling the Bolshevik!

"LIKE his cheek!"
 "I guess that's the right word!"
 "Cheek's not the word! I call it nerve—beastly nerve!"
 "Yep, that's even better!"
 "Rotten!"
 "Disgusting!"
 "Yep, that's even better still, I guess!"

Fisher Tarleton Fish, with his "Yep!" and "I guess!" came in like a sort of operatic chorus. Whatever the other fellows said, that remark seemed to express Fisher T. Fish's feelings better than any other.

The juniors of the Remove Form at Greyfriars School seemed rather excited.

They were talking the matter over in the Common-room, in the Remove Form passage, and several of them were talking at the same time. There was nothing unusual about that; but it did not add to the clearness of the discussion.

As a rule, when Harry Wharton & Co. of the Remove discussed matters with the rest of the Removites trouble would arise. Bolsover, or Skinner and his cronies generally, did their best on occasions like this to question Harry Wharton's leadership. As Harry Wharton was captain of the Form he usually dealt very energetically with the malcontents of the Lower Fourth. But now the time seemed to have arrived when the lion should lie down with the lamb. For Harry Wharton & Co. and the sneaks of the Remove were all on the best of terms with one another as they talked

with heated voices. They were excited, but it was not a Form row. Their indignation was evidently turned against somebody outside the Remove Form circle.

"Like his cheek!" said Bob Cherry, for the fifth or sixth time.

"Blessed if I see how a chap like that can have such a nerve!" Frank Nugent remarked. "It's absolutely past the limit!"

"Yep!" said Fisher T. Fish, the American junior. "I guess the galoot's gone past the limit!"

"Rotten!" said Johnny Bull.

"Somebody ought to do something," said Bulstrode major, rather vaguely.

"Hear, hear!" said Lord Herbert Mauleverer.

"Good idea!" said Bob Cherry. "You take him in hand, Mauly. A lesson in manners from one of the bloated aristocracy ought to do the trick."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a laugh, and the schoolboy-earl glared across the room at Bob Cherry.

"Oh, begad—" he began angrily.

"Peace, my children!" said Harry Wharton. "Don't let your angry passions rise. We're discussing the conduct of Gosling."

"Yep, I guess that's the galoot!"

"The gentleman who is fond of gin-and-water—when he can get it, and—"

"Down with him!" said Tom Brown.

"Hear, hear!"

"We want him—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Not at all; we don't want the rotter

here," said Bob Cherry. "We don't want him at all for that matter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We want him to see that his conduct is regarded with—with despision by all the fellows at Greyfriars," said Harry Wharton.

"Well, that's a good word, anyway," Mark Linley, the Lancashire lad, remarked.

"We want to show him that we regard him, in fact, as a first-class outsider."

"Yes, that's the idea."

"Hear, hear!" said the Removites.

"The question is, how are we going to do it?" said Harry Wharton.

"That's the question."

"Rather!"

The juniors ceased to speak all at once, and looked thoughtful. That was indeed the question, and the answer to it was not forthcoming.

The cause of the indignation of the Remove Form fellows was curious enough.

Gosling, the school porter, a gentleman whom no one seemed ever to have credited with a brain to think with, had suddenly developed the most violent views, especially with regard to work.

Now, thought the Removites, as far as they were concerned, Gosling might have views on any subject under the sun; but after willingly performing certain prescribed tasks year after year, such as carrying parcels up to the studies, or showing little marks of respect to those fellows who had for terms and terms liberally "tipped" him, it came like a thunderbolt to the Greyfriars fellows when Gosling had suddenly adopted a form of "direct action." In so many words, Gosling had struck, and his general attitude now was truly Bolshevik-like.

For instance, Fisher T. Fish had had the door slammed in his face when going

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

By FRANK RICHARDS.

into a room immediately behind the new Greyfriars Bolshevik.

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry had found the school gates locked on the very tick of time, and Gosling had taken their names for being late. Result: One hundred lines each from Loder of the Sixth! Gerald Loder, prefect and cad, had been the prefect on duty that day.

Mauleverer had had to go down to Gosling's lodge in order to fetch a heavy hamper, as Gossy had informed the schoolboy earl that he had been reading the "noospapers" lately, and in one of them had appeared an article wherein men were urged never to dream of carrying parcels for other able-bodied human beings. The why and the wherefore of these remarkable words of wisdom Gosling had not troubled to think; but the idea struck him as being fairly sound, and he had decided to give it a trial. Result: Manly had to carry the hamper for himself!

Mark Linley, on his way out of the school gates, had asked Gosling the time. Gossy had replied that he was not paid to give that sort of information away.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the dusky Nabob of Bhanipur, and one of the most respected members of the Remove Form, had been told by Gosling to go back to his "plantation" and teach the other "niggers" how to rid themselves of the British yoke!

"Inky," as Hurree Singh was affectionately called, had replied that "the esteemed and highly despicable Gossy sahib had evidently been at the gin-bottle drinkfully!"—which meant really that Inky accused Gosling of being under the influence of alcohol, a debatable point, perhaps, with the odds in favour of the dusky Removite.

There had been many other complaints from various other members of the Remove, and even the Fifth-Formers had been discussing the change in Gosling's manners and customs. As far as Harry Wharton & Co. were concerned things had gone far enough already, and the juniors were on the war-path!

England was a big country, and Kent a fairly large county, and if Gosling didn't like working at Greyfriars, then it was time he went elsewhere, and if he wouldn't go, then it was up to the Remove Form to make him.

That was how Peter Todd put it. Peter Todd had a legal turn of mind,

and he reasoned it out in legal style. But that made no difference.

It was undoubtedly like the cheek, the unexampled nerve, of Gosling to try his silly Bolshevik tricks on the fellows of Greyfriars School. Gossy ought to have known better; and if he did not know better, then surely it was up to the Remove to teach him better.

That was the unanimous view held by the meeting in the Common-room.

But how were they to do it?

That was a question which none of the excited juniors found it easy to answer. It was all very well to condemn the unheard-of action of Gosling, but it really seemed as if the powers of the indignant juniors stopped at that point.

"I guess you silly galoots ought to think of something that can be done," said Fisher T. Fish angrily.

And all the fellows nodded. But that was as far as they could get.

"Well, look here, you chaps," said Harry Wharton at last, "there doesn't seem to be much that we can do apart from actually ragging Gossy. Even ragging wouldn't do much good; but I'm bothered why he should really insult us."

"Hear, hear!"

"Perhaps if we go to Wingate, as captain of the school, he will take some sort of action. It isn't any good going to the masters. When I told Quelchy about the gates being locked sharp on the tick of time he didn't say anything; simply told me to do the lines which that rotter Loder had given me."

"Shame!"

"But if we put the case to Wingate it may be different. Old Wingate is a jolly good sort, and he always listens to a deputation."

"That's the idea," said Bob Cherry. "A deputation to Wingate is the proper caper."

"Hear, hear!"

"Of course," continued Harry Wharton, "Wingate may listen to us, or he mayn't. He might even cut up rusty. You never know how to take these blessed Sixth-Formers. It's quite possible that he may think the whole thing cheek on our part."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"He might, you know. Perhaps it is cheek," Harry Wharton remarked thoughtfully, as if struck by a new idea.

"Perhaps it is," grinned Bob Cherry.

"But we're going through with it, all

the same. If Gossy is going to sow the seeds of discord in a quiet place like Greyfriars, it's time we stepped in and kyboshed the Bolshie!"

"That's the idea, I guess," said Fisher T. Fish, with emphasis. "And I calculate that I shall point out to Wingate that—"

"You won't point out anything," said Frank Nugent. "You'll leave the talking to me. Wingate will naturally expect to have a sensible chap as spokesman—"

"That bars you out, then, Franky," said Bob Cherry.

"Why, Bob, you ass—"

"I guess I quite agree with Cherry," said Fisher T. Fish. "If you lopsided jays think that under the circumstances—"

"Under the circumstances, I shall do the talking," said Harry Wharton firmly. "It's no good crowding into Wingate's study, and all talking at once. Carne and Wynne and Tremaine are sure to be with him, too; and we don't want a lot of silly jabber before a set of blessed seniors. I'll point out the facts to Wingate—"

"I guess—"

Bob Cherry looked at his watch. Bob had a way that was sometimes quite irritating of looking at his watch when a discussion was going on.

"Time's going on," Bob remarked oracularly.

"Go hon!" said Bolsover.

"I mean, Wingate will be finished tea and gone out to practice if we don't buck up. No good trying to talk to him on the field, I suppose?"

"Oh, come on, then!" said Harry Wharton. "We only want a few of you chaps."

And Harry Wharton started from the Common-room. A crowd of Removites followed him. Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent walked on either side of him, and Fisher T. Fish, Hurree Singh, Peter Todd, Mark Linley, Tom Brown, Johnny Bull, Lord Mauleverer, and Bulstrode major followed on their heels.

They were only too anxious to make a move. Wingate of the Sixth, captain of Greyfriars, was in his study at tea, and it was a favourable time for catching him. While he was at the tea-table he could not escape, and there were a lot of things in connection with Gosling to be explained.

Harry Wharton & Co. meant to explain them, although they had not finally decided who was to do the explaining. The probability was that they would all start explaining at once, and that might lead to confusion. But it could not be helped.

They marched downstairs to the Sixth Form passage in anything but order. They arrived outside Wingate's study. The door was closed, but from within could be heard a murmur of voices and the chink of teacups. Wingate was entertaining four fellows of the Sixth to tea—all of them great men in the First Eleven. It was easy enough to guess what they were talking about; there was one topic of interest at Greyfriars just then, and that was the coming footer season.

Harry Wharton halted outside the captain's door, and wagged a warning forefinger at his followers.

"Order!" he said.

"I guess it—"
"Dry up, Fishy," said Wharton severely. "Follow me in quietly. We don't want any of your blessed Yankee hooliganism now, Fishy!"

The American junior was speechless for a moment.

"You lopsided jay!" he burst out, as

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"Ow! Help! Murder! Rescue!" Billy Bunter gave a wild shriek for assistance. And there was a roar of laughter from the Removites as they watched the punt pole gradually inclining over. (See Chapter 5.)

soon as he found his voice. "Why, I guess I——"

"Order!"

Harry Wharton knocked at the door, and the Removites marched in.

Wingate and the other fellows were seated round the table by the open window, which gave a view of the quad and the green old elms, with the playing-grounds in the distance. They were chatting very cheerfully; but they all stopped as the army of juniors came in and stared at them in considerable astonishment.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Wingate. "What on earth do you kids want?"

"We're a deputation, Wingate," said Harry Wharton.

"A what?"

"A deputation from the Remove Form," said Bob Cherry.

"Oh!"

"We've come to tell you——"

"Thank you very much," said Wingate. "When I want to enjoy the delights of your conversation I'll let you know. Close the door after you!"

"Ahem!"

"You know your way out, I suppose?" Wynne suggested.

"Ahem!"

"You see, Wingate," said Harry Wharton, "we've come to talk to you about Gosling."

"Eh?"

"Yep! I guess it's about that silly, lopsided, sleepy-headed galoot Gosling!"

shouted Fisher T. Fish excitedly. "Now, I calculate it out this way. If that silly, lopsided, sleepy——"

"What on earth do you mean?" demanded Wingate. "I don't want to hear you go right through that lot again, Fish. If you want to see Gosling, you can. I sha'n't stop you."

"Ahem!"

"You see, Wingate——"

"It's like this——"

"I know you'll agree that——"

Wingate's eyes wandered to a cricket-stump that lay near at hand. The Removites backed away a little.

"If you've got anything to say to me you had better say it and bunk!" said the captain of Greyfriars.

"Well, you see——"

"I guess you jays had better let me explain, Wharton——"

"Oh, ring off!"

"Now, Wharton, you galoot——"

"You see, Wingate, it's a jolly important matter——"

"Most important——"

"It's a question of the rights and dignity of the juniors——"

"And we think——"

"Yep, I guess——"

Wingate rose to his feet.

"There are two ways out of this study," he remarked. "Which do you prefer—the door or the window?"

"Ahem!"

"You see, Wingate——"

"Shut up!" roared Harry Wharton.

"You're wasting Wingate's time—ahem! If you say another idiotic word, Fishy, I'll lam you!"

"I guess!"

"Let me explain——"

"I say, I guess you jays——"

"Oh, sling him out!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, exasperated.

"If you galoots—I—— Oh!"

Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent laid violent hands upon the American junior. There was a momentary struggle, and then Fisher T. Fish went whirling through the doorway. There was the sound of a bump in the passage, and then an ejaculation:

"Ow!"

"Put your foot against the door, Bob!"

"Good!"

Bob Cherry closed the door, and put his foot against it. Sounds of wrath were heard from the passage. Without taking any notice of them, Harry Wharton turned to the captain of Greyfriars, and proceeded.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Chucked Out!

WINGATE had dropped into his seat again. He was laughing—he could not help it; and the other seniors were laughing.

Harry Wharton was encouraged. At all events, he had not been bundled out.

before he had had time to explain the reason for the deputation, and that was something. With a somewhat flushed face, he went on to explain.

"You see, Wingate, Gosling has been here a jolly long time—"

"I believe I was already aware of that," said Wingate, with a nod.

"I've heard something of him," remarked Tremaine, the burly Sixth-Former sitting at the head of the table. "Have you anything later and a little more surprising in your news budget?"

"Ahem!"

"If you've finished, you may as well join Fish in the passage," Carne suggested.

"I haven't finished," said Wharton indignantly. "If you silly asses will only listen a bit, I can get on with the bizney."

"If you've come here to get a special assortment of thick ears, you kids, you're going the right way to work," said Wingate sternly.

"We haven't," said Harry Wharton. "I'm sorry, Wingate, but that silly ass Fish has put me off my stroke a bit."

"Well, go ahead now, then, you young idiot," replied Wingate. "What have you got to say about Gosling?"

"We want to complain about him. Gossy has gone right off his chump lately. He's turned a regular Bolshevik. He won't pay the slightest respect to any of us—"

"I'm not surprised at that!" laughed Wingate. "Some of you kids in the Remove want nurses. Why should Gosling make a fuss of you?"

"That's not the point, Wingate. Gosling has become a regular Prussian. He locks the gates absolutely on the tick. He won't bring parcels across any more. He's an absolute beast with his manners, and it's time something was done!"

"I guess that's the way to talk to the jays!" came a muffled voice through the keyhole. "You must admit that that lopsided galoot wants lynching, Wingate!"

Wingate gave a frown.

"Now, look here, Wharton," he said. "It strikes me you've brought a deputation here on a very flimsy pretext. If you've got any complaints to make about Gosling you should go to Mr. Quelch, your Form-master."

"But look here, Wingate, if—"

"If you'll kindly depart, we'll get on with our tea," said the captain of Greyfriars.

"But this isn't quite good enough, Wingate," urged Harry Wharton. "If Gossy is going to get out of hand like he is at present, it's going to affect the honour of the school, and that concerns you."

"You're thinking of the what?"

"The honour of the school," said Harry Wharton firmly. "Suppose Gosling's Bolshevism starts to spread."

"I think it's quite possible it's spread to the Remove already!" laughed Wingate.

"Will you take Gosling in hand, or are you going to leave him to us? We shall know how to deal with the bounder!"

"Yep, I guess we shall!" came the muffled voice again. "I say, you jays can open this hyer door now. I guess I know how to put it straight to Wingate."

"Shut up, Fishy!" shouted Bob Cherry.

"I guess—"

"I really think you might be more reasonable, Wingate," continued Harry Wharton. "Gosling has been treating us like—like absolute worms, and we think you ought to do something about it."

"You know your way out of this study," said Wingate, "and if you don't

take it, I shall have to help you! Now, are you going?"

"Ahem!"

Wingate rose to his feet; the other seniors rose, too. The Removites retreated towards the door very warily. But they were not finished yet.

"Are you fellows in the Sixth frightened of Gosling?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Certainly not! Don't be ridiculous!"

"Now, Wingate, you'll be sorry you didn't listen to us when Gossy tries his Bolshe ways on you. It would be rotten if the rest of the school thought you were frightened of tackling Gossy."

"Eh?"

"Fellows might think that, you know. Once a captain of a school lowers his colours it's all over then. We're thinking of you all the time!"

"You—you young ass—"

"That's all the thanks one gets for doing—"

"Get out!"

"But—"

"Outside!" roared Wingate. "For goodness' sake lend a hand, chucking them out, you fellows, or they'll go on talking all the evening!"

"Oh, we'll go!" exclaimed Harry Wharton hurriedly. "We'll go— Oh!"

He did!

Carne and Wynne seized him by the shoulders, and Tremaine opened the door. The captain of the Remove was swung out of the study. He crashed into Fisher T. Fish, and both of them rolled on the floor.

"Oh!"

"Yow!"

"Leggo!" roared Bob Cherry, as Wingate's powerful grasp closed upon him. "Ow! I'm going—"

"You are!" grinned the captain of Greyfriars.

And Bob Cherry went.

Harry Wharton and Fisher T. Fish were struggling to their feet when Bob landed upon them.

Crash! Bump!

The Removites were distributed over the floor of the passage again. There was a wail of anguish from the American junior as his tight-fitting Eton jacket split up the back.

"Oh, my stars and stripes! Yaroooh!"

Bump, bump, bump!

In quick succession, junior after junior was tossed out of the study. The last one having been hurled out, Wingate closed the door.

From within the study came a sound of loud laughter, and in the passage was heard a wild scuffling and gasping and snorting from the heap of dusty and enraged Removites. The deputation to the captain of Greyfriars had not been a success.

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Gerrooh!"

"Gerroff!"

"Oh, my head!"

"Ow, my ear!"

Harry Wharton & Co. were sorting themselves out. They sat up, or stood up, and looked at one another. The visit to Wingate's study could not be called a success. The juniors were very dusty and ruffled, and somewhat sore. They were indignant, too. They had gone to Wingate's study to point out the facts of the case, and to try to induce the head of the Sixth to listen to their complaint. This was the result of it.

"Oh, the mugwumps!" exclaimed Fisher T. Fish. "I guess we ought to raid that silly galoot's study and thrash those lopsided jays!"

"Don't be an ass!" groaned Frank Nugent, nursing his arm. "What silly

chump knocked his silly head against my funny-bone?"

Johnny Bull was rubbing his head, and he glared at Frank Nugent.

"Was it your fatheaded elbow that biffed on my napper?" he demanded. "I should think you might have had more sense, really!"

"Ow, begad!" groaned Lord Maul-everer. "I feel as if I had been used as a punching-ball. Whose silly idea was it to come to the place at all? Oh!"

"If you jays had left the whole thing to me I guess it would have been all right. I told you galoots from the beginning that I ought to do the talking!"

"Oh, ring off!"

"I guess—"

Harry Wharton grunted expressively. "Fishy's really messed the whole thing," he said. "If Fishy had not have put Wingate into a bad humour at the commencement it might have been all right. I think we can agree that it was all Fishy's fault."

"Yes, rather!"

"I guess you jays—"

"Let's bump Fish!" said Bob Cherry. "It was all his fault. And it would be a satisfaction to bump somebody, anyhow."

"I guess you galoots won't dare touch me. I—"

"Look here," said Bulstrode. "Wingate can cut up as rusty as he likes, but it won't stop us dealing with Gosling. Let's go down to the Common-room again and talk it over quietly. We shall have to think out a plan of campaign."

"That's the idea," said Wharton. "It's no good quarrelling up here, and I don't feel inclined to stay here and be grinned at by these silly asses!"

There were a good many grinning faces looking out of the doors of the Sixth Form studies. The Removites went down the passage, feeling very dusty and exasperated, and a sound of mocking laughter followed them. Harry Wharton & Co. had very seldom felt quite so wild about anything. It was not only that they were disappointed about the result of their deputation, but they had been treated with contumely—the Remove Form had been insulted.

They regained the Remove Form passage at last. They looked, as Bob Cherry expressed it, a set of wrecks, and it was not surprising that they were feeling quite bad-tempered about it.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Limit!

"WHARTON here?"

Dicky—Nugent minor, of the Second Form—looked into Study No. 1, as he asked the question of Bob Cherry.

It was the end study in the Remove Form passage, and it belonged to Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent. It was crowded at the present moment with the angry members of the deputation.

The study was so crowded, as a matter of fact, that some of the fellows had no room or chairs to sit down, and were leaning against the mantelpiece or standing with their hands in their pockets.

Frank Nugent and Bob Cherry, Harry Wharton's greatest chums in the Remove Form, were sitting on the table, not without danger to the tea-things which had been placed there. The deputation had been invited to tea, so that they could talk matters over, and the kettle was already singing on the



Mr. Quelch looked round. The Form-master was standing up at his table, and the telephone was in his hands as he caught sight of the apparition in the doorway. He gave a gasp of surprise. (See Chapter 6.)

hob—all waiting for Harry Wharton, who had left the study a few minutes earlier.

Fisher T. Fish, George Bulstrode, Hurree Singh, and Lord Mauleverer occupied various chairs.

Mark Linley, Tom Brown, and Johnny Bull had found room in the study, somehow. Peter Todd was sitting on the window-seat. They were chatting—two or three at a time—when Dicky Nugent of the Second Form looked in, most of them speaking and very few listening. The buzz of talk stopped as the fag put his head in at the door, with his usual cheeky expression.

Frank Nugent turned upon his minor with considerable dignity.

"Now, then, young Dicky—" he began.

"Oh, don't you begin, Frank!"

"I'll—"

"Is Harry Wharton here?"

"You say 'please,'" said Frank Nugent severely. "You kids in the Second Form have got to learn your manners. You know the pater is always complaining during the holidays. When you come into your major's study, you should—"

"Oh, rats!" said Dicky cheerfully.

"Come off it, old son!"

Frank Nugent gasped.

He could not think of a reply sufficiently crushing at a moment's notice, so he remained with his mouth

open, without words coming forth; and Dicky took advantage of it to go on.

"You see, I want to see Harry Wharton. Where is he?"

"He's not here," said Bob Cherry.

Dicky's keen eyes were gleaming round the study.

"I was told he was here," he exclaimed. "Where is he? I suppose you rotters are just going to have a feed?"

"Of course we are, you young ass!"

"Then you're offside," declared Nugent minor, with a grin. "You can consider your feed is off. Right off the map, in fact!"

"What's the young idiot talking about?" laughed Bob Cherry.

"There's no blessed tea for you, Bob Cherry, I can tell you!"

"I'll give you a jolly good lamming, kid, if you don't buzz off!"

"Rats! Where's Wharton?"

"He's just gone along to borrow a cake off Vernon-Smith."

"It's not much good wasting time borrowing cakes," said Nugent minor. "Your rotten feed is off, I can tell you! That's understood."

"It'll be understood that you're going to have a thick ear if you don't buzz off, I guess!" exclaimed Fisher T. Fish.

"Oh, you dry up, Fishy—"

"That'll do!" cried Frank Nugent. "We don't want any cheek from a kid in the Second Form; but I shouldn't allow Fish to give my minor a thick ear."

"I guess you don't know what you're

talking about, you jay!" said Fisher T. Fish. "If you do, all I can say is that you're a lopsided galoot!"

"If you say I'm lopsided, Fish, I'll give—"

"Waal, I guess I do!"

"Then I shall jolly well give you a bumping!"

"Br-r-rr!"

"What's the use of making that idiotic row?"

"Br-r-rr!"

"You fatheaded Yankee bounder!"

"Br-r-rr!"

"If you make that blessed row at me again, Fish, I'll rub your long nose in the coal-scuttle!"

"Br-r-rr!"

"You howling ass!"

"Br-r-r!"

Frank Nugent jumped off the table and rushed at the exasperating American junior, who dodged round it.

"Stop, you idiot!" shouted Nugent.

"Br-r-rr!"

"My hat, I'll—I'll jolly well pulverise the bounder when I catch him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, ring off!" said Dicky Nugent, at the door. "Chuck it, you know! The question is—Ow! Leggo! Chuck it! Who is it?"

Nugent minor came into the study with a jump like a kangaroo, with Harry Wharton's grip on his collar.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 656.

"Chuck it!" he roared. "Oh—yow! Franky, you chump!"

"Oh!"
Frank Nugent had rushed right into his minor in his frantic pursuit of the American junior. The Removites burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Dicky Nugent threw his arms around, his major to save himself, and Harry Wharton stepped out of the way. Major and minor rolled on the floor together.

"Ow!"
"Garoo!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
Dicky was undermost, but he soon altered that. He rolled his major off, and Frank Nugent bumped on the carpet. The carpet, like most of the carpets in junior studies, was chiefly a receptacle for dust. Frank Nugent's heavy bump upon it brought the dust up in clouds.

"My hat!"
Dicky scrambled up.
"You chump—"

"Ow! You cheeky young sweep! After that doing we got in the Sixth Form passage, too!"

"Jolly good thing, too!"
"Dicky, you young ruffian—"

"Oh, scat!"
"My hat! Blessed if I sha'n't be only too pleased if Fishy kicks you out of the study now!"

"Right!" said Fisher T. Fish promptly.
"I guess I'll do that!"

"Here, hands off!" said Dicky. "Don't you touch me, you Yankee bounder. Wharton's here now, and I'll give him my message."

"Message!" chorused the Removites.
"Yes, you silly chumps!" said Nugent minor. "And you had jolly well better listen, Wharton, else there'll be a row!"
"Oh!"

"Mr. Quelch sent me along, or rather, Gosling asked me to come up."

"Gosling!"
"Yes, Gosling. That ain't surprising, is it?"
"W-what?"

"Gossy said Mr. Quelch said you've jolly well got to do it, and at once, too. Gossy says he's put the brooms all ready."

"T-t-the b-b brooms!"
"Yes, you silly jabberwocks. The bike-shed has got to be tidied up. Old Quelch said it looked like a pigsty when Gossy showed it him. Said it was disgraceful and all that sort of thing. I heard him say it when Gossy complained about it. Gatty was there, too, so it's quite gospel!"

"Oh, my giddy aunt!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Gossy's still at the game!"

"The rotter!"
"The beastly Bolshevik!"

"The lazy old scoundrel! Fancy us having to do Gossy's sweeping for him! Why, Quelch must have gone mad to listen to the rotter!"

"It's a scandal!" growled Bulstrode major. "I shall ask my pater to take me away from here and send me to a decent school."

"Well, you kids are making a blessed fuss about a little sweeping-up," said Dicky Nugent. "That ain't going to hurt you, is it?"

"Of course it's not going to hurt us, you young idiot!" cried Harry Wharton. "But this comes on top of a whole heap of trouble that ass Gosling is piling up on us. That's the trouble. Gosling has made up his mind not to do a stroke of work, and it's a jolly scandal why the masters should listen to him and take his part. If I was Quelch I should have

made him sweep out the blessed bike-shed then and there."

"Rather!" chorused the Removites.
"Well, you are a collection of chicken-hearted idiots!" said Dicky Nugent. "Blessed if I didn't think you slackers in the Remove were the limit; but now you— Here, hands off, Wharton! Ow!"

"You're going out, you cheeky young sweep!" said Harry Wharton grimly. "I'll give you a taste of what we're going to do to Gosling if he doesn't drop his Bolshie ways."

"Leggo!"
"Now, out you get!"
A boot helped Dicky Nugent into the passage. He turned in the doorway to tell the Removites his opinion of them, but the boot was rising again, and the hero of the Second Form scuttled down the Remove passage instead.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
Ragging Gosling!

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 656.

HERE was silence in Study No. 1 for a full minute after Nugent minor had scuttled away. The message that Dicky had brought the chums of the Remove left the juniors dumb, and they did not look up when a fat face, adorned by a pair of enormous spectacles, looked into the study and blinked around.

"Ahem! Are you chaps just going to have tea?"
No reply.

The fat junior pushed his way into the study and blinked round indignantly through his big spectacles. It was Billy Bunter of the Remove. Bunter was the fattest and greediest junior in the whole of Greyfriars, and he was never a welcome guest at anybody's study. He was not only greedy, but he was a borrower of the most redoubtable sort. Bunter had an allowance of a shilling a week pocket-money, but he always spent five or six shillings, and sometimes more. The process of extracting cash from unwilling lenders had been reduced to a fine art by Billy Bunter. Needless to say, Bunter was, in consequence, far from welcome in the Remove Form studies.

"I say, Wharton, old man, you might answer a chap when he speaks to you!"
"Buzz off, Bunter!" growled Bob Cherry. "You're not wanted on this scene."

"Oh, really, Cherry, I—"

"Ran away, Bunter! Oh, my giddy aunt, what have you dressed up in those togs for?"

The Owl of the Remove, as Billy Bunter was usually called, looked down at his white flannel trousers, and Harry Wharton & Co. grinned as they watched him. Bunter was dressed in cricketing garb, and as Bunter hardly knew the difference between a bat and a stump, it struck the Removites as funny to see Bunter dressed up like this.

"I suppose I can dress as I like, Cherry?" replied Billy Bunter. "As a matter of fact I thought of taking a turn on the river before roll-call!"

"Oh!"
"But if you chaps are just going to have tea I'll stop and have a snack with you. Those rotters in my study never give me a decent feed, you know."

"What's that, you fat rogue!" cried Peter Todd. Peter shared Study No. 7 with Bunter and Dutton and Alonzo Todd, and unfortunately for Bunter he had not noticed Peter Todd's presence when he spoke.

Harry Wharton & Co. gave a laugh as the Owl of the Remove gave a jump of surprise.

"I'll give you a jolly good bumping if you roll out fibs like that, you fat porpoise!" said Peter Todd.
"I—I didn't know you were there. I—"

"Oh, dry up, Bunter!" interrupted Harry Wharton. "You can run away and play. We want to discuss something important."

"Eh?"
"Gossy's getting out of hand, and we're going to jump on him!"
Bob Cherry gave a sudden shout.

"My hat, you fellows!" he cried. "We can start on him now. If Bunter is going on the river why shouldn't we go as well? Let's refuse to clean up the beastly bike-shed. We'll just show Gossy that he's talking through his fat head."

"That's the idea!" laughed Johnny Bull.
"But what about Quelch?" said Harry Wharton. "Franky's minor said that he had been sent up by Quelch."

"No, he didn't! He said Gossy had sent him up for Quelch. That's not the same thing. Who ever heard of a chap listening to a mouldy old school porter like Gossy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Come on!" urged Bob Cherry. "Let us go! It'll show Gosling that we don't care a rap for his blessed rot! We can shake him up as we go out!"

"That's the notion!" assented Peter Todd. "I'm all for the river! It's a ripping day, and there's a couple of hours of sunshine left still. Why should we spring-clean the bike-shed?"

"Hear, hear!"
"What about a snack first?" suggested Billy Bunter anxiously. "We don't want to go rowing on an empty stomach, you know!"

"I know I'm jolly well not going to row you on anything!" laughed Bob Cherry. Besides that, there aren't any barges on the river now!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Come on, Harry!" exclaimed Frank Nugent. "It's a good wheeze. If we want to work out a scheme for out-Bolshevicking the Bolshie, we can discuss it in a boat just as well as here."

The chums of the Remove leapt to their feet, and crowded out of the study. Billy Bunter rolled along in the rear of the procession, having given a last sorrowful look at the forsaken tea. A burst of sunshine greeted the juniors as they walked out into the Close on their way down to the gates.

Gosling, the porter of Greyfriars, was nowhere to be seen, and the chums of the Remove gave a gasp of surprise when they saw that the big iron gates at the entrance of the school had been closed and securely locked.

"Well, my only aunt!" gasped Harry Wharton. "Have you ever heard of such blessed cheek? What on earth is the old idiot up to? Is he working up for the sack, do you think?"

"The rotter must be mad!"
The junior halted at the porter's gate, and hammered on the lodge door.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "Gossy, where on earth are you?"

There was no reply.
"The excellent Gosling-bird is asleep," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "He sleeps the sleep of the justful person!"

"We can't get the gates open unless he turns out," remarked Frank Nugent. "Better make a row."

"The rowfulness ought to be terrifico to wake the worthy Gosling!"
Bang, bang, bang!
Kick! Crash!

There was a sound of a window being

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Kick! Crash!

There was a sound of a window being

opened, and an angry face was thrust out.

Gosling, the porter, looked down with wrathful eyes upon the group of juniors. "Whatcher want?" he demanded.

Harry Wharton took off his cap with a polite bow.

"We want to go out, Mr. Lenin—or is it Trotsky?"

"You ain't going out! That there bike-shed 'as got to be brushed out, and swept proper! Hi complained to Mr. Quelch about it, and 'e sed that the place was disgraceful!"

"And so it is!"

"Then, you go and sweep it hup!"

"Rats! That's your job!"

"Wot I ses is this 'ere, you ain't no business to talk to an honest man like that!"

"But we're not talking to an honest man!" said Frank Nugent. "We're only talking to you, Gossy!"

Gosling snorted.

"Come down and open the gates," sang Bob Cherry pleadingly. "We could climb over the wall, Gossy, but we'd rather you came and opened the gate, for the sake of your beaux yeux!"

Another snort.

"Come down, Gossy!"

"Wot I ses is this 'ere——"

"We want to go out!"

"Go and clean the bike-shed, you young scoundrels!"

"Rats!"

"I ain't coming down on your account! Which my private belief is that all boys oughter to be drowned at birth!"

"Well, that's right in some cases, I suppose. Your parents ought to have done it!" said Bob Cherry. "Are you coming down?"

"No, I ain't! Things is going to change in this 'ere school! You won't catch me making myself cheap to a lot of rascally schoolboys!"

"But we can't get out, you Bolshhevik!"

"Go on, then!"

And Gosling withdrew his head. Bob Cherry chuckled.

"I hold you responsible if I break my neck climbing the wall, Gossy!" he said. "I shall appear to you as a sheeted ghost of a night after your tenth glass of gin-and-water!"

The window slammed down.

Kick! Crash!

Bang!

"Gossy! Gossy! My sweet little Bolshie, open thy window!"

"Gosling!"

But Gosling declined to be drawn.

"We shall have to get over the wall," remarked Harry Wharton. "It's jolly thick if we've got to knuckle down to this sort of thing from Gosling! Who ever heard of gates being locked at tea-time?"

"Just about the limit in cheek!"

"Well, it won't stop us from going on the river if we want to! Let's get over the wall!"

There was a spot in the school wall where climbing was easy, aided by the thick, hanging ivy. The Removites knew it well. They were soon upon the spot, and Bob Cherry gave Harry a hand up. Hurree Singh, Fish, Bull, Linley, Frank Nugent, and Bulstrode followed, assisted by a hand from above. Then Harry Wharton leaned down for Billy Bunter.

The fat junior eyed the wall dubiously.

The climb would have been nothing to any other fellow at Greyfriars, but Billy Bunter was a heavy-weight, and he was not active or inclined to exertion.

He blinked at the wall, and he blinked at the juniors above.

"Come on!" said Harry Wharton.

"Oh, really, you fellows——"

"Give me your hand!"

"Ahem! Do you think you can pull me up?"

"I can, if you climb as well."

"The ivy won't bear my weight!"

"It will if you take hold of the thick tendrils and I help you. Come on, for goodness' sake! We don't want to stop here until sunset!"

"I'm blessed if I can do it! Look here, you fellows, come down again, and I'll climb up over your shoulders, and you can help me!"

"What-ho!" said Bob Cherry. "I don't think!"

"The don't-thinkfulness is terrific!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Give me your hand, you fat idiot!" said Harry Wharton impatiently.

And Bob Cherry immediately began to

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chant an air he had heard on a gramophone during the holidays:

"Give me your hand, oh, fairest,
Whisper a gentle yes.
Come, if for me thou carest——"

"Shut up, Bob!" growled Harry Wharton.

"I suppose I can sing if I like?" said Bob Cherry warmly.

"Something wrong with your supposer, then!" said Harry Wharton, shaking his head. "You can't!"

"Look here, Harry——"

"Here, lend me a hand with Bunter! Take his fat paw!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Shut up, Bunter, and come on!"

The chums of the Remove took a hand each of the fat junior, lying with their chests on the wall. They dragged, and Billy Bunter's feet swept off the ground. He banged into the ivy, and gasped:

"Oh! Ow! Gerrooh!"

"Climb, you ass!"

"Ow! How c-c-c-can I c-c-climb when you're holding my hands?"

"Leggo his fist, Bob!"

"Right-ho!"

Bob let go, and Bunter swung by one hand.

"Now catch the ivy! Oh crumbs!"

Billy Bunter swung from Harry Wharton's grasp, and went down to the ground in a sitting posture, with a terrific bump.

He gave a gasp like escaping steam.

"Ow!"

"My hat! Was ever anybody bothered with such a duffer?" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "I think you had better stay there, Bunter."

"Ow! I've broken a leg and sprained my arm!"

"Then it's impossible for you to get over the wall. Good-bye!"

"Hold on!"

Billy Bunter jumped up with remarkable activity for one whose leg was broken and whose arm was sprained.

"I'm coming!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! I think I can climb the ivy if you help me. Why can't you lend a chap a hand?"

And the Owl of the Remove essayed the climb again, and this time he succeeded in reaching the top of the wall.

He sat there, straddled, puffing and blowing.

"Come on!" said Harry Wharton. "We can't sit here all night."

"Do hold on a minute. I feel rather winded. Oh!"

"Buck up!"

"I won't buck up! I'm going to get a breather in first. Wait for me. I sha'n't keep you waiting for more than five minutes."

Harry Wharton & Co. chuckled.

"You jolly well won't keep us waiting for more than five seconds," said Bob Cherry. "Come on, you fellows! Bunter can sit on the wall and ornament the landscape."

"Here, give me a hand down, you beasts!"

Bob Cherry caught hold of the Owl's ankle.

"Come on, then!"

"Leggo! You—you'll make me break my neck! I—I—I——"

"Oh, come on!"

"Ow! Leggo! Ow!"

Billy Bunter scrambled wildly down the wall. Harry Wharton caught the back of his collar to help him, and the Owl of the Remove gasped for breath.

"I—I say, you fellows, you're beasts, you know; you are really! Hold on a minute! You know that exertion always makes me hungry. Let's give up the river for to-day, and go back and have a jolly good spread!"

"Rats!"

"I suppose you don't want me to expire with hunger at your feet?"

"Come on!" said Harry Wharton. "Get a move on. The sun will be down soon. You're making us waste too much time!"

"Oh, really——"

"Shut up, and come on!" said Harry Wharton tersely.

And the Owl of the Remove rolled along behind Harry Wharton & Co.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Up the Pole!

HARRY WHARTON led the way down to the wooden landing-stage, where Bates the boat-builder kept his boats for hire.

It was a fine, clear, sunny afternoon, warm but not hot. The sun was getting low in the heavens; but there was still plenty of daylight for a pleasant row up the river, and the chums did not

waste any time in snapping up the boats that were there.

"Get away sharply," said Bob Cherry. "Here you are, Marky, get into this skiff before Bunter arrives."

"Right-ho!" laughed Mark Linley, the Lancashire lad, jumping into the boat. "I'll take the tiller, Bob."

"That's the idea. I'll row up, and you can row home."

Bob caught hold of the oar and pushed the boat away from the landing-stage, and they drifted out into the middle of the stream.

Harry Wharton, Hurree Singh, and Lord Maulverer bagged the next boat. Fisher T. Fish and Peter Todd ran another boat into the water, and jumped in, and Peter pulled lazily up-stream. Johnny Bull and Bulstrode major joined forces and took possession of the last remaining skiff just as Billy Bunter stepped on to the landing-stage.

The Owl of the Remove mopped his perspiring brow, and blinked across the water at the little fleet of rowing-boats containing the rest of the Removites.

"Half a second, you fellows!" he cried. "Don't be in such a blessed hurry. I'm hot."

"Try a swim, Bunter!" shouted Bob Cherry. "Don't jump in, though; there'll be too much displacement."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry!" growled Bunter. "I don't call that funny. Whose boat am I coming in?"

Bob Cherry grinned.

"You can come in this one, if you like, Billy," he said.

"All right, Cherry; row it up to the stage."

"What on earth for?"

Billy Bunter blinked angrily through his enormous spectacles.

"How do you expect me to get in, you idiot?" he grunted.

"There're two ways of getting in, porpoise," laughed Bob Cherry. "You can swim or jump. It's a long way to jump, perhaps; but a first-class athlete like you should find it easy. Come on! All you've got to do is to make up your mind to it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you rotters, I want to come for a row."

"A very worthy desire, my dear Bunter," said Peter Todd. "I hope your wish will come true, and that you will have a fine day for it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter glared furiously at the laughing Removites in the boats. He turned angrily round the next moment as Mr. Bates, the boat-builder, joined in the general merriment.

"What are you laughing at, Bates?" snapped Bunter. "Don't forget I've been a jolly good customer of yours during the summer."

"Haw, haw, haw!"

"And I don't want any of your blessed cheek now! Do you understand?"

"Eh?"

"I've come down here for a row, and I'm jolly well going to have a boat."

"There ain't one left, sir."

"Well, let me have one of the private ones out of the boat-house."

"Not likely!"

"Well, good-bye, bluebell!" shouted Johnny Bull. "We're off now. Bring her round, Bulstrode!"

The oars dipped in time, and the boat glided away. It went with a murmur of cheery talk and laughter. The two Removites were feeling very happy as they disappeared up the river, and they left a far from happy Bunter on the bank.

The Owl of the Remove blinked.

angrily after the fast-disappearing skiff, and he gave a snort of annoyance as he turned once more and faced Mr. Bates.

"Look here, Bates," he said, "I'm jolly well going on the river! Who does this punt belong to?"

"That belongs to Sir Hilton Popper."

"Well, let me borrow it for an hour. The old idiot won't know anything about it."

"Yes, he will. Sir Hilton may be down here any minute now."

"Blow Sir Hilton Popper!"

"Well, you blow him when he arrives," said Mr. Bates, turning on his heel and entering the boathouse.

Billy Bunter watched Harry Wharton & Co. removing their jackets preparatory to their starting work at the oars.

"Look here, Wharton, are you going to take me for a row?"

"No."

"Are you, Fishy?"

"Nope."

"Are you, Cherry?"

"Nope again," shouted Bob Cherry, and there was a chuckle from the Removites.

Billy Bunter's face went a deep crimson, and he looked round to see whether Mr. Bates was still looking on. The hard-working boat-builder had disappeared into the boathouse, and the Owl of the Remove could hear him working with a saw.

He rolled down to the edge of the landing-stage, and stepped heavily on to the handsome mahogany staging of Sir Hilton Popper's punt. The punt gave a sudden heave downward; but Bunter kept his balance, and the next moment he was standing with both fat legs in Sir Hilton's boat.

There was a gasp of surprise from the Removites.

"Get out of that punt, you idiot!" hissed Harry Wharton. "Didn't you hear what Bates said just now?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Get out!"

"I'm jolly well going for a row or a

punt after fagging all the way down here!" said Billy Bunter. "I don't suppose that old idiot is really coming down, and, anyway, I sha'n't do any harm to the blessed punt! I'm jolly good at punting! It requires a strong, graceful sort of chap to punt well, you see."

The Owl of the Remove let go the painter, and took off his coat and rolled up his sleeves.

"My hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Just look at the fat champ! I wouldn't like to be in his shoes if old Popper turns up and sees him sailing away in his punt."

Billy Bunter stood up and grasped the long punt-pole. The weight of it upset the balance of the light punt, and for a moment it looked as if Billy Bunter was going to dive headlong into the river. However, he recovered himself, and he stood on the stern and pushed the pole down into the bed of the stream.

The punt swung away from the landing-stage so quickly that Harry Wharton & Co. held their breath in suspense, expecting any moment to see Bunter roll overboard.

"Bunter!" cried Harry Wharton. "Look out, you chump! You'll be in in a second!"

"Oh, really, Wharton, I wish you wouldn't talk such rot! I'm jolly good at punting, I can tell you. It's only jealousy on your part."

"You fat idiot!"

Bunter pushed the pole down again, and the punt went up-stream so quickly that it glided away gracefully from under Bunter's fat legs. The Owl of the Remove gave a grunt as he hung on to the pole and made frantic efforts to keep a foothold on the boat.

"Let go of the pole!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Oh-h-h-h!"

"Let go of— Oh, my giddy aunt!"

Bob Cherry's frantic words of advice arrived too late. Billy Bunter chose to hang on to the punt-pole, and the punt sailed gaily away down-stream, leaving the Owl of the Remove sprawling desperately on the top of the pole, which had become firmly embedded in the sandy bottom of the river-bed.

"Ow! Help! Murder! Rescue!"

Billy Bunter gave a wild shriek for assistance, and there was a roar of laughter from the Removites as they saw the punt-pole gradually inclining over.

"Help, help! Rescue!"

Bunter's piercing cries rang out, and Mr. Bates, with alarm on his face, dashed out of the boathouse and rushed down on to the landing-stage. He gave a start of surprise as he saw the fat form hanging on to the punt-pole in mid-stream.

"Help! Murder! Ow! I-I-I'm g-g-g-going o-o-o-over!"

Splash!

"Ow-w-w-w-w!"

The water went up in a great fountain as Bunter's fat form plunged in. He went right under, but the river at this point was not deep, and in a moment he was on his feet, the stream flowing round his neck.

"Ow! Oh! Br-r-r-r! H-h-help!"

"Wade to the landing-stage, you fat idiot!" roared Mr. Bates. "What in the blazes d'you mean by taking that punt?"

"Oh-h-h!"

Billy Bunter did not heed the angry boat-builder's recriminations. He waded towards the landing-stage, and, drenched and dripping, he scrambled ashore, gasping for breath.

"Ow!" he roared. "Look at me! I'm drenched!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites shrieked with laughter as they watched the Owl of the Remove

LIGHTING-UP TIME FOR THIS WEEK.



AUGUST.

30th Monday - - - 8.20 p.m.

31st Tuesday - - - 8.18 "

SEPTEMBER.

1st Wednesday - - - 8.15 p.m.

2nd Thursday - - - 8.13 "

3rd Friday - - - 8.11 "

4th Saturday - - - 8.9 "

5th Sunday - - - 8.7 "



The Fifth Former sprang forward, and grasped the Owl of the Remove roughly by the back of the neck, and pushed him violently out into the passage. There was a wild shriek from Bunter as he almost fell over his trailing skirt. (See Chapter 8.)

standing in front of Mr. Bates with the water pouring off him in gallons.

The angry boat proprietor was raving, and it looked as though Billy Bunter was in danger of being flung back into the river, when there came the sudden whirring noise of a motor-car being brought to a standstill outside the boat-house.

"That's Sir 'Ilton come for 'is punt!" gasped Bates. "Oh, you young scoundrel! He'll kill you."

Billy Bunter looked round hastily.

"I—is that old Popper?" he said.

"Yes, you fat scoundrel, and you know Sir 'Ilton as well as I do! If he finds you've been messing about with his boat he'll set about you, sure as eggs is eggs!"

"T-then I'm off!" gasped Billy Bunter. "I'm not going to let that rotter get hold of me!"

The Owl of the Remove clambered up the river-bank, leaving a trail of water behind him. He rushed towards the stone bridge, and Harry Wharton gave him a cheer as he gained the road. Billy Bunter looked round for an instant and blinked anxiously to see whether he was being pursued, and then he set off at a great speed—for Bunter—towards Greyfriars.

His boating excursion had not been a success, and he was to find out yet that he was by no means out of the frying-pan. There was a whole heap of trouble

waiting for William George Bunter when he reached Greyfriars, a very damp and breathless individual!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Muzzling Bunter!

"**B**UNTER! Where's that ass Bunter?"

It was Bolsover who demanded the whereabouts of the Owl of the Remove. Bolsover and Hazeldene and Stott and Skinner stood in the Remove Form passage. Bolsover was out of breath, and his face was flushed from exertion.

He wanted Bunter. But just now even Bolsover's stentorian voice failed to fetch him.

The Remove Form bully growled with anger.

"Where is that fat dummy?" he exclaimed. "I say, Brown, have you seen Bunter?"

Tom Brown was just coming by with his cap on, evidently going out for a stroll in the Close. Brown was not a great friend of Bolsover's, and he hardly paused in his stride as he made reply.

"I saw him come in," he said. "Bunter was in flannels, and he looked as though he had been ducked in the fountain. I suppose he's changing out of his wet togs now." And Tom Brown passed on.

Bolsover growled.

"The young fathead! He must have heard me calling, then! Why doesn't he come?"

"Perhaps your voice doesn't carry as far as the dorm," grinned Hazeldene.

"Bunter! Bunter!"

"Here he is!"

The fat form of Billy Bunter came scuttling down the stairs. He was no longer in his flannel clothes. He had changed those, and an Eton suit adorned his fat form. He did not heed Bolsover's voice, but hurried along the passage in the direction Tom Brown had taken.

Bolsover stared after him for some moments in amazement, and then he made a rush after the fat junior.

Billy Bunter quickened his pace as he heard him coming, but the Remove bully ran him down a few yards from the end of the passage. Bunter squirmed in his grasp and yelled.

"Ow! Leggo! Don't! Yow! Help!"

"You young idiot, I'm not going to hurt you!"

"Oh, really, Bolsover—"

"I've been chasing all over the place for you. Old Quelchy is in an awful rage, and said that I was to find you whatever happened. What have you been up to?"

"Ow! Leggo my collar!"

"Quelchy has been rung up on the telephone about half a dozen times. He

said it was old Popper. Have you been poaching in his grounds?"

"N-no! Ow! Leggo!"

"You're coming along with me!"

"I—I can't, really!"

"But Mr. Quelch wants you."

Billy Bunter gave a wriggle.

"I—I—I'm sorry, Bolsover, but—but I really can't come! You will have to apologise to Quelch for me. I—I'm jolly well going to settle with that idiot Gosling first."

"But—"

"Gosling had the blessed check to whack me with a stick when I came in. If I hadn't have been wet through I would jolly well have punched his nose!"

"Bosh! Come along!"

Billy Bunter blinked along the Remove passage nervously. Then he suddenly squirmed in Bolsover's grip, but the bully of the Remove would not let go. His grip tightened instead.

"Oh, Bolsover, you cad! Let me go!"

"Rubbish! You're going to see Quelch! He's in an awful rage about something."

"I—I can't!"

"I tell you you are!"

"I don't care! I'm not going! Blow Popper and blow old Popper's punt! I'm not going!"

"Aren't you?" said the Remove bully grimly. "We'll see! Are you coming quietly, 'or shall I tie your hands behind your back and tickle you up with a stump?"

"I—I'm not going to old Quelch!"

"Oh, let him go!" said Hazeldene. "If he doesn't go now Mr. Quelch will nab him later, on, so it comes to the same thing."

Bolsover scowled.

"You mind your own business, Hazeldene. Quelch told me to take Bunter to his study, and I'm jolly well going to take him. I'm not going to get ragged by old Quelch for this fat rotter."

"I'll give you a hand, Bolsover, old man," said Skinner, with a smirk. "Take him into Study No. 14. We can tie him up there."

"That's a good wheeze!" laughed Bolsover. "Open the door!"

Study No. 14 belonged to Fisher T. Fish and Field and Johnny Bull; but this did not affect Skinner. Without any ceremony he turned the handle and flung the door open with a crash. Bolsover pushed Bunter into the little study.

"Oh, leggo!" roared the fat Remove. "Ow! You're hurting me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, there's a dog-lead and a muzzle!" laughed Bolsover. "Let's do the thing in style. It's time this fat rotter was muzzled. What on earth has that Yankee boulder got a dog-muzzle for?"

"Goodness knows!" said Skinner. "Samples from the States, I suppose. Here you are!"

Bolsover snatched the dog-lead out of Skinner's hand, and, despite the efforts made by the yelling Bunter, the fat junior's hands were firmly knotted together at the back. Billy Bunter squirmed frantically to release himself.

"Ow! Help!" he roared. "Let me go! Rescue!"

"Shut up making that row!" snapped Bolsover. "We shall have a prefect along in a minute. Here, give me that duster, Stott!"

Stott handed over a duster which looked as though it had dusted Study No. 14 since Greyfriars School had been built. In a moment the rag was tied round Bunter's fat face, and he gurgled and spluttered and fumed with rage as

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he endeavoured to continue his yells for help.

There was a guffaw from Bolsover and has satellites as they regarded their handiwork.

"Yes, it wants the muzzle to finish it off!" laughed Bolsover, taking up the wire contraption from Fish's little table.

Bunter gave a smothered snort of rage as the muzzle was fixed; but he was quite unable to shake it off. He turned a red and angry blink at the grinning Removevites. But Bolsover's heart was hardened, and he gave a grim chuckle of amusement as he picked up a cricket-stump from the corner cupboard.

"Now, Bunter, my beauty! A-bout turn! That's right! Oh, you won't, won't you! Then take that!"

Thump!

The cricket-stump came down across Bunter's fat shoulders with a thwack, and there was a smothered groan from the Owl as he turned about and rolled out into the Remove passage again.

"That's the medicine!" laughed Bolsover. "Now, double quick march to Mr. Quelch's study, or you'll make friends with this stump again."

Bunter fairly shook with rage, but he had to submit to Bolsover's rude humour, and he rolled along in the direction of Mr. Quelch's study. He looked a remarkable sight, with the dog's muzzle tied firmly over the gag, and there was a wild shriek of laughter from Desmond Wibley as they passed him at the foot of the stairs.

Mr. Quelch's study door was reached at last, and Bolsover could hear the Form-master shouting down the telephone. He flung open the door, and reminded Bunter of the stump by a blow between the shoulder blades.

Billy Bunter took the hint, and he staggered into the study as Mr. Quelch looked round. The Form-master was standing up at his table, and the telephone was in his hands as he caught sight of the apparition in the doorway.

He gave a loud gasp of surprise, and the telephone almost dropped to the floor.

"Bunter!"

"Mmmmmmmmm!"

"Boy!"

"Mmmmmmm!"

Mr. Quelch almost threw the telephone down on his desk. He dragged Bunter into the room and slammed the door to with a crash.

"Now, Bunter!"

"Mmmmmmm!"

"Boy, how dare you!" roared Mr. Quelch, turning crimson. "What—what does this gross impertinence mean?"

"Mmmmmmm!"

The Remove Form-master breathed hard.

"Bunter!" he said, in a voice of thunder. "I can see you are unable to articulate. I'll remove that gag and that—that muzzle!"

In a moment the wire muzzle and the duster fell to the floor, and Billy Bunter, with his hands still behind his back, stood and blinked at the furious Form-master.

"Now, Bunter, I presume you are not responsible for putting those things round your own face?"

"If you please, sir—I—I—that is Bol—"

"That is enough!" exclaimed the Remove master, in a voice that made the fat junior jump. "I do not want to hear any more. I ordered Bolsover to bring you to my study at once. He has carried out the order, but not in the proper spirit. I will deal with him later. Now, Bunter, I have been pestered for

the last ninety minutes with this telephone. Sir Hilton Popper has been ringing me up every five minutes. Nothing will satisfy him. You, Bunter, are responsible for this disturbance."

"M-me, sir?"

"Do you dare to deny it?" thundered the Form-master.

"I—I—I—"

"Answer me!"

"You see, sir, I—I—"

"Bunter, you have been taking liberties with Sir Hilton Popper's punt down at Bates' landing-stage. Sir Hilton tells me that he arrived in his car to find his punt floating down-stream, and his punt-pole in the reeds. You, Bunter, were responsible for that. Sir Hilton is furious, and nothing will satisfy him but that you are soundly punished by me. I am tired of you, Bunter! Here have I been disturbed in my work by the incessant ringing of the telephone-bell. You deserve a sound thrashing, you absurd, ill-bred boy!"

"B-but—"

"Hold out your hand, Bunter!"

"I—I can't, sir! They—they're tied behind my back!"

Mr. Quelch gave a jump, and he turned the Owl of the Remove about, and hastily unfastened the dog-lead.

"Now, Bunter, hold out your hand!"

"I—I—I—"

Mr. Quelch took Bunter by the collar with his left hand, and grasped a pointer in his right. The pointer made rapid play, and the dust rose from Billy Bunter's garments. Wild yells rose from Bunter.

"Ow! Oh! I didn't take old Popper's punt! I never—I mean, I only borrowed it for a few minutes! It was only a joke, sir! I never took his punt! Ow! Ow!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Oh! Ow! Yow!"

Mr. Quelch's arm came up and down like a machine, and there was quite a cloud of dust all round Bunter. His arm ached with the exercise, and at last he stopped.

"There, Bunter! That is for your impertinence in borrowing Sir Hilton Popper's punt, and for not taking proper care of it when you did borrow it!"

"Yow!"

"You deserve more than that! Sometimes I think you are totally senseless."

"Yow!"

"Are you not ashamed of yourself?"

"Yow!"

"Go back to your study, and think over what I have said to you!"

"Yow!"

"And take that rag and that dog-muzzle and that leather strap with you. Go! I shall be rung up on the telephone by Sir Hilton again shortly. I shall tell him that you have been properly punished. Now go!"

Billy Bunter crept out of the room, with his hands rubbing his back. Bolsover had disappeared, and there was no one about as the Owl of the Remove rolled into Study No. 7 and tried to sit down; but the process was too painful, so Bunter stood up and groaned!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Hatching a Plot!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. returned from their boating expedition in time for roll-call. They were feeling a little tired after the long walk to and from the river, and they had all taken their turn with the oars, so it was not surprising to find them half an hour later gathered

together in Mr. Mimbles' little tuck-shop.

The tuck-shop was part and parcel of the school-building, so it was not necessary for the boys to go out of the gates. Gosling had given the juniors a sour expression as they had come in, and he had growled out his intention of reporting them to Mr. Quelch for not having worked on the bicycle-shed.

However, the chums of the Remove were feeling too tired to argue with the surly old porter; but under the influence of Mrs. Mimbles' good things they had soon recovered their spirits, and a whole party of them had grouped themselves and fallen to discussing the vexed question of Gosling and his Bolshevik ways.

Even Billy Bunter was there this time, and Harry Wharton had appealed to the Owl to tax his fat head with a view to making some sort of counter-attack on the school porter.

Bunter was looking thoughtful now. Lord Mauleverer asked him twice whether he would have another jam-tart without eliciting any reply—a most unheard-of thing with Bunter.

"H'm!" said Bunter at last. "I wonder if it would work?"

"Will you have another tart, begad?" said Mauleverer, for the third time.

But Harry Wharton dropped his hand upon Mauly's shoulder, and told him to "ring off."

Mauleverer stared at the captain of the Remove.

"The fat bounder's got on to a wheeze, I think," said Harry Wharton. "It doesn't often occur, but I know it's a wheeze by the gleam in his eye. It's quite time we had that idiot Gossy on the carpet. It's got altogether too thick. He had the cheek to whack Bunter with a stick when he came in this evening. Now then, porpoise, what is it?"

Billy Bunter was still thinking deeply. He did not reply for the moment, and Harry Wharton waited patiently.

For, although Wharton was the captain of the Removes in their alarms and excursions and in all their games, he would have been one of the first to admit that the majority of wheezes for japes and raids were frequently suggested by one of the lesser lights in the Form. Bunter very seldom came forward with any useful "stunts"—in fact, there were many occasions when Harry Wharton & Co. wouldn't listen to Bunter; but they appreciated the fact that often in the past Bunter had excelled himself with his ventriloquist efforts, he had not always been a complete failure in the various concert-parties that had sprung up from time to time.

"I wonder—" said Bunter again, and then he stopped.

Harry Wharton waited.

"My word," said Bunter, blinking through his enormous spectacles, "it would be a wheeze! It would be tremendous!"

"The wheeze, Bunter?"

"Yes."

"Up against Gossy?"

"Yes."

"Tremendous?"

"Yes."

"Good!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Now, what's the wheeze, Bunter? If it's any good we'll work it if it costs a leg! Go ahead, my cheery porpoise!"

Billy Bunter was still looking very serious.

"It all depends upon whether Gosling has a sister," he said.

"Gosling—a sister?"

"Yes, Wharton."

"Well, I know Gossy has got a sister," exclaimed Bob Cherry. "I've often seen a picture of a fat, frumpy-looking washerwoman, and Gosling has said it was his sister. She lives in Australia,

I think. Lucky to be so far away from Gossy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Australia! Fat!" mumbled Bunter. "That makes it a bit easier. Look here, you chaps. I think I've got hold of a jolly good wheeze. Pass those cakes, Mauly!"

"You're not going to have anything until you've explained the wheeze!" said Harry Wharton. "We've been done too many times by you, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, you chaps!"

"Explain!" said Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter blinked furiously at the grinning Removes, and then cleared his throat with a fat little cough.

"It would be a jolly good wheeze if Gossy's sister came to Greyfriars, wouldn't it? He, he, he!"

"Gossy's sister!" said Bob Cherry. "Isn't Gossy enough, without his blessed sister?"

"I—I don't mean his real sister, you know."

"What!"

"I mean, supposing I came to Greyfriars as—as Gosling's sister, and taught the rotter a jolly good lesson? Don't you think that would be a good idea?"

"My hat!"

Harry Wharton & Co. gave a whistle of astonishment as Bunter's idea suddenly dawned on them.

"Bunter, you fat chump," exclaimed Harry Wharton, "it's a first-rate, gilt-edged wheeze, and we'll work it for all it's worth! I don't know whether I can make up to look like Gossy's sister, though."

"Oh, really, Wharton, it's my wheeze, you know! I ought to take the part."

"But—"

"I sha'n't give you any more wheezes if you're going to get all the credit for them!"

"But you always make such a mess of your shows, Bunter," said Harry Wharton. "This is a first-rate idea, and it'll be a jolly shame if it's done in."

"I think Bunter would make a jolly good sister to Gossy!" laughed Bob Cherry. "I should let him go through with it, Harry, old son; and if he makes a mess of it, we'll—we'll drown him in the fountain!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can trust me not to fail, you chaps!" said Bunter, as the Removes gave a hearty laugh. "I'm a jolly good actor, you know, and it's only the jealousy shown by you beasts that I don't get the leading parts in the Remove Dramatic Society!"

"Oh, dry up, Bunter, you worm!" said Frank Nugent.

"Well, I'm only thinking of the welfare of the Remove!" grunted Bunter.

"Hear, hear, porpoise!" said Bob Cherry.

"Now Bunter's thought that, I suppose we had better put our heads together and decide what and how we're going to do it to put Gossy down a peg."

"That's the idea!"

"Well, Bunter, you had better give us your idea first, and then we can see how we stand. Come on! Sit down at this table."

The Removes sat down at Mrs. Mimbles' little tuck-shop table, and, after blinking round the little room, Bunter lowered his voice. In hushed tones of great caution, he explained, and Harry Wharton gasped, and the Remove juniors yelled. In whispers, with many a chuckle, the juniors plotted the plot.

There was very much of a surprise in store for Gossy the Bolshevik!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Gosling!

BUNTER was ready!

The fat Remove had been left to himself in Study No. 1.

Harry Wharton & Co. had supplied him with everything he wanted. Fortunately for the success of the wheeze, the Greyfriars Remove-Form Dramatic and Operatic Society had a whole wardrobe of clothes. There were make-ups for all sorts and conditions of characters, and Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent had spent the best part of an hour in the box-room looking out suitable garments for the fat Remove's make-up.

It was arranged that Billy Bunter should have Study No. 1 to himself whilst he made up, and that Harry Wharton & Co. should keep a careful watch in the quadrangle in order to ensure Bunter a safe exit out of the school-buildings. It had been decided to get Bunter over the school wall surrounding Greyfriars, so that he could come in at the gates and ring up Gosling in the same way that any ordinary visitor would do.

This would allay any suspicion.

Bunter was clad now in the garb of an elderly lady, and he stood in front of the looking-glass in order to get a good view of himself.

The Owl was evidently pleased with himself. He turned slowly round to see the effect of the clothes from all points of view. A back view was not easy to obtain, and Bunter's position was rather perilous as he squirmed round, looking over his shoulder. Billy did his best to obtain a good view, and he was giving utterance to a murmur of admiration, when the door-handle was turned quickly, and the door flung open.

Billy Bunter was startled. He gave a jump, and nearly lost his balance.

"Wharton here?"

There was a gruff voice at the open door, and then a gasp of surprise.

"Oh, I—I beg your pardon, madam!"

Coker—Horace Coker of the Fifth—stammered out an apology. He had certainly not expected to find a lady in Wharton's study. Coker had been at Greyfriars for a long time now, and he could never remember juniors entertaining old women before.

As Coker stood awkwardly in the doorway Bunter's eyes rolled curiously behind his pair of spectacles. He gave a nervous cough.

"Ahem! Er—what's that, my boy?"

"I'm looking for a fellow named Wharton, madam. I was told he was in here."

"I see," replied Bunter, with a fat smile. "Now, I seem to know your face. I've met it somewhere. It's—it's a common sort of face; but I can't mistake that nose of yours."

Coker went crimson.

"What say, madam?" he gasped.

"That nose," replied the bogus Miss Gosling. "Oh dear, what a nose! Where have I met it? Is your name Coker, by any chance?"

Coker looked as though he was on the point of having an apoplectic fit.

"No, it isn't Coker!" he snapped. "My name is Coker. I'm Coker of the Fifth, and I'm dashed if I will allow you to make insulting remarks about my nose!"

Billy Bunter was beginning to enjoy himself. He worked his way into the middle of the study, so that the window was immediately behind him. The strong shadow his face was in helped him

to conceal his identity from the indignant Coker.

"I don't think I was rude about your nose, my dear little boy," continued the disguised Owl of the Remove. "It is a curious shape, is it not? How you do remind me of a dear little fellow I knew. His name was Croker. Are you quite sure your name is not Croker?"

"My name is Coker!"

"That is strange. It is very much like Croker. Are you making a mistake, do you think?"

Coker stepped into the room.

"Do you think I don't know my own name, madam?" he roared. "I don't know what you're doing here, but I think it's jolly suspicious."

"Er—er—what's that?"

"I say it's very suspicious. Visitors are not allowed in the studies, especially in the studies belonging to the kids of the Remove Form. I've got a good mind to go and fetch Gosling, the porter, to throw you out."

The disguised Bunter gave a loud snigger.

"Gosling, did you say? Oh dear! He, he, he!"

"I'll go and tell him. He'll soon deal with you."

"Gosling! Why, he is my own brother. I have come all the way from Australia to see him."

"Phew!"

"I—I—I thought this was his study, my dear boy. Dear George has often written to me and told me what a jolly little study he had got."

"I'll fetch the headmaster!" snapped Coker suddenly. "I think there's something very fishy about this." And Coker of the Fifth turned on his heels.

"Here, I say, Coker old man—"

began Bunter, in alarm.

The Fifth-Former gave a start of amazement as he flew round again.

"Bunter!" he gasped. "Bunter!"

"He, he, he!"

"You fat young scoundrel!" roared Coker angrily. "It's you, is it? Blessed if I didn't suspect something of the sort!"

"Oh, really, Coker, old man—"

"You think I've got a funny nose, do you?" fumed Coker. "You think I don't know my own name, you spoofing blighter!"

The Fifth-Former sprang forward, and grasped the Owl of the Remove roughly by the back of the neck, and pushed him violently out into the passage.

There was a wild shriek from Bunter as he almost fell over his trailing skirt.

But he recovered himself the next moment, and as Coker stood gasping

angrily in the doorway, the disguised junior turned on his heels and dashed down the corridor.

"Come here!" roared Coker. "I'll give you a jolly good hiding for your blessed cheek!"

But Bunter was not stopping for the hiding. He flew down the passage with his skirt trailing on the linoleum, and raising a cloud of dust. He gained the head of the stairs a good twenty yards ahead of the furious Fifth-Former, and he went down the stone steps three at a time, with Coker in pursuit.

The Owl of the Remove gained in the mad dash downwards, and he was another dozen yards to the good as he flew through the door leading into the quadrangle.

Unfortunately for Bunter, there was a

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small cluster of fags standing outside, and he looked round anxiously for signs of Harry Wharton & Co. But the Removites were gathered together by the wall, carefully guarding the ladder which Bunter was to use in order to get out of the school grounds without Gosling seeing him.

Billy Bunter made up his mind quickly as he heard Coker pounding along the passage. Gathering up his skirts in both hands, he set off in the direction of the appointed place. Gatty and Myers, of the Second Form, and Tubb and Bolsover minor, of the Third Form, stared at the remarkable scene in breathless surprise, and then as Bunter thundered past them they gave a wild shriek of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, madam!" shouted Gatty.

"My only topper! Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tubb. "Just look at her!"

Bunter was just disappearing, and Coker of the Fifth stopped as he came up to the juniors. It was not at all dignified for Coker to be seen chasing a fat old lady across the quad, and anyhow Bunter had a very big lead now, and it would not be so easy for Coker to catch up with him.

Bunter dashed up to Harry Wharton & Co. breathlessly. The chums were standing by the ladder, and Bob Cherry gave a grin as the Owl panted up to them.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he cried.

"What's up, Bunter?"

"Coker!" puffed the Owl. "That rotter found me, and is chasing me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That will be all right, Bunter," laughed Harry Wharton. "We'll deal with Coker. Up you go!"

"But—"

"Go along, you fat idiot! If we want to catch Gossy, now's the time!"

"Oh, really, Wharton, I—"

"Give him a push, Bob!"

Bunter was yanked up to the ladder, and the grinning Removites pushed him up, and Bunter had to go. He went up the rungs very gingerly, and blinked round anxiously when he got to the top. Harry Wharton & Co. had made their preparations admirably. A second ladder was on the other side, leading down to the leafy lane, and Bunter stepped on to the top rung, and the next minute his head disappeared on the other side of the wall.

Gosling, the porter, sat outside his lodge in the pleasant sunshine. Gosling was feeling very comfortable. Most of his work was over, and he had taken advantage of the fact by sampling the contents of a green bottle he kept behind the clock in his little parlour. Gosling, feeling very happy, and smelling slightly of gin, sunned himself, and was content.

There was really plenty of work for Gosling to do, but he had firmly made up his mind not to do it. The time had arrived, thought Gosling, when he should show more independence and less energy. He felt now that he could take a well-earned rest for the remainder of the afternoon.

He was blinking towards the gates, and wondering hazily whether he should sit there and rest, or whether it was worth the effort to pay another visit to the green bottle behind the clock. He was turning it over in his mind, when a figure entered at the gates of the school.

Gosling sat bolt upright.

The figure was that of a stoutish-looking lady, wearing a black skirt and cape, and a little poke-bonnet with a few very

UPS AND DOWNS OF LIFE.



Ikey: "Vot haf I tolt you before, mine son, not to make your down-strokes so thick. It wastes too much ink, and you know kervite vell we haf to economise these bad times."

SILLY ASS!



Black: "I know a fine thing for sea sickness."

White: "Do you? What is it?"

Black: "An ocean steamer."

A REGULAR NUGGET!



"What would you do if you were in my shoes, old man?"

"Clean them, old chap."

ancient-looking flowers in it. She wore a big pair of spectacles, and altogether looked as though she lived well, although the expression on her fat face was not prepossessing.

The woman came in at the gates of the school as if she belonged there, and Gosling viewed that proceeding with amazement and indignation.

"Hi, you there!" he shouted.

The woman glanced towards him.

"Well?" she rapped out.

"Houtside!"

"Eh?"

"Get hout!"

"Oh, you rude man!" said the stranger. "I'm coming in."

"My honly 'at!" muttered Gosling, as Harry Wharton & Co. came upon the scene.

He jumped up and placed his bulky form in the path of the newcomer. The woman stopped, looking at the school-porter with a ferocious stare.

"You just go hout!" said Gosling, pointing to the gates. "Hout you go! You 'ear me?"

"Oh, get out of the way, my man!"

"Wot?"

"Let me pass!"

Gosling smiled unpleasantly. He did not like his repose being disturbed, and he did not like the way the stranger talked to him.

"You 'ear me?" he said emphatically. "Tramps ain't allowed in 'ere! There ain't nothing to be given away! You get hout!"

"Tramps, you old fool! I'm not a tramp!"

Gosling simply staggered.

"Wha-a-a-at!" he gasped. "What did you call me?"

"Old fool—old idiot! Get out of the way!" said the woman angrily.

"Well, I'm blowed!" said Gosling.

"Will you let me pass?" shouted the stranger.

"I rather think not, you cheeky old woman!" said Gosling. "Hout you go! You march straight hout, or I'll—I'll push you out! You 'ear me?"

A large crowd of Greyfriars fellows had joined Harry Wharton & Co. now, and there was a snigger from them as Gosling finished his ultimatum.

"Go hon! Hout you go!"

"Man!" shrieked the woman in a piercing tone. "I am coming in! Do you think I've come all the way from Australia to be treated in this manner?"

"I don't care where you've come from! Hout you go!"

"I've come to see my brother!"

"Get hout!"

"He will know how to deal with you!" shrieked the woman. "He is a gallant, brave, dear man! He will half-kill you for this!"

"Hout you go!"

"I refuse! I will not go until I have seen my brother. I want to see Mister Gosling!"

Gosling seemed to suddenly shrivel up. He staggered back, recovered, and then staggered again.

"Wot?" he gasped.

"I want to see Mr. Gosling—my brother—and I refuse to go until I have seen him! Boys, do you hear this horrible scoundrel!" shrieked the woman, pointing an outstretched hand at the dumbfounded porter. "He refuses me my own flesh and blood! He denies me that pleasure, although I have come millions—er—I mean thousands of miles across the seas to see him! I—I feel that I could cry my poor old eyes out!"

Harry Wharton & Co. gave a shriek of laughter. Billy Bunter was carrying out his part to the letter. To say that Wharton was surprised was to put it mildly. Bunter, as a rule, was a duffer and an idiot. His one thought was food and

money wherewith to obtain it. He was a perfect fool at games, and now he was performing a part infinitely better than any other Removite could have done it. Gosling staggered nearer the disguised Bunter.

"D-d-don't shout so loud!" he gasped.

"I-i-it will ruin me 'ere!"

"Ruin you, you bad, wicked old man?" shrieked the woman. "You just wait until my brother comes! He will ruin you all right! He'll ruin that ugly face of yours!"

"But I—I am your brother!"

"What?"

"I am George!"

"You George Gosling?" shrieked the incredulous woman. "You brute! You—you—"

"Oh, ain't I Gosling, you boys?" shouted the unhappy porter. "Master Wharton, you tell 'er!"

"No man as cruel as you could be my brother!" cried Miss Gosling. "I'm surprised that these boys put up with you! It would be different in Australia. Boys are boys there, and you would be tarred and feathered!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I should like to know how you treat these poor boys," continued Miss Gosling. "Brutal and hardhearted, I should say!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come into the lodge, Gwenny," said Gosling huskily. "I—I didn't know you. It is hover thirty years since Hi saw yer! Oh, Gwenny!"

There was a shriek of laughter from the crowd as they heard Gosling's words.

But "Gwenny" wasn't having any! At any rate, not at present. She blinked at the trembling porter with a most ferocious glare, and Gosling wiped his handkerchief across his perspiring forehead.

"Tell me, boys!" cried "Gwenny."

"Is that man—this brother—this quaking worm—kind or brutal to you?"

"Brutal!" shrieked the crowd.

"Do you hear that?"

"It's a lie! A blooming lie! I'm a kind-hearted man, I am, Gwenny! I wish you would come into the lodge!"

"Pshaw! You inhuman ruffian!"

"Wot?"

"You crawling worm!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the crowd.

"Look 'ere, I'm getting sick of this 'ere slanging!"

"Do you think I'm going to give you



The Owl was evidently pleased with himself. He turned slowly round to see the effect of the clothes from all points of view. (See Chapter 8.)

the thousand pounds I've brought all the way from Australia, after talking to me like you have?"

"Wot! A thousand pounds? Oh, my heye!"

"I shall give it to the boys to spend in the tuck-shop. That will make up for your inhuman treatment."

"Hurrah!"

Gosling shook all over as the crowd of fellows cheered the announcement to the echo.

"A thousand blessed pounds for the tuck-shop?" he roared.

"Yes, indeed. I suppose I can do what I please with my own money?"

"But—"

"I shall not give you a penny, you nasty, cruel man!"

Gosling's face went quite pallid.

"Are—are you going to forget the hold days, Gwenny," he said, "when we used to play together, hand play games, and hall that sort of thing?"

"You shouldn't be a beastly cad to these chaps."

"Wot!"

"I'm going away now, and one day I shall return and see how you have been treating these poor boys. If there are no complaints from them, I may reconsider my arrangements. I'm off now!"

"'Ere, wot—"

"Don't you stop me. You ordered me out of the gates a few minutes ago. Well, I'll jolly well go!"

"But—"

"Rot!"

"Look 'ere, Gwenny, I—"

"Bosh!"

The bogus Miss Gosling gave a toss with her head, and gathered up her skirts and hurried out of the gates.

Gosling staggered to the chair outside his lodge, and gave a groan.

"Come on, you chaps!" said Harry Wharton. "The wheeze has worked like a motor. Gossy'll leave us alone now, as sure as eggs are eggs. He'll always be expecting that thousand pounds!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of the Remove struggled through the crowd, and hurried away to the spot where the ladder was resting against the wall. As they came up to it a head wearing a poke bonnet appeared over the top, and the fat face of the Owl of the Remove blinked down on them.

"Well played, Bunter!" cried Harry Wharton. "For once you've done well!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Come on, you fat duffer! We'll give you a spread for this!"

"Rather!" said Bob Cherry. "Come along!"

Billy Bunter clambered down the ladder without any delay, the chums of the Remove hurried him into the School House, and thence back to Study No. 1.

Needless to say, Harry Wharton & Co. kept their promise. Billy Bunter was entertained right royally, and the fat Removite ate and ate until he could eat no more.

Gosling, to this day, has never heard a word about the plot; but the old porter certainly gave up his Bolshevik ideas, and no longer treated the Removites with contumely. He had visions of coming into a clear one thousand pounds, and he was not going to risk losing it.

If he had ever found out the little plot it would certainly have fared badly with the Owl of the Remove for spoofing Gosling "In Borrowed Plumes!"

THE END.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 656



The Finest Story of a
 Gladiator's Life Ever Produced.

By
 FAMOUS
 VICTOR NELSON.

INTRODUCTION.

Marcus, an upright, honest gladiator, is chosen to wrestle with Nabis, a famous Greek champion of Nero's court.

The contest takes place at a huge feast in Nero's palace.

It is a night of nights, and a more than hard one for the palace slaves.

Marcus defeats Nabis, and is also instrumental in saving Nero when an assassin endeavours to slay the all-powerful ruler of Rome. For this Nero presents Marcus with a purse of gold, and the celebrations proceed on a lavish scale.

Among the slaves waiting at table is one Eunice, a young and beautiful Briton, who is loved by Marcus. Eunice incurs Nero's displeasure, and he turns angrily to the soldiers about him.

"Take this careless chit and give her three hundred lashes!" he thunders. "Not one less—you understand! By the white knees of the Graces, you shall be taught a lesson, girl!"

"Have mercy, sire!" the girl pleads.

Nero, however, turns away; and, moaning, Eunice is hurried from the great room.

Marcus hears the dreadful command, and rushes to the room where the punishment is being carried out. He flings himself upon the brutal soldiers, and fights a grim hand-to-hand contest. The odds against him look like telling when there comes a startled interruption.

"Hold!" a terrible voice cries.

Nero stands before them, and for a moment the young gladiator's life hangs by a thread.

Then the great despot tells Marcus that he will forgive him and allow him to marry Eunice if he is successful in catching a pirate called Strongbow, the Rover—a man who has waylaid a large number of Nero's ships at sea. If he is unsuccessful, then Eunice is to be thrown to the lions in the arena. Marcus sets off with a company of splendid men, and is instrumental in ambushing Strongbow's fleet. Just as Marcus is about to strike down the pirate, the outlaw suddenly cries for mercy.

"My son!" Strongbow gasped hoarsely, his eyes fixed as if fascinated upon a pictured serpent tattooed on Marcus' arm. "My long lost boy! Hold! Wouldst you deliver your own father over to Nero and a death too awful to contemplate?"

(Now read on.)

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The League of the Snake.

MARCUS stared at the pirate in stupefied amazement. He wondered if he could have heard aright, or if his ears had played him some strange trick. Then:

"Don't you understand?" the disarmed Strongbow said quickly, with an appealing gesture. "As an infant you were stolen from me and taken I knew not whither. I am your father—you are my son! The sign of the twisted serpent makes me sure!"

With surprise and horror curiously mingled in his eyes, Marcus slowly lowered the sword he had been holding to Strongbow's throat.

This man was his father—this man who had roved the seas, ruthlessly plundering and slaying! He could hardly bring himself to place the slightest belief in his claim, and yet—

Why, it must be true! How otherwise could the man know that he—Marcus—was without knowledge of his parents—one whose birth and identity were enveloped in mystery? And he must be aware of this, or he would not have dared to base a plea for mercy on such an assertion as that he had made.

Meanwhile, the fight between the crew of the Conqueror and the men of the rover vessels was proceeding fiercely, though it was swaying in favour of the former—a fact that Strongbow had not failed to realise as he had fought with Marcus.

The decks of the smaller boats were thick with dying and wounded men; the air was rent and made hideous with their groans, and the first warm rays of the rising sun streamed down upon a scene of such strife and carnage as it is well-nigh impossible to describe.

Because of the complete surprise that had been sprung upon them, for every man from Rome who had fallen there were three pirates. But those still upon their feet fought with the reckless ferocity and daring of men who knew that it was better to die than be taken prisoner.

Capture meant being taken to Rome, and either the arena and the lions or Nero's torturers awaited them there.

The sailors who had boarded the pirate ships made rush after rush, and rover after rover was impaled upon their swords or javelins. Men fought at close quarters, fought locked together, and

here and there pitched into the sea. No quarter as yet was asked, and none given.

Before Marcus could demand proof of Strongbow's startling words a rush of men almost carried both him and the pirate chief off their feet. The rovers belonging to the ship were being pressed back and defeated by the boarders from the Conqueror, and Marcus and the man who claimed to be his father found themselves in the midst of a wild, hand-to-hand melee.

Marcus swung up his sword to defend himself as he found himself suddenly faced by a gigantic negro who carried a formidable club.

He side-stepped swiftly as the black aimed at him an ugly blow, and, countering ere his enemy could strike again, hurled him to the deck with a blow from his sword. At practically the same moment Leo, who had had his javelin knocked from his hand in the fight, squared up to Strongbow with his bare fists, and got home a blow on the point of the rover chieftain's jaw that stretched him senseless on his back.

For ten minutes longer the fighting continued; but at the end of that time the pirates found themselves hopelessly vanquished.

On four of their ships, those who had not gone down were being held at the point of swords and javelins, whilst other of the boarders fettered or bound their hands. On the other boats, including that the stunned Strongbow had commanded, they were forced back against the bulwarks and throwing down their arms in despair.

With his brain in a whirl, Marcus stood looking down at the pirate chief, as two of the men from the Conqueror bound his hands behind his back.

Leo came up and joined him; but Marcus said nothing to his friend just then of the remarkable and terrible statement Strongbow had made. The young gladiator was trying to convince himself that the man's claim could not be true, though his heart was as heavy as lead, and a still voice persisted in whispering that Strongbow was indeed his father, and that only an unnatural and inhuman son could dream of taking him back to Rome.

Leo's rugged face was smeared with blood from a cut upon his forehead, and one of his eyes that had got into the wars was discolouring and fast closing. But



Next moment Leo and the sailors had joined Marcus, and in the combined glare of their torches a startling spectacle was revealed. (See page 19.)

for all that, he was grinning his habitual grin and flushed with victory.

"By the shade of my mother, that was something like a fight, my Marcus!" he declared. "I have but one regret."

"And that is?" Marcus asked, though he spoke mechanically, and had hardly gained the sense of his chum's words.

"That it cannot begin all over again!" Leo chuckled. "I did not give as good an account of myself as I couldst wish. A caitiff of a half-caste hit my knuckles with a club, and I dropped my trusty javelin and lost the run of it in the general scuffle."

"And what, master, didst you do with the half-caste knave?" asked one of the sailors who had been binding Strongbow, as he got upon his feet.

Seeing the twinkle in the man's eyes, Leo's smile broadened in response.

"I didst pick him up and throw him from me in disgust," he said. "For one brief moment he stood upon his head. That—alas for him!—was the first part of his unworthy carcase to hit the deck. Afterwards he seemed strangely unwell, and did not appear to notice when certain combatants walked upon his face."

A laugh went up from those who were near and heard. Only Marcus remained grave. Under the deep tan the long voyage beneath blazing suns had brought to his face he was deathly pale, and there was a deep furrow of thought between his brows.

He seemed to take a grip upon himself, and, issuing curt orders left and right, superintended the mustering of those prisoners on the vessel who were not too seriously wounded to need fettering or binding.

When they were lined up against the bulwarks, closely guarded by armed sailors, Marcus ordered other of his men to care for those of the enemy who were maimed and injured, and for the dead to be cast into the sea.

He himself picked up the unconscious Strongbow and carried him to a spot out of the way of hurrying feet. Having lain him upon the deck and slipped a discarded robe beneath his head, the young gladiator stood by him, thinking, thinking. Then suddenly Leo sauntered over to him.

"They are in truth a pretty crew, Marcus!" he remarked, nodding towards

the captured pirates who stood scowling morosely at their guards. "They look as happy as an arena lion who has swallowed a gladiator with all his armour on. But what ails you, good friend? Why do you stand and stare at this knave, whom I presume is Strongbow?"

Marcus looked his friend in the face, and Leo started, and instantly grew serious as he saw the agony that was in his friend's eyes.

"He says he is my father, Leo," the gladiator said, in a low tone.

"What!" Leo's jaw dropped, and he stared at Marcus as though he doubted his sanity. "Your father?" he gasped. "Impossible!"

Marcus gave a troubled shake of his head.

"That is where you are wrong, Leo," he answered huskily. "It is not, alas! impossible. You knowest the mystery that is connected with my true parentage?"

Leo uttered an incredulous cry. "But, this man—this pirate, thief, and—and murderer," he stammered, "cannot surely be—"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 656.

"Hush!" Marcus warned. "Let none of the men hear you! Listen! I will explain!"

Quietly, he told his chum how Strongbow had seen the tattooed serpent upon his arm, and instantly cried out that he was his son—the son whom he swore had been stolen from him and taken he knew not where.

Leo's rugged face grew graver as he listened. Like Marcus, he had to admit that, to make such a statement, the pirate must have known that the young gladiator's parentage was a closed book to him. And in that case, if he were not really his father, as he declared, how had he gained such knowledge?

"By Hercules, if what he says is right, what will you do?" Leo asked, in sympathy, as he looked down at the prostrate rover.

"As yet, I do not know," Marcus answered, with something very like a groan, for he was thinking of Eunice. "It would be a terrible position. But I am hoping against hope that I can prove he lied to me for his own ends."

"Let us hope he did!" Leo exclaimed fervently. And, knowing how loyal a friend he was, Marcus warmly but silently pressed his hand.

Marcus gave orders for Strongbow to be carried on board the Conqueror, and the command had scarce been complied with than the pirate chief regained his senses. Marcus and Leo had followed him on board, and the former came to the secluded part of the ship where he had been taken immediately he knew the man was conscious.

"My boy!" the pirate said huskily, as he looked up and found the gladiator standing over him.

The young man's eyes were hard and his handsome face set sternly. He seated himself upon a coil of rope by the pirate's side, searching his bearded face with a keen glance.

"You didst make an extraordinary statement," he said quietly. "I knowest not as yet whether or no to place any credence in your words. Canst give any proof that you spoke the truth?"

"I am your father, as I declared," Strongbow answered eagerly. "Listen, and I will convince you, my son. Thou knowest not the meaning of the symbol upon your arm?"

Marcus shook his head. He felt that proof of the rover's words was coming, and could not trust himself to speak.

"Then I will tell you," Strongbow went on. "Five-and-twenty years ago I was a wealthy and influential citizen of Rome. I fell in love with one of my slaves, set her free, and made her my wife. It was soon after this that I began to realise the injustice of the system of enslaving our conquered foes that was in force then, and still prevails to-day.

"Perhaps it was your mother's influence that made me look at life from a different standpoint. She was a very good woman, and felt keenly on the subject. Soon I found myself feeling and thinking as strongly as she, and I spoke to other citizens—my friends and acquaintances—and converted many to my views.

"Eventually, we planned to form a league which should have for its object the suppression of slavery. We realised from the first that our work would have to be carried out secretly, and looked about for some sign or symbol by which one member should know another; for soon we had many followers, and feared that spies would creep into our midst and betray us to the emperor.

"In those days I possessed a ring of twisted gold, formed in the shape of a serpent, similar to that depicted upon your arm. It was decided that every member should be supplied with a ring of this design, and that it should be the symbol of our society, which we then determined to call the 'League of the Snake.'

"Then, later, to rely upon the fact of a person owning such a ring as a sign of good faith became too dangerous. Our numbers had immensely increased, and the peril of spies and traitors betraying us thus grew greater. A Greek amongst us—an expert in the art—made the suggestion that our sign should be tattooed upon the arm of every member of the league, so that, at our meetings, all present could display it. It was a safer and surer method of identification of membership, and was adopted.

"Then you were born, and it was your mother's dearest wish that you should be brought up in our beliefs and urged to follow our aims. At her request the sign of our league was tattooed upon your arm by the Greek, and we used to dream and wonder if you would one day become a great worker in our cause, and, perhaps, lead a great movement to put down the inhuman cruelties and injustices our vanquished enemies were submitted to.

"But, alas! our league was soon afterwards broken up. Who betrayed us we never knew, but we were betrayed; and there started a series of vicious persecutions against the more important members of the league. Your mother was assassinated—undoubtedly by the emperor's orders—and you were stolen one day whilst out with your nurse.

"I began to have the city scoured for you, my son, but within twenty-four hours I and other members were fleeing for our lives. The emperor had taken open action against us, and given his soldiers orders to slay us.

"Many did fall beneath their swords, but I and a few others escaped to Africa, and have been exiled ever since."

He shook his head sadly as he paused. "The murder of my wife and the loss of you, my son, embittered me, and made me feel that my hand was turned against all mankind. Just how I drifted into becoming a pirate need not be gone into. I am just that—a man who has been driven into being an outlaw."

The face of the young gladiator had grown more bloodless and strained as he listened. Already, it seemed, there was proof enough that Strongbow was his father, yet there was more to come.

"Take my sleeve and roll it up, my son," Strongbow said. "You will find upon my arm the sign of the league, even as it appears on your own."

With trembling fingers Marcus mechanically obeyed him, and he caught his breath in sharply as he found that the tattooed serpent was indeed imprinted just above Strongbow's elbow.

Inwardly, the lad groaned. There was no doubt left in his mind. The man was his father, as he vowed.

"Come, my son!" the rover urged. "You will not take me back to Rome now that you knowest this? Think—think! We should arrive just prior to the summer games, and when they commenced, if I were not cast to the lions, Nero might crucify me or make me a human torch."

"Hold!" Marcus whispered hoarsely, shuddering at the vision that had risen before his eyes.

He had once seen a poor wretch covered with pitch, bound to a stake, and set blazing. It was, perhaps, the worst of the fiendish cruelties Nero's command brought down upon criminals or on those who displeased him.

Marcus rose to his feet and paced the deck. One vision had been replaced by another—the sweet, trusting face of Eunice, the girl for whom he would willingly have laid down his life—and Nero's inhuman words came back to him, seeming to hammer into his brain.

If he failed to bring Strongbow back before the summer games started "Eunice's wedding would take place in the arena!" That was what the emperor had said, and Marcus knew well enough that he would not waver in such a decision. He revelled in cruelty, and would delight in forcing him to be present, that he might watch his agony of mind when the girl was thrust into the arena and the famished lions—they would be starved for several days previously—were loosed upon her.

That must not—should not happen. Yet, to deliver his own father over to a similar or worse fate to save her was a course no son could contemplate pursuing. Was man ever before placed in so terrible a position? What was he to do? To save his beloved would be to yield up his father. To shield him, meant indirectly murdering Eunice. What could he decide—what could he do? He felt that he was hovering upon the borderline of insanity—that something must soon snap in his brain and leave him mad.

For a full twenty minutes the young gladiator continued to stride to and fro, his handsome face drawn and haggard, and his chin sunk upon his breast.

Strongbow's eyes followed him anxiously, eagerly; and once, when they met his, Marcus saw that they were full of appeal.

At length Marcus paused in his pacing, and in a voice that was husky and unlike his own, addressed the pirate.

"I can come to no decision yet," he said. "But if thou givest me your word that you will not attempt to escape I will free your hands. I cannot keep my own father a prisoner."

"I swear by the shade of my mother that I will remain on the vessel, make no attempt to leave it, and abide by your wishes, my son," Strongbow answered earnestly; and, drawing his sword, Marcus cut through the thongs that lashed the pirate's wrists together behind his back.

With his head still bowed Marcus walked away.

There was much to do. Doubtless, on the island would be a hoard of valuables the pirates had taken from ships they had held up and plundered, and this must be searched for.

He called Leo to him, and instructed him to pick six men to go with them on the expedition.

Glad to have something to do, Leo quickly gathered them together, a small boat was lowered, and the sailors tumbled into it. Marcus and Leo followed, and the little craft was propelled towards the island.

Within a few minutes its keel was grating upon the sandy beach. The two gladiators sprang ashore, the men followed, and the boat was drawn out of reach of the waves. Then, with Marcus and Leo leading, the search-party wended its way towards the rocks and waving palms inland.

During practically all the morning they were engaged upon their task.

After forcing their way through a stretch of stunted bush they came upon a low range of hills, which were virtually honeycombed with caves, any of which would be suitable to hold such booty as the pirates might have collected and stored away.

Cave after cave Marcus and his companions entered and inspected. Expecting they might find something of the kind, the gladiator had ordered the men to bring torches with them, and they had ignited these and carried them.

It was arduous work. Many of the caves extended far into the heart of the hills, winding tortuously, and they were compelled to penetrate to their extreme end before they could satisfy themselves that nothing was concealed in their depths.

As luck would have it, they met with no success until they entered almost the last of the caverns.

This was considerably larger than any of its fellows, and its mouth lay in a deep hollow amongst the rocks. They came near to missing it altogether, for it was hidden from their view as they approached by a gigantic boulder which was poised on the brink of the hollow directly facing the cave's opening.

Marcus and Leo examined the huge rock as they reached it. As the latter put out his hand and touched it it rocked and trembled upon the ledge of stone on which it rested, and, as, considering its weight and bulk, it could hardly have been placed there by human means, it formed one of Nature's phenomena, and a remarkable one at that.

It must have been poised there through countless ages, yet both Marcus and his friend felt sure, as they inspected it, that a vigorous push would send it crashing into the hollow, to completely block the mouth of the cavern. As they entered the cave Leo glanced back at the great mass of stone, and, to the amusement of the men, made a wry face at it.

"'Twould be awkward for us if that knave acted scurvily and fell off its perch whilst we're searching for riches and booty that probably are not in the cavern," he said quaintly.

"As it has no doubt been there for thousands of years, it would be cruel luck for us, Leo," Marcus answered drily. "Methinks, at all events, it will condescend to remain there until we are safely out again."

They filed into the gloomy mouth of the cavern, their torches held above their heads. The flickering flames threw eerie shadows on the rocky walls, and their footfalls went echoing weirdly and hollowly away into the unknown depths.

Marcus had begun to doubt if the pirates had their possible hoard stored on this island at all, and was half-expecting this last search to be barren of result like the rest. But as they swung round a sharp curve in the cave's walls he saw that he was wrong.

A cry had broken from Leo, for simultaneously he, too, had seen what his friend had seen. The cavern suddenly widened, and had been formed into an enormous store-room.

Goods and valuables lay about on every side. There were bales of costly silks, cases of wine, boxes, and casks of provisions, and others, which when they opened them, proved to contain gold-dust, costly gold and silver ornaments, and jewellery. There seemed no end to the vast hoard. As they examined it with fascinated eyes, they realised that it was not simply a vast fortune, but represented many vast fortunes piled into one.

Marcus began to give orders for some of the lighter and more costly treasures to be carried then and there out of the cave and taken back to the Conqueror, when suddenly he stopped and stood rigid, listening.

"Didst hear anything?" he asked of Leo.

"Methought I heard a groan, Marcus," the other gladiator answered. "Perhaps it was imagination. These caves are full of strange sounds, and—"

His voice was abruptly silenced. The sound that both he and his friend had had the impression they had heard before had reached them again, and this time both knew that they had made no mistake.

It was the groan of a human being, low but very distinct, and it came from beyond the heap of goods, and lay in the shadows where the cave narrowed once more and continued on into the hills.

Marcus was the first to spring into activity. He started to fling aside the boxes and casks, and made a passage through the hoard. With his torch held above his head, he advanced into the narrow opening, and almost stumbled over a dark figure lying in the shadows.

Next moment Leo and the sailors had joined him, and in the combined glare of their torches a shocking and startling spectacle was revealed.

An elderly man lay on the uneven floor of the cave secured by a stout chain attached to a staple driven into the rocky wall. His clothing had grown so ragged that it left him partially naked, and he was so thin and emaciated that his ribs seemed in danger of penetrating through his skin.

His hair was as white as snow, as was his beard, which reached to his waist. His eyes were sunken, and held a dreadful hopelessness. Like his body, his face was so fleshless that it gave one the impression of that of a mummy. He looked up at them with an expression in his eyes like that seen sometimes in those of a tortured animal.

"Put me out of my misery," he moaned. "Why do you keep me here in torment? I beg of you to slay me and end my sufferings."

"We have come to rescue you," Marcus said gently, as he fell upon one knee and quickly examined the chain and the iron circlet by which it was attached to the unfortunate creature's waist. "We do not belong to the pirates. We have vanquished them, and will take you back to our ship, and later to Rome."

The old man uttered a cry of mingled amazement and gladness, and stared up into the handsome face above him as though he doubted the evidence of his senses. Then, seizing Marcus' hand, he kissed it in a pathetic gratitude.

"May the gods be blessed for their goodness to me!" he sobbed, completely breaking down. "I am to see the free world—the light of day again! I can scarce believe it; yet you have a good face, and I feel you have not deceived me to add to my wretchedness!"

"Nay," Marcus assured him, still speaking with a curious tenderness. "What I tellest you is true. We shall take you back to our ship and Rome."

"To Rome! Nay, I canst not go there!" the prisoner muttered. "Though it is near a score of years ago since the league I formed was discovered by the emperor, and I was compelled to fly to escape his wrath, it will not be forgotten, and I must remain an exile."

Marcus regarded him in surprise. "Do you mean the league for the suppression of slavery—the League of the Snake?" he asked sharply. "Methought

the man who is now a pirate, Strongbow, was the founder of that, and—"

"Strongbow lies!" the old man exclaimed vehemently. "He was once my friend, but never in agreement with my aims. It was I, Anthony of Antium, who formed the league which, after a time, was betrayed by a traitor to the emperor. Strongbow—Bah! He is a black-hearted scoundrel who wouldst enslave his own mother if it suited his purpose! He possessed a ship, and at the time, soon after my wife was murdered and I was seeking to fly from Rome, he bargained with me to assign to him my whole fortune in return for a passage to Africa. I agreed, but when he had the vessel upon the high seas and my wealth in his possession, he admitted that he, too, had had to escape from the city, because he was sought for a robbery he had committed."

He gasped for breath. He was very weak, and seemed kept up only by a fierce excitement.

"He suggested we should turn pirates, and when I objected and threatened to make known his intentions on reaching Alexandria he made me a prisoner, brought me to this island, and has kept me here through the long, weary years that have elapsed since. He is a man who takes pleasure in torturing others, and has refused to listen when I have pleaded with him to make an end of me!"

Marcus was thrilling with excitement and new hope. His voice shook as he asked a question that meant more to him than life and death.

"Tell me," he said, "didst you have a baby, a son, who, near the time of your wife's assassination, was stolen from you?"

"Why, yes. But how came you to knowest this?"

Marcus could have cried out aloud in his relief. To his joy, he realised that Strongbow had merely been tricking and deceiving him. He knew, too, that his real father lay before him now; that he was Anthony of Antium, not Strongbow, the pirate and murderer.

Strongbow had seen that the fight was going badly against his men—seen this just as his eyes fell upon the tattooed snake on Marcus' arm, and he was forced to the conclusion that the gladiator, amazing though it might seem, was the son of the man he had kept a prisoner for so many years upon the island.

The lad signed to Leo to hold his torch near. Then silently he showed the old man the symbol upon his arm. Anthony of Antium stared at it for a moment without speaking, though he drew a sharp breath. Then he raised his eyes to the gladiator's face and understood.

"You—you are my son!" he gasped.

"Yes," Marcus answered simply; and he drew the wasted figure of his father into his strong arms.

Strongbow's Triumph.

SUPPORTING the weak and tottering figure of his father, Marcus was slowly leading the way from the cavern. In respectful silence Leo and the sailors followed, bearing their torches to light the way.

Some tools had been found amongst the pirate's hoard, and, with the help of Leo, Marcus had managed to strike the iron circlet from about his father's waist. He was so feeble that he was only able to walk with the lad's assistance, and his joy at being freed and at the same time being reunited to the boy he had

(Continued on page 20.)

BY NERO'S COMMAND.

(Continued from page 19)

thought lost to him for ever, was pitiful to witness. He was smiling wanly, and tears were running, unchecked, down his ashen, sunken cheeks.

Marcus' expression was grim and hard. But for the thought that Strongbow would be more than punished in Rome he would have enacted from him a swift payment for his villainy. It worried Marcus a little to think that he had left the pirate chief free upon the ship; but he consoled himself with the conviction that, although his hands were released, he would be closely watched by the sailors. A shock awaited him, however, as the little party neared the mouth of the cave.

He was explaining to his father how Strongbow had led him to believe that he was his son, and that he—the pirate—was the originator of the league for the putting-down of slavery in Rome, and he gave a start as he heard Leo let out a startled cry, and found his friend leaping past him.

The mouth of the cavern was some fifteen yards ahead, and, although he had gone ere Marcus looked in its direction, Leo had seen the figure of a man framed in the opening.

To his consternation, Marcus' friend had recognised him as Strongbow, whom he understood in a flash must have contrived to dive from the Conqueror and swim ashore.

With a terrible fear gripping at his heart, Leo raced for the opening of the cavern as the pirate swiftly disappeared. But he was too late.

There was a rumbling sound, and, whilst Leo was still a few feet from the exit of the cave, the thunder of rock crashing against rock.

The daylight was blotted out, and a hundred echoes rumbled away through the cavern, sounding to Leo like a death knell, as he beat impotently upon the mass of rock that was before him.

Strongbow had heaved the gigantic swinging boulder from its perch, and it had thudded down into the hollow and entirely blocked the mouth of the cave. They were entombed alive!

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