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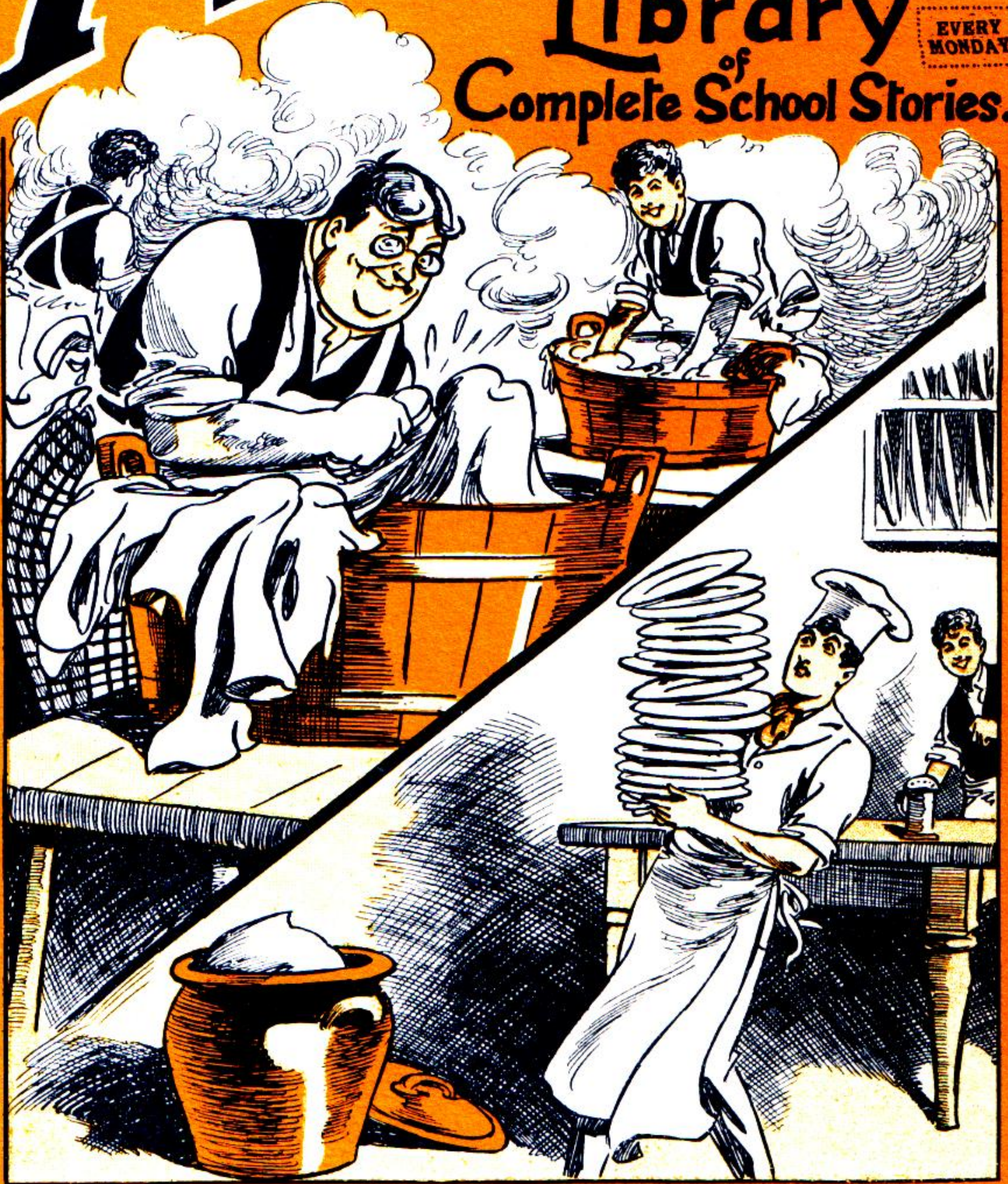
(See Inside.)

No. 857. Vol. XXVI.

Week Ending July 12th, 1924.

The Magnet 2d

Library **EVERY MONDAY**
of Complete School Stories.



HARRY WHARTON & CO. IN THE "LOWER REGIONS!"

"THE SCHOOLBOY DOMESTICS!" and GRAND NEW SERIAL
— in this issue —

Published by Howard Baker Press Ltd, 27a Arterberry Road, Wimbledon, London, S. W. 20.





Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his chums. Write to him when you are in trouble or need advice. A stamped and addressed envelope will ensure a speedy reply. Letters should be addressed "The Editor," THE MAGNET LIBRARY, The Amalgamated Press (1922), Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

MAGNET MOUNTS!

OUR Competition is going ahead under full steam. Anybody who raises an objection to the employment of the term steam in this connection is perfectly at liberty to do so. Of course, the splendid Royal Enfield bicycle which goes to a prize-winner every week is a machine which relies on sinew for speed. But, however you take it, there's not a doubt but that the new MAGNET Competition is a splendid business.

THAT BIKE!

Think of it! Pretty nearly everybody is the better for a spin on a bike. Talk about a giddy Rolls-Royce, why, it is not in it! Get fat and somnolent in a car if you chose, but for brawn and brain the bike is the thing. And the MAGNET is equipping one reader a week with a bicycle of the best make, a machine which will take hills and amble off into the attractive country, thus giving the right touch to a half-holiday. This MAGNET opportunity is a golden one. You should enter for the competition right away. This is only a reminder, you know. There is a bike going every week, and it may be your turn next. So send in your entry. I should have a lot more to say on this point, but this is a Chat column, not a bicycle corner. Even if you have a good workable "wheel," it is just as well to have a second steed in the stable, as the old one may cast a tyre, or a tube may go on strike. So make a note of this chance.

"SHERWOOD GOLD!"

By Francis Warwick.

No words from me are really called for on the subject of this topping yarn of good old Sherwood. It has the real atmosphere of the greenwood; and next Monday's instalment again introduces Robin Hood, the chivalric chieftain who, with his merry men, made mincemeat of a good many nefarious plots against truth and fair play in the bygone days. We are all of us glad to get back to such a romance of Old England, with its colour and glamour and heroism in the distant times when King Richard of the Lion Heart was on the Throne. In this stirring serial of "Sherwood Gold," as a backbone to the theme introducing young Tom Hadleigh, we find what is happening in England whilst King Richard is away on the Third Crusade, and we see how old Robin Hood in his forest sanctuary stood for the absent king and for the oppressed. Robin Hood, Earl of Huntingdon, was a

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king's man right through the whole shining story of derring-do.

"THE PARTING OF THE WAYS!"

By Frank Richards.

There are many misapprehensions floating round regarding the detail and the duties appertaining to an Editor's job. I have no time to go into all that now, but I am at liberty to point out that the grand yarn of Harry Wharton & Co., down for our next week's issue, has been largely inspired by tips from trusty readers. Over and over again I have had requests for more of Redwing. Tom Redwing is a character who has always been appreciated. That's why he figures conspicuously in our next number.

A STORY OF FRIENDSHIP!

To my mind Mr. Frank Richards is never in happier vein than when he gets going on a real character tale such as this. We see life as it really is, life with its sadness and its myriad doubts, with some of those strange promptings of the heart which seem to take the whole direction of a life at times. How many partings of the ways there have been! Friendships snapped through some miserable little mistake, an error which we imagine in our limited vision should never have been. But things are not quite as we see them. That's just where the puzzle comes in. The new story strikes just the right note of sincerity which Magnetites like, and the

treatment of a difficult theme is of the kind that goes right home—makes one think, not unpleasantly either, as one cons over the dilemma of Tom Redwing.

TRUE AS STEEL!

That's Tom Redwing. The wonder to me is that anybody should feel surprised concerning the dominant factors in the mental make-up of Redwing's character. He is a son of the sea, and near neighbourhood to the deep, and what it stands for spells no end in the formation of a character. You will get wondering as you read our remarkably fine Greyfriars tale next Monday morning whether Vernon-Smith really felt it worth while to get his way, for in following his own plan and his special silly ambition he "does in" the friendship which existed between him and Tom. Now, nothing can compensate for the loss of a real friendship. You may win tons of money by playing false, or get pitchforked on to some giddy worldly pinnacle, but that sort of reward won't make good what you have lost in the time of reckoning up and the balancing of the books, as it were. The new tale is great, and I shall leave it at that.

A "CONTENTMENT" SUPPLEMENT!

Don't for the love of Mike get imagining that the new issue of the "Greyfriars Herald" deals merely in prosy plagiarisms from the placid philosophers and the mealy-mouthed moralisers who like to rub in obvious facts. To some people contentment suggests something in the vegetable line with green moss sauce. A popular error this. Discontent need not be ruled out, although a fellow feels fairly well satisfied. Take the priceless case of dear old Bunter. He is an object lesson. The new issue has sparkling asides, and its wisdom is unexcelled. Fail not to study the pearls of wit which have been supplied lavishly by the Greyfriars staff.

A WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY.

Our cheery little coloured Companion Paper, "Jungle Jinks" starts this week—in its issue dated July 12th—a splendid new series of cigarette pictures of foreign birds and animals. All collectors should make a note of the fact. The set is unique.

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A Detective Story of Liverpool and London, introducing Sexton Blake, Tinker, and Topper.

NOW ON SALE! PRICE 4d. EACH!

The members of the Remove at Greyfriars have turned their hands to many things in the past, but up to the present domestic work has been given a "miss." With the whole of the domestic staff down with "flu," however, it falls upon Harry Wharton & Co. to step into their shoes, temporarily, at any rate. Their adventures in the "lower regions" are weird and wonderful.



The Schoolboy Domestics!

A Magnificent New
Long Complete Story
of Harry Wharton
& Co., of Greyfriars.
.. By ..
FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Good News!

"IT'S rotten!"
Bob Cherry of the Remove made the remark to his chums, Harry Wharton & Co., known to fame as the Famous Five.

"The rottenfulness of the esteemed and ludicrous situation is terrific!" murmured Hurree Singh, in his weird and wonderful English.

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Still, it can't be helped," he said. "These things will happen in the best regulated schools."

"I suppose so," said Frank Nugent lugubriously.

The Famous Five were standing at the top of the School House steps looking out into the quad. It was a glorious afternoon and a half-holiday. But Greyfriars had fallen under the evil influence of the demon influenza. Practically the whole of the domestic staff were "down" with the 'flu, and the school sanny was packed to overflowing with juniors and seniors alike.

"It's rotten!" growled Bob Cherry.

His chums nodded moodily. They were entirely in agreement with the sturdy Bob. Thus far they had escaped the ever growing tentacles of the complaint that had swept over Greyfriars like a scourge, but there was no telling when one of them would fall a victim. But it was not that prospect that worried the Co. It was the fact that Greyfriars had been placed in quarantine, so to speak. The Head had decreed that no junior or senior should leave the precincts of the school. Beyond the school gates was "out of bounds."

"How long is this going to last?" said Johnny Bull. "I'm fed-up with it already. I shall die of monotony if something doesn't happen soon."

"Hear, hear!"

That seemed to be the general opinion of the Famous Five.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Dr. Short said we should be in quarantine for three weeks," said Harry Wharton miserably.

"Oh, my hat! One week will be enough for me," groaned Bob Cherry. "No walks, no boating or swimming, no picnics, no—"

"I say, Wharton, old chap!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" boomed Bob Cherry. "Here's Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Cherry!" said Billy Bunter, blinking at the sturdy junior through his big spectacles. "Have you heard the news?"

"What, has your celebrated postal-order arrived at last?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, Cherry, I am, as a matter of fact, expecting a postal-order from one of my titled relations, you know," said Bunter cautiously. "Expect it will be for a quid."

"Make it sixpence," grinned Frank Nugent.

"There's nothing doing, anyway," said Harry Wharton, smiling. "We aren't cashing any postal-orders, old fat lard tub. We're stony!"

"'Tain't that," said Bunter. "I don't want you to cash my postal-order for me."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Wonders will never cease!"

"Really, Cherry!" said Billy Bunter indignantly. "But, I say, you know it's a shame."

"I should think it is," said Bob Cherry, eyeing the fat junior critically. "They ought to have put you in a museum years ago. You're not going to tell me that you've realised at last what a blot on the landscape you are?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!" exclaimed the Owl of the Remove. "Yah! I won't tell you that the Head's decided that we are to help with the domestic work now. You rotters are never serious."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter's idea of keeping a thing to himself struck the Removites as being decidedly funny. They could not help laughing.

But Bunter's announcement had aroused their interest.

"What's that about helping in the

domestic work, Bunter?" said Harry Wharton.

"Eh? Then you know all about it?" said Bunter, blinking at the Co. in turn.

"No, you fat idiot!" grinned Harry Wharton. "We only know what you told us just now."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a shame!" said the fat junior indignantly. "Just as if I'm going to help with washing up the crocks, scrubbing the floors, and all that? It's all very well for old Quelchy and the Head to sit tight and watch us do all the work. But I'm not having any. I'm not a blessed domestic servant. I'm a—"

"Fat old lard barrel!" grinned Nugent. "No need to tell us that, Bunter. We've got eyes for ourselves."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The fatfulness of the esteemed and ludicrous lard barrel is terrific!"

"Oh, really, Inky!" exclaimed Billy Bunter peevishly. "You might be content to wash up dirty dishes, scrub floors, fetch coals and things; you never were particular, you know. But I'm not going to put up with it. I have my dignity to consider. What would my titled relations say if they saw me on my hands and knees, for instance, scrubbing a floor?"

"They'd say that it was good soap wasted," chuckled Johnny Bull. "Your neck needs a scrub more than the floors do."

"Yah!"

Bunter's retort was expressive if not polite.

"It's a jolly good idea, if what Bunter says is true," said Bob Cherry, at length. "Rather fun taking on the domestic work of the school. Break the monotony, anyway."

"And the crockery, too," grinned Nugent. "There are some exciting scenes ahead, I'm thinking."

"Yes, rather!"

Bunter's news had had the effect of restoring the Famous Five's good spirits. They would welcome even domestic work as a change from the present monotony

of life. Better than mooching around the school enclosures doing nothing.

"I suppose the fat idiot isn't telling us a whopper?" said Harry Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton," exclaimed the fat junior indignantly. "You might take a fellow's word."

"How did you hear about it, then?"

"Quelchy told me," said Billy Bunter promptly.

"Eh!"

"I mean—ahem—the Head—that is to say, I overheard Mr. Quelch talking to the Head," added the Owl hastily. "The study door was open, and I happened to be passing down the passage. Of course, I couldn't help hearing what the silly jossers were saying."

"Of course not," grinned Bob Cherry. "Bootlaces will come undone, won't they, Bunter?"

"Really, Cherry. But it's a shame, anyway," said Bunter warmly. "And I'm not going to soil my hands with blessed domestic work."

"But what about the cooking?" said Nugent. "We shall want a cook. Cooky was taken to the sanny this morning."

Billy Bunter's fat face brightened considerably.

"I never thought of that," he admitted. "Of course, in the circumstances, I should be willing to take over the cook's duties. After all, in a case like

this, you know, I believe in every chap putting his hand to the wheel, as Shakespeare said."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter's indignation had melted away like snow before the sun. In fact, he was now very eager to take over some domestic work—in the kitchen. The Owl lived, moved, and had his being, so to speak, where food was concerned.

Clang, clang!

"Hallo, there's old Quelch's bell!" boomed Bob Cherry.

"Come on, chaps," said Harry Wharton, starting along the passage to the Form-room. "We shall know how much of Bunter's yarn is true in a few minutes."

"I say, Wharton—Cherry," gasped Bunter, rolling after the Famous Five. "Wait for me, you know. I'll do the cooking. Quelch's going to put you in charge, Wharton, old chap. Wait for me!"

But Harry Wharton & Co. heard and heeded not. Mr. Quelch was a very punctilious gentleman, and despite the fact that it was a half-holiday, a summons from a Form master could not be disregarded with impunity.

"Beasts!" yelled Billy Bunter, waddling after Harry Wharton & Co. "Yah! I'm blowed if I'll do the cooking!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Call for Volunteers!

THE Removites from all parts of the school came pouring into the Form-room in answer to the summons, discussing among themselves the reason for such a procedure on a half-holiday. But the chattering died away as the majestic figure of Dr. Locke stalked into the Remove class-room accompanied by Mr. Quelch.

There was an anxious and worried expression on the face of the Head that was at once observed by the Remove, and which found reflection, as it were, in the face of Mr. Horace Quelch.

A pin could have been heard to drop as Dr. Locke mounted the platform and surveyed the Form.

"My boys," he said, "I have asked Mr. Quelch to summon you here in order to ask your co-operation in the scheme which your Form master has suggested to me. You are all aware of the fact that this scourge of influenza that has suddenly descended in our midst has robbed us gradually of our domestic staff. Indeed, the cook was taken to the sanatorium only this morning. Greyfriars will have to carry on under difficulties until such time as we can show a clean bill of health. No doubt you are aware that it is impossible for me to engage a new staff, owing to the infectiousness of the complaint, and that to keep the school clean and wholesome I need help."

The Head paused for breath, and glanced at Mr. Quelch.

"Your Form master has suggested that you boys would be willing to take over the domestic duties of the school," continued Dr. Locke.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Great Scott!"

That piece of news came as a bombshell to the majority of the Remove. They hung on the Head's next words.

"Mr. Quelch thinks that you are capable of performing such duties, for he informs me that, from his past experience of camping with you, the Remove is very proficient in culinary and domestic arts."

"Hurrah!"

"To some of you, perhaps," continued the Head, "the work might be irksome. It is not my intention to appeal to those boys. But upon those who are willing to help us—help Greyfriars—I would call for volunteers."

A forest of hands shot into the air before Dr. Locke's words had concluded, and a low murmur of suppressed excitement ran through the ranks of the Remove.

The Head and Mr. Quelch smiled slightly as they noted this show of enthusiasm.

"I am glad to see such a sporting spirit amongst my boys," said Dr. Locke. "The work, mark you, will be hard—very hard. There will be cooking, cleaning—everything, in fact, that the domestic staff would do in the ordinary course of events. But the volunteers will be excused lessons."

The latter announcement was received with cheers.

"Hurrah!"

"I will leave Wharton to draw up a list of names of volunteers," continued the Head. "He will allot you boys to your various tasks. The work will be carried on under the supervision of Mr. Quelch. I feel sure that the Remove will live up to the reputation he has accorded it."

And, with a kindly smile, the venerable Head of Greyfriars swept from the Form-room in earnest conversation with Mr. Quelch. He left behind him

A MAGNIFICENT "ROYAL ENFIELD" BICYCLE GIVEN AWAY FREE EVERY WEEK!

MAGNET "Characters" Competition!



EASY AS FALLING OFF A LOG! RIDE YOUR OWN BIKE AND SEE THE COUNTRY IN COMFORT!

This is one of the simplest competitions ever put before MAGNET readers. All you have to do, chums, is to take the name,

HARRY WHARTON,

and, starting with any three letters in it, make up a phrase about this world-famous character. For instance, R, R, T, could make "Removes Remove's Tyrants."

Remember that the initial letters of each word of your effort must be contained in the words Harry Wharton, although you may use any other letters of the alphabet to follow, and also use the same letters more than once.

When you have thought out a good answer fill in the coupon below, taking care to write your effort and your name and address clearly, and post it to "Harry Wharton," "Characters" Competition, THE MAGNET LIBRARY, Gough House, Gough Square, E.C. 4, so as to reach that address not later than July 21st, 1924.

To the sender of the best answer will be awarded a magnificent "Royal Enfield" Bicycle.

The excellence of the effort will consist in its apt relation to the character named. You may send in as many attempts as you like, but all efforts must be written on the proper entrance form.

The decision of the Editor of MAGNET must be accepted as final in all matters, and entries are only accepted on this condition.

MAGNET "CHARACTERS" COMPETITION.
(Harry Wharton.)

Write your effort here.....

I enter the MAGNET "Characters" Competition, and I agree to accept the Editor's decision as final.

Signed

Address

In the event of my winning, I prefer a Lady's—Gent's—Bicycle. Cross out the word not applicable.

Another "Royal Enfield" Bicycle Offered Next Week!

a crowd of excited Removites, all talking and laughing.

"Oh, my giddy aunt!"

"My hat!"

"Waal, I swow!"

Harry Wharton pushed his way to the Form master's desk and mounted it.

"Gentlemen of the Remove," he began.

"Hear, hear!"

"On with the washing!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gentlemen of the Remove!" roared Wharton.

"You mean domestics of the Remove," chuckled Harold Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gentlemen of the Remove!" again roared Wharton. "We'll start with the cooking staff. By a show of hands we'll elect our chef. Have any of you the cheek to say you're jolly good cooks?"

"I say, Wharton, you beast—I mean, old chap," piped Bill Bunter—"I'm a jolly good cook. Best in the Remove bar none."

"Best barrel, you mean!"

"Oh, really, Squiff!"

"Hands up for Bunter as the Remove's chef!" called out Harry Wharton.

One hand went up, followed by another. And both hands belonged to Billy Bunter.

"Carried unanimously—I don't think!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I'll put it to the vote," smiled Harry Wharton. "Whom do you reckon is the most capable and reliable cook in the Remove?"

Many were the names put forward by the excited Removites, but the loudest demand was for Mark Linley, the Lancashire junior.

"It seems as though Mark Linley will have to don the cap and apron," said Harry Wharton. "Now, then, hands up for Mark Linley!"

The scholarship junior's reputation as a cook was well known and appreciated in the Remove. Linley had roughed it in the days gone by, and was a first-rate cook. A forest of hands signalled that Linley was the first candidate for the post of honour, and Mark Linley was duly appointed.

"Hurrah!" shouted the Removites, when the appointment was conferred with mock ceremony. "No scraggy portions, Linley, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll do my best," smiled Mark Linley. "But I shall want a staff to assist me, you know. I can't wash the spuds and peel them and cook the joints and cook the pies and—"

"Oh, help!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Don't fancy your job, Mark. Heaven help you if the beef is underdone, or the potatoes not salted!"

"Really, you chaps, I think I ought to be Linley's right-hand man," said Billy Bunter. "I could do the pastry."

"Do it in, you mean," said Skinner, at which there was a fresh peal of laughter.

"Squiff, Ogilvy, and Redwing. How's that for kitchen-hands?" bellowed Harry Wharton. "They're all fellows who have had to cook for themselves in the past. And if they can eat their own cooking, I suppose we can."

"What a flattering compliment!" grinned Squiff. "Right-ho! I'll take on the job, Wharton."

"Same here," said Ogilvy and Redwing in unison.

The captain of the Remove entered the names on his list.

"But what about me?" roared Bunter indignantly. "I'm jolly well not going to be left out!"



"Yarooop! Hellup! Fire! Murder!" roared Bunter, making ineffectual attempts to clamber out of the wash tub. "Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled the juniors. "Lend a hand, you fellows," grinned Wharton, grabbing the fat junior by the slack of his capacious breeches. "Heave-ho!" Gasping and spluttering the Owl was pulled from the tub. (See Chapter 3.)

"Your little mistake, Bunter—you are!"

"Yah! 'Tain't fair! I shall go to Quelch about it! I'll go to the Head! I'll go to—"

"Jericho!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"But shut up, for goodness' sake!"

"Hear, hear! Ring off, Bunter!"

Snorting with indignation, the Owl of the Remove subsided. During that period of grace Harry Wharton called for volunteers to make the beds in all the dormitories and to keep the dormitories clean. Volunteers were speedily forthcoming, their enthusiasm to assist no doubt prompted by the reason that there would be no lessons for the volunteers.

At length practically every task borne in the ordinary course of events by the domestic staff was allotted to a group of juniors. There remained now only to decide the laundry department and the "washers up" for the kitchen.

Wun Lung, Tom Ditton, Oliver Kipps, and Micky Desmond volunteered for the latter job—it being the lesser of the two evils, according to Micky Desmond. But volunteers for the laundry department were not easily obtained.

There was plenty of laundry work to keep the rest of the Remove busy every day of the week, but those "without jobs" were inclined to fight shy of it. Washing, wringing, and ironing was hard work; they were out for a "cushy" time.

"Well, somebody's got to do it," said Harry Wharton at length. "In fact, I think we'll all turn our hands to the wash, as it were."

"I'm jolly well not going to slave away at a wash-tub!" roared Billy Bunter.

"Neither am I!" exclaimed Harold Skinner.

"Well, you can please yourselves, anyway!" returned Wharton. "The chaos who don't volunteer will have to do lessons with old Prout in the Fifth."

That soon decided the remainder of the Removites, and even silenced Billy Bunter. Anything was better than sitting in a stuffy Form-room swotting under the eagle eye of Mr. Prout.

"Then everything's settled," said Harry Wharton. "We'll show the rest of the school what the Remove can do."

"Hear, hear!"

The meeting broke up, while Harry Wharton went along to Mr. Quelch's study and presented his list. He returned to the Remove Form-room about five minutes later.

"Everything's O.K. Mr. Quelch begs the Remove to commence their duties right away," he announced.

"But it's a half-holiday!" roared Skinner.

"Shut up, Skinner! You're always grouching," said Vernon-Smith.

The cad of the Remove subsided into silence as several of the Removites glanced at him sharply. It was a case of work at the wash-tubs or work in the Form-room. And Skinner wisely decided that the former offered the best opportunities for slacking.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

On with the Washing!

THE "kitchen" staff wore broad smiles as Harry Wharton marshalled the Remove into their respective parties. Tea was the only meal left for the "kitchen" staff to prepare that day, as the whole school, masters included, would partake of cold meat—left over from dinner—for supper.

The dormitory staff, under the leadership of Vernon-Smith, repaired to the School House with two solid hours' hard labour in front of them. There were beds to make in the Lower and Upper Fourth dormitories, besides the Fifth and Sixth. The Third and Second Forms had been made responsible for their own dormitories. Floors had to be polished, windows had to be cleaned. But the Removites piled into their tasks with cheerful faces and indefatigable energy.

From the region of the kitchen came the musical sound of jingling crockery and the hum of cheery voices. But in the scullery Wun Lung, Micky Desmond, Oliver Kipps, and Tom Dutton, the deaf junior, were not so cheery. They were washing up the dirty plates and dishes left over from the midday meal.

But it was in the laundry that the greatest activity reigned. Fifteen Removites, including Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, and Frank Nugent, were ranged in front of wash-tubs. Collars and jackets had been discarded, and white aprons donned.

Billy Bunter, the perspiration streaming down his fat face as he scrubbed away at a sheet, was puffing and blowing like a grampus.

"This is too much like work," he muttered. "To think that a Bunter should come to this—on a half-holiday, too!"

"No slacking, Bunter!" called out Harry Wharton. "Those three sheets have got to be washed in half an hour. How's the boiler going, Bolsover?"

"Steam's up!" chuckled Percy Bolsover, with a critical eye on the steam-gauge. "The water will be ready for rinsing the sheets in about five minutes' time."

"Ease up a bit with the pressure, then," said Wharton. "We sha'n't have all these things done for half an hour yet."

Percy Bolsover leaned on his shovel, and smiled with satisfaction. The job of "boiler-minder" had fallen upon his broad shoulders. This was a chance of showing off his abnormal strength. In any case, he preferred looking after the boiler to scrubbing away at the tubs.

"Grooough!" groaned Skinner. The cad of the Remove was taking his "pleasures" sadly. Work in any shape or form Harold Skinner abhorred. But Harry Wharton had taken the precaution of placing the "slackers" in his immediate vicinity. And there was no opportunity of slacking under his eagle eye.

"Get on with it, Skinner!" he rapped. "This will do you good, you know. Much better than smoking a cheap cigarette."

"Grooough!" groaned Skinner, plying the scrubbing-brush with redoubled energy.

"Wow!" moaned Stott.

"It's a shame!" muttered Snoop, but he continued with his task, nevertheless.

"That's the stuff to give 'em!" chortled Bob Cherry. "I've nearly scrubbed this sheet into shreds, Harry."

Harry Wharton smiled. Bob Cherry was bursting with energy at all times, and whatever he put his hand to he did well.

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Alonzo Todd, however, was in difficulties. His heart was in the right place, but Alonzo was not cut out for anything arduous. Harry Wharton, in consideration of the gentle Alonzo's frail strength, had merely given him four pillow-cases to wash. But one pillow-case was sufficient to take all the starch out of the duffer of the Remove.

"I must beg you to allow me a moment's respite, my dear Wharton," he said, laying down his scrubbing-brush. "I am afraid that my delicate constitution is not quite keyed up to the pitch of endurance this domestic labour entails. My Uncle Benjamin would be gratified, I know, to learn that I had volunteered my services at the wash-tub; but even Uncle Benjamin would bid me pause before draining my strength too much."

"That's quite all right, Alonzo!" grinned Wharton. "You volunteered for the wash-tub, you know, otherwise I should have given you something demanding less stamina. Take a rest by all means."

"Thank you, my dear Wharton!" said the duffer gratefully. "I have a little book in my jacket-pocket, entitled, 'Handy Hints for the Home.' I will peruse this excellent little guide for a few moments before I return to the tub. You will observe, my dear Wharton, that I have washed one side of the pillow-case."

"Yes, I've observed that," said Wharton. He could have added that he had washed two large sheets whilst Alonzo had been washing one side of a pillow-case. But the captain of the Remove spared Alonzo's feelings.

"Here, I say," roared Bunter, as he saw Alonzo leave his wash-tub. "Yah, that ain't fair. No slacking, Toddy!"

"My dear Bunter," murmured Alonzo, wagging a bony finger at his study-mate. "I am shocked to think that you would make use of such an epithet. I am merely fatigued through lack of experience in the performance of these everyday domestic duties."

"Slacker!" retorted the Owl of the Remove scornfully.

"Shut up, Bunter!" exclaimed Wharton. "Get on with the washing!"

"Oh dear!"

Billy Bunter relapsed into silence. But his fat mind was busy. Alonzo had been allowed a respite from the wash-tubs on account of his frail constitution. The fat junior would like to have pleaded the same tale, but he knew there was little sympathy to expect from Harry Wharton.

"Grooough!" he muttered, as his fat hands dived beneath the thick lather of soapsuds that accumulated at the surface of the water. "This is cruel. I—"

He broke off as a sudden brain-wave entered his fat mind. The soapsuds had given him an idea.

Glancing about him casually, he saw that he was not observed by any of his Form-fellows. Then, dipping his hand into the thickest part of the lather, he scooped up a quantity of the stuff and dabbed it round the corners of his mouth.

"I say, Wharton, I—I—" he began.

"I'm—I'm— Grooough!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" yelled Bob Cherry. "What's the matter with you, old fat top? Jove, Harry, he's going into a fit!"

Even as Bob Cherry spoke Billy Bunter swayed away from the wash-tub, a fixed, peculiar expression in his eyes. Whether by accident or design, he lurched against Harold Skinner, with the result that the cad of the Remove

lost his balance, slipped on the watery ground, and plunged head and shoulders into his own wash-tub.

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

"Well headed, Skinny!"

But Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry were not laughing. Their faces were fixed on William George Bunter. That fat youth swayed unsteadily on his feet for a few seconds, and then sank like a baby elephant to the stone floor.

"Epileptic fit!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, darting forward to the side of the Owl, and noting at a glance what he took to be foam at the corners of Bunter's mouth.

"Looks like it," said Bob Cherry doubtfully. "He's not spoofing, is he?"

"Don't be an ass, Bob!" said Wharton impatiently. "Can't you see he's foaming at the mouth?"

Bob Cherry peered closer. And then a gleam came into his eyes.

"I think you're right, old son," he said thoughtfully. "I know how to cure that kind of fit."

The juniors, who had forsaken the impromptu entertainment afforded by Skinner's ducking, wiped their hands on their aprons, and crowded round the fat, still form of Billy Bunter. Their faces wore expressions of anxiety. Billy Bunter lay like a log, and his breathing appeared to be troubled and unsteady. But the Removites made way as Bob Cherry pushed through their midst.

He returned a few moments later with a pail of hot water in his hands.

Harry Wharton and the other Removites looked at Bob in amazement.

"What on earth are you going to do with that hot water, Bob?" asked Wharton.

Bob Cherry winked mysteriously.

"Oh, you leave that to me!" he returned. "I know all about epileptic fits. An uncle of mine used to indulge in them occasionally, and the doctor used to bring him round by throwing a pail of hot water—scalding water—over him. I'll bet you a ten bob cake that I cure Bunter!"

Some of the juniors were laughing now. They had observed what Wharton had missed. They observed, too, that the fat figure of Billy Bunter was beginning to move.

"Wonderful what a pail of hot water will do," said Bob Cherry, preparing to dash the contents of the bucket into the fat junior's face. "Stand back, you chaps, or you'll get scalded!"

Billy Bunter's fat form quivered as he heard the last word. He had not bargained for this kind of treatment. Mention of a pail of hot water being splashed over him brought him out of his "fit" like a jack-in-the-box. He sat up, blinking wrathfully at the smiling Bob.

"You unfeeling beast, Cherry!" he roared indignantly. "You cruel fiend!"

"Soon cured!" chuckled Bolsover.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!" continued Bunter, shaking a fat fist at the sturdy junior.

"Better now?" inquired Bob sweetly.

"Or do you want my uncle's cure?"

"Nunno!" said Bunter hastily, as Cherry made to throw the water over him. "Yah! It wasn't an epileptic fit. I just swooned off through overwork."

Billy Bunter shuddered as some of the strong lather with which he had adorned his mouth slipped inside that capacious organ. Soap on the exterior of his face Bunter could bear with great fortitude—when it suited him. But soap inside the mouth—a particularly strong soap at that—was anything but pleasant.

"Grooough!" he groaned.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm ill, Wharton," said Bunter in a faint tone. "I really am. I don't think

I could possibly manage to go on with the washing."

Harry Wharton's eyes gleamed. He was feeling a little rattled that he had been taken in by Bunter's deceit. A hose-pipe, already connected to a hydrant, was quite handy. He picked it up and directed the nozzle on the ample form of the Owl of the Remove.

"Please yourself," he said grimly. "But if the scrubbing-brush isn't picked up two seconds from now you—"

But there was no need for the captain of the Remove to continue his threat. Bunter had a great aversion to water, especially when directed from a hose-pipe. He seized his scrubbing-brush.

"Beast!" he roared. "I'll make you sorry for this, Wharton, you rotter! I'm blowed if I'll do any more work! Yah!"

Scrub, scrub!

It was wonderful how Billy Bunter changed his mind. A mere movement of the poised pipe was sufficient to make him ply the scrubber with terrific energy.

Wharton dropped the hose-pipe and walked back to his own tub. He had some hard work to put in if he were to finish his three sheets in time with the other juniors.

Skinner, working next to him, was breathing fire and slaughter on the head of William George Bunter for being the indirect cause of his immersion in the soapsuds.

"You wait, you fat barrel of lard!" he called out to the Owl. "I'll teach you to barge about like an elephant!"

Billy Bunter snorted. "Serve you right. You wanted a wash, anyway!"

"Why, you fat rotter—"

"He, he, he!"

Bunter believed in laughing at his own jokes perhaps for the simple reason that no one else would.

Whiz!

Skinner picked up a particularly large handful of soft soap, and, with an accuracy that would have earned him applause on the cricket-ground, threw it at William George Bunter.

The sticky mass caught the junior full on the face, and gradually slid down his features until it practically obscured them.

"Yaroooh! Ow! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was Skinner's turn to laugh now, and the Removites joined in. They fairly shrieked at the funny spectacle Billy Bunter presented.

"Groooooogh!"

In his endeavour to clear his face of the soft soap Bunter had succeeded in transferring some of the stuff to his hands, thence to his clothes. A particle of it dropped to the floor, and, in his agitation and semi-blindness Billy Bunter stepped on it. That action was fatal.

He crashed into the wash-tub and sent it spinning from its trestle, the soapy water swamping him from head to foot. But Bunter's misfortunes didn't end there. He groped about wildly, and then his other foot slid over the greasy soap. He shot off at a tangent, and landed on all-fours in the centre of the tub, sending up a bubbling spray of soapy water like a miniature geyser.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Removites. "Better hang him on the line to dry!" chuckled Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yarooop! Hellup! Fire! Murder!" roared Bunter, making ineffectual attempts to clamber out of his undignified position in the tub.

"Lend a hand, you fellows!" grinned Wharton, grabbing the fat junior by the slack of his capacious breeches.

"Heave-ho!"

Several of the Removites caught hold

of the fat junior and hauled him clear of the tub.

Bunter was now in a parlous condition. Water literally oozed out of him. He squelched it at every step. And his fat face still bore an ample quantity of the soft-soap.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the juniors. "Wo-ow!" wailed Bunter.

"Another porpoise brought to land!" chuckled Sidney James Snoop.

"He, he, he!" laughed Stott. Stott always laughed at Snoop's jokes.

"You had better hop off to the bath-room and get cleaned!" grinned Harry Wharton. "I think you've done all the washing for one day. I'll put you on the ironing to-morrow."

"Groooooogh! Rotters!" wailed Bunter, squelching off to the bath-room. "Beasts! Groooooogh!"

And that was all the Removites had of the amiable Bunter's fascinating society for the remainder of that memorable afternoon. For the next hour at least Billy Bunter was engaged in drying himself and changing into a fresh suit of clothes.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Not Nice for Loder!

"THAT'S enough for to-day!" Harry Wharton made the remark as he surveyed the pile of sheets which the Removites had scrubbed, rinsed, and mangled that afternoon. Most of the juniors felt pleased with themselves.

It was a novelty, for the time being, at any rate, to take the place of the Greyfriars domestic staff, even although it meant three hours' hard work at the "wash-tubs."

But the next day's washing would be far preferable to lessons in a stuffy Form-room.

Only Skinner and his cronies were aggrieved. The black sheep of the Remove were proverbial slackers, and they had been compelled to work that afternoon as they had never worked in their lives before.

"What about hanging the clothes on the lines?" suggested Bob Cherry. "There's a slight breeze coming up; they'll be ready for ironing to-morrow."

"Good idea, Bob!" said Wharton promptly. "Pile in, chaps. We'll soon have this bunch on the lines."

"Perhaps I may be allowed to assist," ventured Alonzo Todd, stepping forward. "I have been reading about the intricate art of the laundry. If you need any advice on the subject, my dear Wharton, pray listen to these few tips on 'How to Hang Out the Clothes!'"

The captain of the Remove grinned. Alonzo Todd, as usual, was taking life seriously.

"That's all right, Alonzo," said Harry Wharton hastily, as the Duffer commenced to turn the pages of his handbook. "I—I know all about hanging out the clothes to dry. M-m-my aunt used to do washing, you know, and—and I used to take it home—"



The clothes-line drew farther away from the ground with Alonzo Todd clinging to it like a third-rate performer on a trapeze. "M-m-my dear Bolsover," he said wildly. "Pray let me down. I am sure this is not the correct way to hoist a clothes-line!" "Oh, my hat!" said Bolsover faintly. "I didn't know the silly ass was hanging on to the line." "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Removites. (See Chapter 4.)

"Ninepence a dozen!" chuckled Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really," blinked Alonzo Todd. "I had no idea, my dear Wharton, that you were so well versed in the domestic arts."

The simple Removite had no idea that his leg was being pulled. He proceeded to make himself useful. Skinner obligingly loaded him up with a pile of sheets which very nearly obliterated the thin and weedy figure of the Duffer of the Remove as he staggered away to the drying-ground.

In a procession the Removites moved off in his wake bearing the afternoon's wash with them. In a few moments the juniors were pegging the sheets on the lines.

Alonzo Todd was soon in difficulties again. He could not understand why the corner of the sheet which he repeatedly pegged to the steel line persisted in slipping off. And it was not until his cousin Peter pointed out to him that he was standing on one part of the sheet he was trying to "hang out" that he discovered a reason.

The clothes-lines were operated by wires sliding over pulleys. These, naturally had been allowed to run slack, so that the Removites could reach them.

It was rather unfortunate for Alonzo Todd that he was gripping the line at the precise moment that Bolsover hauled on the pulley, for as the line tautened it drew farther away from the ground, with Alonzo Todd clinging to it like a third-rate performer on a trapeze.

"M-my dear Bolsover!" he said wildly. "Pray let me down! I am being carried away!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bolsover, suddenly becoming aware that he had hoisted Alonzo Todd to a position five or six feet from the ground. "The silly ass shouldn't have been hanging on the line!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Removites, clustering round the wildly-kicking figure of Alonzo Todd.

"Let me down!" said Alonzo appealingly. "I'm sure this is not the correct way to hoist a clothes-line, Bolsover. If you will lower me I will endeavour to enlighten you on the subject by drawing your attention to this excellent little book 'Handy Hints for the Home.'"

"Oh, my hat!" repeated Bolsover blankly, still, however, making no attempt to lower the clothes-line, the end of which he had made fast to the staple in the wooden upright.

"I—I really cannot stay up here any longer, Bolsover," said Alonzo wildly. "Pray let me down!"

It did not occur to the simple-minded Duffer that he could jump to earth. What was obvious to the average fellow never became obvious to the mighty intellect of Alonzo Theophilous Todd until he had given it a deal of serious thought.

But the Duffer's words roused Bolsover major to a state of activity. He began to unwind the end of the clothes-line from the staple at a great rate. And Alonzo's wish in part, at any rate, was granted.

"My dear Bolsover——"

Bump!

The line, no longer obliged, so to speak, to support Todd's weight, ran through Bolsover's fingers as it left the staple, and the Duffer of the Remove came to earth with a bump that shook every bone in his body.

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"Yarooooh!" he roared. "Wow-yowp!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites laughed loud and long over Alonzo's misadventure, and then set about erecting the remaining clothes-lines. This was accomplished without further mishap, thanks, perhaps, to the advice extracted from his "excellent little book," which Alonzo freely imparted to the juniors who had charge of the pulleys.

"And now for tea," said Harry Wharton, as he surveyed the afternoon's work with a glow of pride. "Removites can turn their hands to anything after this!"

"Hear, hear!"

The "washing" party broke up, and made tracks for their studies.

"Not so bad, is it?" said Wharton, as he walked along with Frank Nugent and Bob Cherry. "Bit of a novelty, at any rate."

"The novelty is terrific!" murmured Hurree Singh. "The esteemed and ludicrous afternoon's work reminds me of the English proverb—a wash in timefulness saves the pitcher from going longest to the well."

"Hum!"

Inky's rendering of an English proverb was as weird and wonderful as his rendering of the English language.

"Let's hop over to the kitchen and see how Mark Linley and the assistant cooks are getting on," suggested Harry Wharton.

"Good egg!"

The Famous Five altered their direction and strolled to the door of the kitchen. From within came the sounds of applause and the merry jingling of plates.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Sounds like a tea-fight!"

The Famous Five pushed open the door of the kitchen and looked inside. Then they gasped simultaneously.

"My hat!"

Oliver Kipps, the Remove's conjurer and juggler, was standing in the centre of an admiring group consisting of the "kitchen staff." Mark Linley had discarded his schoolboy attire, and was now garbed in a suit of white drill, crowned by an enormous chef's hat. His assistants were similarly clad, whilst the other three "washers-up" had their sleeves rolled back to their elbows.

But it was not that strange sight which caused Harry Wharton & Co. to voice the simultaneous exclamation. Away above Oliver Kipps' head a dozen plates were rising and falling like a fountain. The schoolboy juggler's prowess with plates was well known in the Remove, but never had Harry Wharton & Co. seen him control so many at once.

As soon as two plates reached his left and right hands they were sent skimming, higher than ever, into the air again, their places quickly being taken by another two plates compelled by the force of gravity to descend.

There must have been at least a dozen plates undergoing such "juggling" treatment, but Oliver Kipps, his keen eyes watching, it seemed, every plate at once, never faltered in his judgment and his timing.

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"Oh, my giddy aunt!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, admiringly.

"Hot stuff!" said Nugent enthusiastically.

"The hot stuff-fulness is terrific," purred Inky. "But the crashfulness of the esteemed and ludicrous Kipps will be terrific also."

It seemed that Hurree Singh was endowed with the gift of prophecy, for at that moment Oliver Kipps, moving his feet slightly backwards and forwards, so that he remained directly beneath the flying plates, slipped on a spot of grease that had not been cleaned from the tiled floor.

Bump!

The schoolboy juggler felt his legs shooting out in two different directions, and immediately his interest in the flying plates died out. But the plates had been sent hurtling into the air, and the force of gravity demanded that they should return to earth again.

"Look out!" shouted Harry Wharton. "The plates!"

But his words came too late.

Crash! Crash! Crash! Crash! Crash! Five plates clattered to the tiled floor and broke into fragments.

Crash! Crash! Crash! Crash!

Four more followed the example of their fellows.

Crash! Crash! Crash!

The dozen plates were no more.

Oliver Kipps sat in the midst of the wreckage like a dazed being. His expression was comical to behold. Despite the fact that twelve good plates and true had been "done in," the juniors had to laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not according to programme!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Nothing to cackle about!" growled Kipps ruefully. "I didn't bargain for that!"

"Neither did we!" grinned Wharton, laughing until the water came to his eyes. "But we like it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites rocked their sides with laughter, and in the midst of the hilarity Loder, the unpopular prefect of the Sixth, poked his head into the kitchen. A malignant gleam shot into his eyes as he beheld the scene of destruction on the kitchen floor.

"You young sweeps!" he snapped, striding into the kitchen. "So this is how you see that the work entrusted to you is carried out!"

The Removites remained silent, a circumstance that brought a flush of anger to Gerald Loder's lean face.

"Answer me!" he hissed, "or I'll make things hot for you!"

"We can't very well answer you if you haven't asked us a question, can we?" said Harry Wharton sweetly.

"Are you responsible for this, Wharton?" ground out the prefect, tightening his grip on the ashplant he carried.

"Not guilty, me lord!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Then who is?"

"The force of gravity, if you ask me," grinned Nugent. "You must have heard about it, Loder? Even in the Sixth, I suppose, they know what that is?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gerald Loder gritted his teeth and strode forward. He grabbed Frank Nugent by the collar of his jacket and brought the ashplant into play.

"Cheeky little brat!" he rapped. "Take that!"

The ashplant hissed aloft, but the blow never fell, for it so happened that Loder trod on the identical greasy spot that Oliver Kipps had done. His feet skidded

from underneath him as though he had been wearing roller skates.

Crash!

The Sixth-Former shot off at a terrific speed. It was unfortunate for Loder, fortunate for the juniors—they were enjoying themselves—that an open flour bin was in his line of route, so to speak. Without deviating from the course his slip had started him on, Gerald Loder dived head foremost into the flour-bin.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My only Aunt Sempronia!"

"Gug-gug! Yarroooooooooop!" came Loder's muffled yells.

His head had disappeared completely in the flour, his legs were wildly thrashing in the air, his yells were truly heart-rending.

"Cave!" suddenly whispered Johnny Bull. "Here's Quelch!"

A sound of footsteps, unmistakably those of Mr. Quelch, the master of the Lower Fourth, came to the juniors' ears. They looked about them in confusion. Kipps hurriedly swept the broken plates into a heap by the side of the wall, and then he indicated the pantry door.

"Get out by the back way!" he whispered.

The juniors were not slow to respond. They piled out through the pantry door in double-quick time. Harry Wharton had just disappeared round its friendly portal when Mr. Quelch bustled into the kitchen.

The Remove master halted on the threshold in wonder and amazement. His eyes nearly started from his head as he became aware of a pair of particularly long legs sticking out from the flour-bin.

"B-b-b-bless my soul!" he gasped faintly.

"Hellup! Rescue, you young sweeps! Gug-groooooooooough! I'll flay you alive for this! Grooooo!"

"Boy!" rapped Mr. Quelch, recovering his power of speech, "cease that absurd performance at once! Come here, boy!"

But the "boy," for the time being, was incapable of extricating himself. His shoulders were tightly fixed in the flour-bin, and despite his frantic struggles, Loder was unable to obey the Form master's command.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Follow Your Leader!

YOU will be careful not to break any of these ornaments, Trotter?"

Dr. Locke smiled kindly at Trotter, the page-boy, as he prepared to leave his study.

"Yes, sir!" replied Trotter promptly.

The page-boy had been called in by the Head to spring-clean his study, a duty that fell usually to the House Dame or one of her assistants. Armed with a mop, a bucket of water, and sundry dusters, Frederick Trotter was prepared for a long job.

"I don't expect you will have cleaned the study by this evening," said Dr. Locke, as an afterthought. "You may finish to-morrow."

"Very good, sir."

Dr. Locke rustled from the study, leaving Trotter blinking at the four walls of that sacred apartment, unable to decide upon which wall to start. Since the "plague," as Trotter called it, had smitten Greyfriars, Trotter had had a very busy time of it. Gosling, the school-porter was "down" with 'flu, and the page-boy was now school-porter, boots, charwoman, and general handy man.

"This 'ere's a go," muttered Trotter, scratching his head, and eyeing a choice



Mr. Quelch came to a halt in wonder and amazement. His eyes nearly started from his head as he became aware of a pair of particularly long legs sticking out from the flour-bin. "B-bless my soul," he murmured faintly. "Hellup! Rescue, you young sweeps! Gug-gugg! I'll flay you alive for this!" howled Loder. "Boy!" rapped Mr. Quelch, recovering his power of speech. "Cease that absurd performance at once. Come here, boy!" "Gug-grooooo!" gasped Loder. (See Chapter 4.)

selection of Chinese pottery that had arrived for Dr. Locke only that morning. "I'm all on tender-looks about these 'ere ornaments already. 'Very valuable,' says the 'Ead. Blowed if I can see anythin' valuable about 'em. Seem to 'ave seen any amount of 'em in Woolworth's pretty cheap."

Once more the page-boy gazed critically at the row of ornaments taken from their packing-case and marshalled in a row upon the mantelpiece, and then he shrugged his shoulders.

"Orders is orders," he reflected. "This 'ere study is to be spring-cleaned, and the sooner I sets about the bloomin' job the better. Old Gosling & Co. are 'aving a cushy time up in that there sanny, I'll wager. 'Flu! H'm! Old Gossy is a deep 'un, all right—always thought so."

Trotter started work, entertaining himself at intervals by discussing the probable value of the Chinese ornaments with an imaginary individual. By the time Trotter had been at work an hour those ornaments had reached a fabulous value.

Suddenly Trotter paused in his labours as he felt a peculiar fit of giddiness stealing over him. He shrugged his shoulders as though to shake the feeling off, but to his annoyance and growing alarm he grew more giddy.

Muttering to himself he sat down.

He suddenly became aware that he felt cold—very cold, although the late afternoon was very warm—close, in fact. Then understanding dawned in upon him.

"The 'Flu!"

Trotter had heard enough of the symptoms of influenza to know that the scourge had caught him within its grasp. He staggered to his feet, conscious of the fact that, although he was cold, perspiration was streaming out of him.

"Sanny for me!" he muttered, passing through the study door and out into the passage.

And within five minutes of his reaching the sanatorium, Frederick Trotter was tucked between the blankets, the latest "case" for the hard-worked matron to attend to.

"He's got it bad," she confided to one of her assistants. "Poor lad!"

And Trotter had got it bad. He lay in a small ward isolated from the rest of the patients—the worst case at Greyfriars.

Meanwhile, unaware of the fact that Trotter had been commissioned to clean the Head's study, Harry Wharton & Co. went along to that sacred apartment with the intention of volunteering to spring-clean it themselves. They had offered to clean Mr. Quelch's study, and the Remove master had thanked them for the offer, and informed them that they could start in an hour's time. To Wharton's knock upon the Head's door a kindly voice bade him enter.

The Famous Five walked in.

Dr. Locke was standing in the centre of his study, a puzzled expression on his face. And the puzzled expression became general when Harry Wharton & Co. gazed round the Head's apartment. Never had they seen Dr. Locke's sanctum

in such a state of disorder. But his words soon afforded an explanation.

"Bless my soul!" he gasped. "I had no idea that Trotter would commence operations in such a fashion. Where is the young rascal? Have you seen Trotter, my boys?"

"No, sir!" replied Harry Wharton.

"Bless my soul!" reiterated Dr. Locke. "I left Trotter here about an hour ago to clean out this room. I am afraid that Trotter has a peculiar idea as to how a room should be cleaned."

"Ahem!"

Harry Wharton coughed discreetly. Looking round the study he could appreciate Dr. Locke's view of the matter. The pictures had been taken from the walls and placed in a haphazard fashion upon the floor, likewise the books—valuable books—from the bookcase. The table had been up-ended and pushed into a corner. Trotter evidently believed in working in a clear field.

"Ahem!" coughed Harry Wharton again. He felt it hard to begin an explanation of his mission to Dr. Locke's study at that somewhat inopportune moment. The Head turned sharply, and eyed the captain of the Remove.

"You wish to speak to me, Wharton?"

"Yes, sir," said Harry. "We—my chums and I—were wondering whether we might—ahem!—spring-clean your study, and—"

"Thank you, Wharton, for your kind offer," said Dr. Locke, rather hastily. "but I think I will let my study remain over for a spring-clean until the house-dame is able to give it her close attention."

There was very little else to say to that definite negative. Harry Wharton & Co. muttered something unintelligible and departed. Once in the passage they paused and looked at one another.

"The Head's waxy about his precious books being chucked about the floor," said Harry Wharton. "I shouldn't like to be in Trotter's shoes."

"Neither should I," said Bob Cherry. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Loder!"

The Famous Five jumped at Bob Cherry's announcement. If Loder was on the war-path it would mean trouble. And the expression on the unpopular prefect's face as he strode along the passage in the juniors' direction seemed significant of trouble.

Loder was boiling with rage and mortification. To be caught in such an undignified position, with his head and shoulders wedged in a flour-bin, by no less a person than Mr. Quelch was galling indeed. But it was quite a long time before Loder had become aware of the master's presence in the kitchen, and some of the language he had uttered had offended the sensitive ears of Mr. Quelch. Thus, when he had explained the situation to the Form master, Mr. Quelch had as good as remarked that it served him right. He had, moreover, cautioned the prefect in the case of such unmannerly epithets as he himself had overheard.

But that was not all. Loder had been engaged for the last hour in ridding himself of the flour that had clung to his person. He had been compelled to change into a fresh suit of clothes. Even now a goodly portion of the flour still clung to his straggling hair.

"Look out for squalls!" breathed Wharton. "He's got his ashplant with him."

"Loder will get more than he wants if he's looking for trouble!" said Johnny Bull grimly.

"You young sweeps!" grated Loder, coming to a standstill in front of the

Famous Five, and swishing the ashplant. "I've been looking for you!"

"Have you really?" grinned Bob Cherry. "We haven't been looking for you, Loder. We see more than enough of you as it is."

The prefect ground his teeth together.

"You young rascals will follow me to my study!" he rapped. "I'm going to talk to you—with my ashplant!"

"Isn't he a nice amiable fellow?" said Bob Cherry innocently. "Shall we go along with our dear prefect, chaps?"

Bob Cherry winked expressively with the eye that was farthest away from Loder.

"Shall us?"

"Lets!" said the remainder of the Co. demurely.

"Follow me!"

Loder turned on his heel and strode off down the passage. The Famous Five followed in single file, Bob Cherry in the lead. Bob was grinning as he walked behind the prefect. Loder had a peculiar swaggering walk, and Bob was mimicking the walk and the swagger with great success. The juniors behind him were, in turn, imitating the antics of Bob Cherry, so that by the time the mimicry reached Nugent at the extreme end of the line, the walk and the swagger had been exaggerated to an enormous and ridiculous extent.

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Wibley and Piet Delarey, as they came upon the strange procession. "Is this a new game?"

"Dear Loder is going to talk to us," said Bob Cherry, with a grin. "We are going along like good little boys to his study."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Juniors were streaming into the passage from the studies now, and the laughter grew and grew like the little apple in the orchard. Loder swaggered on to the Sixth Form quarters, the Removites lining up behind him, all walking with long, swaggering strides.

"Oh, great Scott!" exclaimed Squiff. "This is rich!"

"Line up, chaps!" called out Wharton, sotto voce. "Follow your leader!"

Loder strode on, unconscious of the merriment he was leaving in his wake, or of the fact that thirty juniors were streaming behind him in single file, imitating his swaggering stride. When Loder reached his study he flung open the door and marched inside.

"Come in, you little sweeps!" he rapped.

The "little sweeps" came in with a rush.

The prefect gasped as he saw the number of juniors that had followed him into the Sixth Form quarters. But he made no attempt to close the door of his study. By the time he had recovered from his surprise the study was packed to overflowing with Removites.

"What the thump does this mean?" he demanded savagely.

"These little boys have come to hear you talk to us," said Bob Cherry meekly. "They are all nice boys, Loder."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" roared Loder, gritting his teeth and taking a firm grip of his ashplant. "Outside, you young rotters, or there will be trouble!"

But the "young rotters" made no attempt to get "outside." That was enough for Gerald Loder. He hadn't a sweet

temper at the best of times, but a combination of circumstances, such as the afternoon had subscribed, culminating in the present situation, was like unto the kindling of a match to a bundle of straw. He started to wade in with the ashplant.

Swish, swish!

"Ow!"

"Yarroooh!"

Swish, swish!

"Yowp!"

A chorus of yells followed that initial onslaught with the ashplant—and the yells came from the Removites.

"Yarroooh! Oh, garoooooough! Yowp!"

This time the yells proceeded from the Sixth-Former himself. Harry Wharton & Co. piled upon him and wrenched the cane from his hands. The prefect descended to the study floor under a human avalanche of Removites.

"Give him a taste of his own medicine!"

"Scrag the rotter!"

"Wallop him!"

"I say, you fellows, let me get at him," roared Billy Bunter's voice above the others. "Gimme that ashplant, Cherry!"

Swish!

"Yarroooh!" yelled Bunter, as Bob Cherry "gave him the ashplant."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah, you beast!" exclaimed Bunter, dodging out of the way. "I didn't mean that, Cherry, you rotter!"

"Sorry!" grinned Bob. "You asked for it, you know!"

"You young whelps!" roared Loder savagely, "let me get up!"

He struggled fiercely to free himself, but the Removites held on grimly. At last Loder's struggles ceased. He lay like a log, panting, his eyes glinting maliciously.

"Now we are going to talk to you—with the ashplant!" chuckled Harry Wharton, picking up the prefect's cane. "Ever since poor old Wingate and the other prefects went into the sanny you've been making things as unpleasant as possible. The Remove are fed up with your tyrannies."

"Wallop him, Wharton!"

"We are going to teach you that you can't bully the Remove," continued Wharton.

"Hear, hear!"

"You're going to receive a stroke with this ashplant from every junior you've caned, or attempted to cane, since the epidemic started," went on Wharton.

"Good old Wharton!"

"The lesson will start with me," concluded Wharton, swishing the cane.

The prefect commenced to struggle frantically, but three juniors were holding on to his arms, whilst four more squatted on his feet. Johnny Bull had thoughtfully stuffed a handkerchief into Loder's mouth, and that served as an effectual gag.

"Mum-mum-mmmmmmm!"

Loder wriggled and gurgled, and gurgled and wriggled, but there was no escape.

Swish!

"Mmmmmmmmm!"

Wharton wielded the cane, and then passed it on to the next junior.

Swish!

The process was continued until every fellow who had received a licking at Loder's hands since influenza had held its sway over Greyfriars had obeyed Harry Wharton's decree. By the time the "lesson" was over, Loder was aching in every limb.

"That will teach you not to crow it over us," said Harry Wharton, at length. "You're always looking for trouble, Loder, and you'll always get it in the Remove. Ta-ta!"

The juniors poured out of the study,

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"Line up, chaps," called out Wharton softly. "Follow your leader!" Loder strode on, unconscious of the merriment he was leaving in his wake, or of the fact that thirty juniors were streaming behind him in single file, imitating his swaggering stride. "Oh, Great Scott!" exclaimed Squiff. "This is rich!" (See Chapter 5.)

leaving the unpopular prefect boiling with rage and well-nigh speechless. In a triumphant procession they entered their own quarters, conscious of the fact that they had taught the tyrant of the Sixth a much-needed lesson.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. Skinner Takes a Hand!

"YOU leave it to me, Loder!" Harold Skinner winked knowingly at the Sixth Form prefect as he made the remark.

The black sheep of the Remove had been in earnest consultation with Gerald Loder for over half an hour. There were times when the unpopular Sixth Form prefect invoked the aid of juniors, but those occasions were generally connected with shady schemes; and this was one of them.

Smarting from the ragging he had received, Gerald Loder had nursed his aches with the fires of revenge, so to speak. He had decided that the whole of the Remove should suffer for their handling of him, and that Harry Wharton & Co. should be made to feel the venom of his hatred more than the others.

Had Loder a genuine grievance against the high-handed actions of Harry Wharton & Co., he would have sought a higher authority than Harold Skinner to avenge his outraged feelings. But he knew that in appealing to the Head for redress he would doubtless receive a lecture for his own "high-handedness." Weighing up the pros and cons carefully, the prefect had decided that he would have to make the Famous Five "smart" some other way.

He found a ready ally in Harold Skinner of the Remove. That complete young blackguard was always a ready tool in any scheme of revenge directed against Harry Wharton & Co.

"You think it will be safe, Skinner?" asked Loder anxiously.

"Safe as houses," grinned Skinner. "I know the Head doesn't want his study touched, even if Quelchy does. They'll both be in a fearful wax when they see the results of the 'spring-cleaning.'"

"Hum!"

Gerald Loder's enthusiasm was beginning to wane already. Any scheme that included amongst its victims such august personages as Mr. Quelch and the Head himself was a bit too risky, even for Loder. But Skinner's reassuring manner, and the knowledge that if the scheme should fall foul somewhere retribution would also fall on Skinner besides himself, combined to steady his wavering courage.

"Go ahead, Skinner," he said, at length, pitching the end of a smoked-out cigarette into the fender. "But be careful!"

"Trust me!"

And the black sheep of the Remove departed for the quarters of the Lower Fourth. He entered Study No. 11 and quietly closed the door. Snoop and Stott, his study-mates, were seated at the table. They looked at Skinner curiously as he came towards them.

"What's biting you?" asked Enoop.

"What's in the wind?" said Stott.

Skinner drew his chair up to the table and sat down. Then, in low tones, he told Snoop and Stott of the scheme he had in hand. At the conclusion his two study-mates remained strangely silent.

"Well?" demanded Skinner, at length.

Snoop and Stott fidgeted uneasily.

"Bit risky," said Snoop. "Of course, I'd like to see that cad Wharton sing small, but—but—"

"But—but—" faltered Stott, contributing to the conversation.

Skinner made an expressive gesture.

"But—but," he mimicked. "Have you two lost your nerve, or what?"

"'Tain't that," said Snoop slowly. "But I draw the line at playing a trick like that on Quelchy and the Head."

"Y-yes, same here," faltered Stott weakly. "You see—"

"I see," said Skinner scornfully. "I see a couple of weak-kneed plaster saints."

That was a compliment, even if badly expressed, for Snoop and Stott, although not possessing the nerve of Harold Skinner, were as deep a pair of young scoundrels as their study-mate.

Snoop grinned feebly, and Stott tittered.

"So you're not coming in on the deal?" asked Skinner.

"I'd rather you left me out," replied Snoop, rising to his feet.

"And so would I," said Stott, making for the study door.

"Right-ho!" exclaimed Skinner. "I'll work the stunt on my own. Mind you keep mum about it, that's all," he added darkly.

His study-mates did not reply. Rascals that they were, they were not likely to give away Harold Skinner's scheme unless they were implicated themselves.

Snoop and Stott walked out of the study, leaving Skinner to complete his plan of campaign. At length Skinner rose from the table and strolled along the Fourth Form passage until he came on a level with Mr. Quelch's study.

From within came the sounds of energetic labour, and the murmur of voices. Harry Wharton & Co. were busy "spring-cleaning" their Form master's study. The carpets had been taken out and beaten, the walls had been swept, the floor had been scrubbed, and every article dusted and replaced in its original position.

"Quelchy will be pleased when he sees the change we've made," said Harry Wharton, leaning on his broom. "A jolly good hour's work, chaps!"

"Hear, hear!"

"The goodness of the jolly hour's work is terrific," said Hurree Singh, putting the finishing touch to Mr. Quelch's bookcase. "And the surprisefulness of our esteemed and honoured preceptor will also be—"

"Terrific!" chuckled Bob Cherry, turning a red face from the fireplace, the fender and tools of which he had been polishing until he could see his face in them.

The Famous Five called a halt in their labours and made a general survey of the apartment. It certainly looked vastly improved from what it had been an hour previous.

"That's all for to-day," said Wharton, gathering up the brooms and dusters. "We shall sleep like logs to-night, you fellows."

"What-ho!"

The Famous Five walked out of Mr. Quelch's study, Harry Wharton locking

the door after him and pocketing the key. Mr. Quelch was on "duty" up in the sanatorium, reading to the convalescent cases, and would not require the key for an hour.

Depositing the brooms, scrubbing brushes, and dusters in the small store-room set aside for the purpose, Wharton closed and locked the door. Then the Co. made tracks for the bath-rooms for a "tub."

And whilst the Famous Five were thus employed, a figure stole into the dormitory on tiptoe and halted beside Harry Wharton's bed.

It was Harold Skinner!

Listening intently, the cad of the Remove heard only the sounds of Harry Wharton & Co. splashing in their baths. Then, with a soft chuckle, Skinner took the keys of Mr. Quelch's study and the store-room from Wharton's trousers-pocket and hastened downstairs.

He was away exactly twelve minutes, and by that time Harry Wharton & Co. were having a brisk "rub down." There was a healthy glow of colour in their cheeks as they chatted amongst themselves, in striking contrast, could it have been compared, with the unnatural flush of crimson in Harold Skinner's lean face as he replaced the keys of the store-room and Mr. Quelch's study in Harry Wharton's trousers-pocket and silently and stealthily made tracks for his own study.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Shock for Mr. Quelch!

MR. QUELCH, the master of the Remove, came down from the sanatorium with a tired expression on his learned face. For over two hours he had been reading to the convalescent cases in the isolation ward. Mr. Quelch was conscious of the fact that he had done his duty well. The "convalescents" who had listened to the droning voice of Mr. Horace Quelch were conscious that he had done his duty "too well."

Two hours of listening to deadly-boring literature that had taken a certain Greek gentleman a lifetime to compile had passed like two long years. At the conclusion of his "duty" Mr. Quelch had smiled kindly at the convalescent cases, and closed the bulky Greek tome with a finality that seemed to suggest that he in turn was wearied with the works of the classic gentleman.

A trifle hungry and exceedingly tired, Mr. Horace Quelch had made for the privacy and comfort of his own study, only to find upon arrival there that the door was locked.

"Bless my soul!" he ejaculated. "Of course, I gave the key to Wharton when he offered to clean my study."

With this reflection, the Remove master went along to Study No. 1 and knocked at the door.

Tap-tap!

"Come in, fathead!" boomed Bob Cherry.

The door opened and Mr. Quelch looked in on the juniors.

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, flushing a deep crimson. "S-s-sorry, sir! I didn't k-know it was you, sir!"

Mr. Quelch smiled at the Famous Five and addressed Harry Wharton.

"You have my key, Wharton?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said the captain of the Remove, diving a hand into his trousers-pocket. "I hope you will find your study all right, sir."

"I am sure I shall," smiled Mr. Quelch.

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ndulgently. "It was very good of you boys to come to my rescue like that. The room was in a shocking condition."

Mr. Quelch took the key and sauntered away to his own study. He inserted the key in the lock and turned it. The door opened in answer to his push, but hardly had it moved inwards a foot when it came into contact with something that had evidently been left behind the door. Crash!

Mr. Quelch gasped as a crash of metal rang out, followed by the splashing sound of water almost at his very feet.

"Wha-a-at?" he stammered, gazing down at a pool of water that was now running underneath the door and out into the passage. "Bless my soul!"

He pushed the door open farther and strode inside, almost falling over an up-turned bucket, from the interior of which merged a stream of water. But it was not the bucket of water that caused the Remove master to stand rooted to the spot, it was the state of his study—the study that had been spring-cleaned by the Famous Five.

"Goodness gracious!" murmured Mr. Quelch faintly.

The study was in a parlous condition. There were books, carpets, and papers all mixed up in an untidy heap on the bare floor, the chairs had been up-ended, the fire-irons and coal-scuttle and sundry cushions reposed in a heap in another part of the room. The pictures on the walls had been tilted, and in some cases turned entirely round, so that their backs were all that remained to view. Dirty smudges sullied the whiteness of the paint on the skirtings of the walls, ashes and cinders seemed to have been liberally sprinkled all over the bare boards.

Mr. Quelch gasped and gasped again as he gazed upon the scene of chaos. And then his brow grew dark. Several little petty worries of the day all helped to add fuel to his rising wrath, and with a glint in his eye he turned to stalk down the passage. A fat junior almost ran into him as he rounded the corner of the passage. It was Billy Bunter.

"Bunter!" called out Mr. Quelch severely.

"Ye-es, sir?" blinked Bunter, not too shortsighted to observe the light of trouble in his Form master's eyes.

"Kindly ask Cherry, Wharton, Nugent, Bull, and Hurree Singh to step into my study at once!"

"Yes, sir," replied the Owl of the Remove, turning on his heel and scuttling down the passage.

He found the Famous Five engaged in a deep discussion concerning the cricket fixtures that would, on account of the "flu," have to be cancelled.

"Outside, Bunter!" roared Bob Cherry, as the fat junior came breathlessly into the study.

"You be careful, Bob Cherry," said Bunter. "Quelchy wants you chaps at once."

"Quelchy?" said Harry Wharton, rising to his feet.

"Yes; Quelchy," cackled Billy Bunter.

"He, he, he!"

"Expect he wants to thank us for cleaning up his study," said Bob Cherry.

"What are you cackling about, old fat tulip?"

"He, he, he!" grinned Bunter. "You ought to see Quelchy's face—he's in a boiling rage."

Paying little heed to Bunter's remarks, the Co. left Study No. 1 and hastened along to their Form master's apartment. Mr. Quelch met them on the threshold.

"Boys," he said sternly, "I am shocked and surprised to think that you would play such a mean and despicable prank on your Form master!"

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at Mr. Quelch in stupefaction, wondering whether he had suddenly gone off his head. But Mr. Quelch was sane enough; there was no mistaking the steely glitter in his eye; the juniors knew it of old.

They waited for the master of the Remove to speak again. But Mr. Quelch, gazing at them searchingly, threw open the door of his study, presenting a full view of the chaos beyond.

Harry Wharton & Co. almost jumped from the floor at the scene that met their gaze. They blinked, looked again, blinked at one another, and gasped.

"M-my hat!"

"What is the meaning of this, Wharton?" snapped Mr. Quelch icily. "I presume it is your idea of a joke!"

"Joke, sir!" stammered Wharton, still gazing at the transformation the study had undergone since he had seen it last.

"J-joke, sir!"

"Boy!" stormed the master of the Remove. "Have you lost your power of speech as well as your reason? I ask you to explain this outrageous conduct!"

"I—I—I—we—we—" murmured Wharton weakly.

"It's a rag!" said Johnny Bull in his blunt way, coming to Wharton's rescue. "Anyone can see that!"

"A what, Bull?" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"A rag, sir—that is to say, a joke! I mean, a—a—a—a—"

"A rag, sir!" volunteered Bob Cherry. "We left your study as bright as a new pin. There wasn't a speck of dust in the whole place when we had finished cleaning here, sir."

"That's so," said Wharton quietly. "Someone's been here after us."

"Nonsense, Wharton!" said Mr. Quelch sternly. "How could anyone else have been in my room when you possessed the only key?"

Harry Wharton started as that astounding fact was borne in on his mind. Here was a poser indeed. For some moments the Famous Five fidgeted uneasily. They had no explanation to offer, beyond the fact that someone must have gained access to the keys of Mr. Quelch's study and the store-room, for there were several cleaning utensils now in the Form master's apartment, which the juniors remembered having taken away when they had finished their cleaning.

"Well?" demanded Mr. Quelch at length.

"I am afraid that I cannot answer that question," returned Wharton respectfully. "I can assure you, sir, that—that we are not responsible for this dirty trick. I can prove it, sir!"

"Indeed!" commented Mr. Quelch dryly. "I shall be glad to listen to your proof."

"Look at the woodwork of the skirting and the windows," said Harry Wharton quietly. "It is obvious that they have been cleaned quite recently."

"Yes; I think you are right, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch, examining the woodwork closely.

"The pictures, sir," said Harry Wharton. "I shall be surprised if you find any dust on them."

The Form master examined the pictures.

"They appear to have been dusted," he remarked, "for I noticed only this morning how dirty they were getting."

"Well, sir," continued Harry Wharton, "does it seem likely that we should go to the trouble of cleaning your study first if we wanted to leave it in this awful state?"

Mr. Quelch was compelled to see the

(Continued on page 17.)



Supplement No. 182.

HARRY WHARTON, EDITOR.

Week Ending July 12th, 1924.

THE LAWS OF CRICKET!

Specially Revised—for his own convenience—by
TOM BROWN.

The following laws are only to be observed when I am batting:—

1. The bowler is forbidden to bowl from a closer range than fifty yards. He is also forbidden to aim at the wicket. The ball must be delivered so that it will pitch about a foot from the leg-stump, so that the batsman will have no difficulty in banging it to the leg-boundary. The bowler is not to make faces or grimaces at the batsman, or attempt to intimidate him in any way.

2. The stumps are to be six inches in height. They are to be pitched close together, so that the wicket is not more than three inches wide. Of course, the bowler will find it hard to hit a tiny wicket like this, at a distance of fifty yards; but then, that's his funeral!

3. The wicket-keeper is to stand well back, and he is on no account to try and stump the batsman.

4. Should the ball be hit in the air, no fieldsman is permitted to catch it. If he does, it will count as six runs to the opposing side.

5. If the batsman is beaten by a ball, he is permitted to stop it with his foot, hand, shin, or any portion of his anatomy. The umpire must on no account give him "Out" for obstruction.

6. If the batsman happens to be bowled out, he is to be given another chance.

7. Every hit to the boundary will count as 12 runs, and every hit clean out of the ground will be reckoned as 20 runs.

8. Should the batsman be successful in making a century, he is to be escorted to the school tuckshop after his innings, and given a jolly good feed.

The following laws are only to be observed when I am bowling:—

1. The bowler is permitted to bowl at a range of ten yards from the wicket. He may throw, fling, hurl, chuck, or deliver the ball in any manner he likes. He may also frighten the batsman by wearing a hideous mask, or hypnotising him, or shaking his fist at him.

2. The stumps are to be six feet in height. They are to be pitched with an interval of one foot between them. Some may object to this, on the grounds that the bowler will bowl his man out first ball. Well, jolly good luck to him!

3. If the batsman misses the ball, he is Out, whether the ball happens to hit the wicket or not.

4. If the batsman dares to stop the ball with his foot, hand, shin, or any portion of his anatomy, he is to be given "Out" for obstruction.

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5. The limit for any batsman's innings is five minutes. If during that time he has not been bowled, caught, stumped, maimed, or crocked, he must retire.

6. Every hit to the boundary will count as half a run, and every hit clean out of the ground will count as a whole run.

7. After each wicket he captures, the bowler is to be taken to the tuckshop and fed. (See Rule 8, Col. 1.)

CHAMPIONS OF THE REMOVE!

(Compiled by our Sports Editor.)

Subject.	Champion.
Cricket	Harry Wharton.
Football	Bob Cherry
Lawn-tennis	Frank Nugent
Golf	(Undecided)
Swimming	Mark Linley
Oarsmanship	Johnny Bull
Gymnastics	Wun Lung
Cycling	Tom Brown
Boxing	Bob Cherry
Wrestling	Hurree Singh
Long-distance Running	Mark Linley
Sprinting	Bob Cherry
Jumping	Frank Nugent
Weight-lifting	Percy Bolsover
Chess	Hurree Singh
Ludo	Alonzo Todd
Games of Chance	Harold Skinner
Slacking	Lord Mauleverer
Gorging	Billy Bunter
Gardening	Dick Rake
Singing	Hurree Singh
Mouth-organ Music	Micky Desmond
Detective-work	Peter Todd
Story-writing	Mark Linley
Poetry	Dick Penfold
Drawing and Painting	Frank Nugent
Oratory ("gift of the gab")	Peter Todd
Chief Sports Champion	Bob Cherry
Champion Scholar...	Mark Linley

EDITORIAL!

By Harry Wharton.

SUMMER is with us at last, and Greyfriars rejoices beneath its magic spell.

The call of the "Out-of-doors" is irresistible. Lessons in stuffy Form-rooms are regarded as an abomination. Why don't they "scrap" lessons in July, and let us live out-of-doors?

The Greyfriars sportsmen are finding plenty to occupy their time, these days. Cricket is in full swing; boating on the Sark is as popular as ever. The noble army of cyclists go far a-field on half-holidays, and come back in the cool of the evening, weary and dusty, but serenely happy. Bob Cherry has set the fashion in early morning bathing. He gets up an hour before rising-bell, and sprints down to the sea, accompanied by other energetic spirits—but not by Billy Bunter or Lord Mauleverer! The tennis-courts are proving a big attraction; and the amateur photographers are having the time of their lives. The fags have started their kite-flying and butterfly-catching season; and everything in the garden, so to speak, is lovely!

With all these activities going on, it is not fitting—as Billy Bunter said when he tried on a new waistcoat—that the editorial staff of the Greyfriars Herald should be idle. We have been very busy in the evenings compiling a special number dealing with Summer Sports. The issue is now in your hands. You will find plenty to enthuse over in these pages. Perhaps the tit-bit of the issue is Dicky Nugent's weird and wonderful story of an attempted Channel swim. It is a screamingly funny story, but the author did not intend it as such! Dicky takes his work very seriously, and it would puzzle and pain him to see fellows chuckling over what was meant to be a perfectly serious story.

Many of you will be taking your holidays this month. Whether you take a trip to the seaside, or a long cycling or walking tour, or a glorious camping-out holiday in the country, I hope you will enjoy yourselves up to the hilt. July is a ripping month for holiday-makers. The country is at its best. Of course, the weather is not to be trusted. You never can tell what the Clerk of the Weather has got up his sleeve. It might be a heat wave, and it might be a blizzard. But I don't think many of my readers will be unduly disturbed by the weather. Most Heraldites have the happy knack of being able to squeeze a hundred per cent. of enjoyment out of a holiday, be it wet or fine.

HARRY WHARTON.

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My Finest Sporting Feat!

A Record of Amazing Achievements
— Some Fact, and Some Fiction

BILLY BUNTER:

I can't say off-hand which was my finest sporting feat. You see, there are so many of them standing to my credit that it's a difficult matter to pick and choose. Sometimes I think the century I scored for the Remove last season, thereby winning the match for them, was my finest effort. You see, I performed the feat under a severe handicap. I had put my shoulder out of joint when feilding, and was in great pain. I had also been hit in the eye by a fast ball. However, I played up like a hero, and the boundaries simply flowed from my bat. When I made the winning hit, Wharton came running on to the playing-pitch, with the tears streaming down his face. "Bunty, old boy," he sobbed, "you're the pluckiest fellow who ever plucked! Despite a dislocated shoulder and a blind eye, you have nocked up a century, and won the match for your side! You shall have a regular place in the team from this time forthwith." A splendid achievement of mine, wasn't it, dear readers? I will now proceed to describe how I licked Bolsover major in the first round—"

(Enough, Bunter! I'm just going to call on you with a cricket-stump, to curb your imagination!—Ed.)

BOB CHERRY:

Sorry I can't describe my finest sporting feat. I've done nothing to make a song about, anyway.

(Since Bob is too modest to talk of his achievements, I will do it for him. Undoubtedly his finest sporting feat was when he won the special Gold Cup presented by the Governors of Greyfriars to the best athlete in the Remove. Bob proved himself beyond all question to be the finest all-round athlete in the Form.—Ed.)

ALONZO TODD:

Perhaps my greatest sporting feat was when I caught a large minnow, weighing nearly a quarter of an ounce, when fishing in the River Sark. The huge monster very nearly pulled me into the water in its struggles to free itself from my hook. I had to exert all the strength of my biceps to haul up that tremendous fish. I conveyed it in triumph to Greyfriars, and it has been stuffed and placed in a glass case in the school museum. I am very proud of that wonderful capture, but I hope to do even better next time. Possibly I shall succeed in landing a minnow that turns the scale at a whole ounce! Won't that be splendid? My Uncle Benjamin, who is a great angler, will rejoice to learn of my sporting achievements.

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HURREE SINGH:

My finest sporting featfulness was performed during an esteemed and ludicrous cricket match. I was bowlfully trundling, and I capturefully bagged three wickets with three successive balls. This is what they call the "hatful trick." I felt proudly bucked at my performance; but my three victims were very sick about it. They haven't forgiven me yet!

DICKY NUGENT:

I think my finest sporting feat was when I won the Dommynose Championship of the Second Form. I'm jolly hot-stuff at Dommynose, as my opponents will testify! I simply wiped up the table with them. I am also a wonderful chap at Loodo, Drafts, and Snakes and Ladders. And when it comes to kite-flying, I soar far above my rivals; at least, I did the other day, when my box-kite lifted me clean off my feet and carried me across the Close! Another grate feat of mine was when I won a race by inches, in a back yard at home. By the way, did I ever tell you how I licked Sammy Bunter at Noughts and Crosses?

(No, you didn't; and we don't want to be told now! Next, please!—Ed.)

BOLSOVER MAJOR:

As a pugilist, I am regarded as the Great White Hope of Greyfriars; and it was with my fists that I accomplished my finest sporting feat. I knocked out no less than fifty feeble fags in a single day; and if that isn't a world's record I should like to know what is! I not only knocked out fifty fags, but fifty front teeth into the bargain. I'm a terrible fellow when I'm roused, and can always be relied upon to win all my fights—unless my opponent happens to be more than three feet in height, in which event I turn and flee!

MR. PROUT:

Undoubtedly my finest sporting feat was when I shot ten rabbits, a brace of pheasants, a covey of partridges, the kitchen cat, Gosling, the porter (slight leg wound), a sparrow, and the Head's study window—all in one day!

DICK PENFOLD:

I think my finest sporting feat, you'd find extremely hard to beat. Batting with all my skill and power, I scored a hundred runs per hour. The bowlers bowled till they were tired, but still I hit like one inspired. I made such cuts

and pulls and drives, the fieldsmen scattered for their lives! I smashed the clock in the pavilion; my score was nearly half a million. They tried in vain to get me out; I was impregnable, no doubt. Then suddenly the spell was broke. A bump, a crash—and I awoke!

LORD MAULEVERER:

My finest sportin' feat, begad, was when I walked the whole way down to the village and back in the record time—for me—of three hours! I was absolutely played out by the time I reached the gates of Greyfriars. Then I crawled away to my study sofa, to sleep off the effects of that wonderful feat of endurance!

LAST MAN IN!

By Dick Penfold.

"LAST man in—and six to win!"
The shout is heard a mile.
I grasp my trusty "Willow King,"

And smile a sickly smile.

It's hard to give a genuine grin,
When you yourself are Last Man In!

"Play up, School!" shouts Johnny Bull.

"Keep your end up, Penfold!"

The shouts that rise on every hand
Increase my shyness tenfold.

A pad is buckled on each shin,
And I, poor wretch, am Last Man In!

The fieldsmen stare, the bowlers glare
As if they'd like to eat me!

I have a fear the first ball bowled
Will baffle me and beat me.

With trembling hand I stroke my chin,
And wish I wasn't Last Man In!

Nervous, unmanned, I take my stand
A short space from the wicket.

A dreadful hush falls on the crowd—
I simply cannot stick it!

Six runs are wanted yet to win:
Pity the poor old Last Man In!

In horrid dreams, the bowler seems
To be a towering giant;
And that was how he now appeared—
Huge, hefty, and defiant.

I felt as tiny as a pin—
A shaking, quaking Last Man In!

A breathless hush, a sudden rush,
The ball came like a bullet;

I fancied it would pitch to leg,
And vainly tried to pull it.

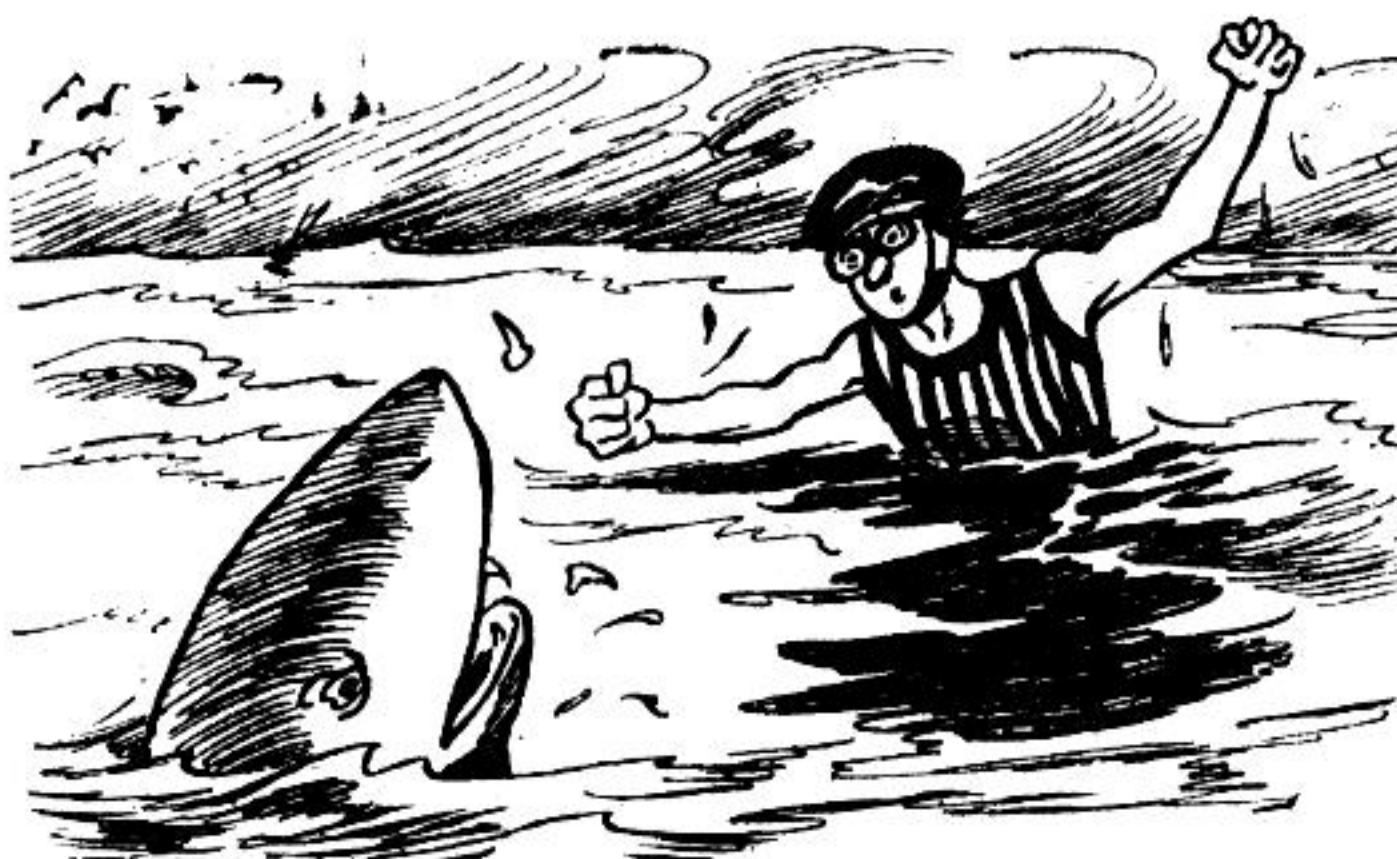
And then a most unearthly din
Greeted the ears of Last Man In!

The stumps were spinning in the air,
Performing revolutions;

The bowler danced with impish glee
As if he'd taken Kruschen's.

Then rose a scornful, savage shout—
The Last man In was Last Man Out!

[Supplement ii.]



Foiled at the Finish!

The Story of a Wonderful Attempt to Swim the Channel.
By DICKY NUGENT.

I MEAN to accomplish the grate feet, or perrish in the attempt!" Percy Plunger spoke with doggid determinashun. He stood on the edge of the peer at Dover, ready to take the plunge. Standing behind him, scribbling furiously in their notebooks, was a groop of newspaper reporters.

Our hero—for you will certainly vote him a hero before you come to the end of this story—was clad in a pail pink bathing costume, with purple stripes. A bathing-cap was pulled down over his ears to prevent those organs from getting water-logged. He also wore a pair of enomus goggles. His trainer had just rubbed him down with bear's greese to keep him warm in the water.

Percy Plunger was about to tackle that most formiddable feet of swimming the Channel. It was his grim intenshun to swim from Dover to Cally. Only two people in history had ever performed that feet. I can't remember their names offhand, but I fancy one was Oliver Cromwell and the other William the Konkeror.

Crowds of people were on the peer, waiting to see Percy take the plunge. Prezzantly a sinnister-looking skoundrel, with a swarthy face like a Spanyard's, pushed his way through the throng and stepped up to Percy, who was glansing down at the turbulent water with a certain amount of 4-boding.

"Plunger, I want a word with you!" muttered the sinnister-looking man, in a horse wisper.

Percy swung round.

"What do you want?" he demanded.

"I have a propersition to put before you, Plunger," said the stranger. "You will never swim the Channel without assistance. You know that as well as I do. It's twenty-one miles from Dover to Cally, and you are bound to be carried out of your course by the currant. Besides, you might be swallowed by a shark, or run down by a destroyer, or possibly get the cramp, and have to chuck in your mitt. I repeat, Plunger, you will never perform the feet without assistance."

Percy looked puzzled.

"What are you driving at?" he demanded.

The swarthy stranger lowered his voice.

"I am here to help you," he muttered.

"I intend, if you are willing, to come across with you in a boat. As soon as you are out of sight of the shore you can hop in, and I'll row you right across to Cally. Then we will pretend that you have swum all the way. Do you get me? It's a grate stunt. The papers will be full of your wonderful eggsploit tomorrow morning. 'PERCY PLUNGER SWIMS CHANNEL IN RECORD TIME!' What a fine plackard that will make! But if you don't take advantage of my offer you will be skorned and derided by the British Publick. 'PERCY PLUNGER GIVES UP THE GHOST IN MID-CHANNEL!' That sounds horrible, duzzent it? If you are wise, you will avail yourself of my assistance. All I want in return for my services is a modest check for a thousand pounds. Now, Plunger, what do you say?"

Percy said nothing. He glared at the sinnister skoundrel, and sparks of indignation flashed from his eyes. Then, raising his klenched fist, he dashed it full into the man's face.

Biff!

The skoundrelly stranger was taken completely by serprize. He staggered back and lost his ballance, and toppled over the edge of the peer, falling with a shriek and a splash into the angry water below.

"Grate snakes!" gasped one of the newspaper reporters. "Why did you hit that fellow, Mr. Plunger?"

Percy gave a snort.

"He came to me with a diabollicle suggestion," he said. "He wanted to take me across the Channel in a boat, and then pretend to the publick that I had swum every inch of the way."

"The cur!"

"I have given him my answer," said Percy. "He is now struggling in the sea, bellowing for help. You'd better throw him a rope, or he'll be food for fishes."

As soon as the dasterdly skoundrel had been reskewed from a watery grave,

Percy Plunger started on his formiddable task. Claasping his hands above his head, he dived gracefully off the edge of the peer.

There was a loud cheer from the specked taters.

"Good old Plunger!"

"Best of luck, old man!"

"Hope you get to Cally all right!"

The next minnit Percy found himself struggling in the swirling, whirling sea. It was very ruff at the time. The waves were mountane high, and the billers and brakers were terribul to behold. Percy ought to have attempted his Channel swim when the sea was as smooth as a millpond, like Oliver Cromwell did. However, he had now taken the plunge for better or worse, and he had to go through with it.

He struck out with strong, sweeping strokes. There was no boat with him. Percy had arranged to do without a boat, in case the publick should think there had been any wangling. A number of officials would be waiting to reseve him at Cally—if he ever got there.

Percy covered the first five miles without misshap. Then he was nearly cut in two by a liner. He only just managed to get out of the way in time. As it was, he was caught in the wash. For a few minnits he disappeared, and he had swallowed pints of salt water before he bobbed up to the surfiss.

Having recovered from this ordeal, Percy swam on. He had no more trubble until he got into mid-Channel, and then he ran into a shole of porpusses. They didn't attack him, but he

(Continued on next page.)

THE STORY OF A BOY WHO WAS "SACKED" FROM SCHOOL, AND REFUSED TO GO HOME!

Val Mornington Shopboy!

Scorned by his late school-fellows!

Are you reading this grand series of Rookwood tales appearing every week in the

POPULAR?

ON SALE ON TUESDAY.

Supplement iii.]

ARE YOU CONTENTED?

See what we have to say on the subject of

"CONTENTMENT"

IN

NEXT MONDAY'S SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT, BOYS!



Cricket Chatter!

By
Bob Cherry.

BILLY BUNTER is wondering why the English Selection Committee has not invited him to play for England against the South Africans. Possibly the wise gentlemen on the Selection Committee have never even heard of W. G. Bunter, though they remember W. G. Grace quite well. What ignorance!

* * *

GREYFRIARS REMOVE entertained the merry men of Highcliffe last Saturday. It was a great game. We won the toss, and batted first, hitting up the formidable score of 212. It looked as if Highcliffe would be badly beaten, but they rose to the occasion in great style, and Frank Courtenay and the Caterpillar made a rare fight for runs. However, they could not quite manage to pull the game out of the fire, and the Highcliffe innings closed for 205. A jolly near thing! All honour to the losers for their plucky fight.

* * *

OUR First Eleven, ably skippered by that sound sportsman, George Wingate, is going great guns. Wingate made a century in his last match, and a delighted crowd carried him shoulder-high to the pavilion. It was his first hundred of the season; but it certainly won't be his last, for he is showing sparkling form. Good old George!

* * *

COKER of the Fifth is like a bear with a sore head just now. After worrying Wingate for weeks to give him a place in the First Eleven, and after meeting with a blunt refusal on each occasion, Coker sent a petition to Mr. Prout, pointing out that he was the best cricketer at Greyfriars, and entitled to fair play. The petition was thrown out. Nothing daunted, Coker appealed to Mr. Quelch—with the same result. Finally, he sent a petition to the Head, who said that he was quite content to leave the matter in the capable hands of Wingate. Coker is now bubbling over with wrath. He talks wildly of sending a petition to the Governors, and then, if that fails, he will approach the Test Match Selection Committee. I expect he will finish up by sending a petition to the House of Lords! Poor old Horace!

* * *

ALONZO TODD, the gentle Duffer of the Remove, joined us at net-practice a few afternoons ago. After stopping one ball with his shin and another with his prominent proboscis and a third with his funny-bone, Alonzo has come to the conclusion that cricket is "a brutal and ruffianly game, which should be immediately abolished by Act of Parliament."

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MR. PROUT has no pretensions to being a cricketer; but the other day we saw him "bowling" along the road on his motor-bike! And the Head, though too old for cricket, made a "good drive" yesterday—in Sir Hilton Popper's motor-car! And Mr. Twigg brought off quite "a good catch" when fishing on the banks of the Sark!

* * *

TOM BROWN has come forward with a brilliant suggestion for brightening cricket. He says that every match ought to be played to music, with barrel-organs all round the ground. Then there would be no chance of the fieldsmen dropping off to sleep! When each batsman goes in, a Brass Band should proceed in front of him, and also play him out again after he has been bowled. Tom Brown says he would cheerfully organise such a Band himself, only he hasn't the "Brass"!

* * *

ON Saturday next we are playing St. Jim's. It will be good to see all the old familiar faces again—Tom Merry and Talbot and the immortal Gussy, who will probably be bowled first ball, and say, "Bai Jove! How on earth did that happen, deah boys?" Whether we shall beat our old rivals or not remains to be seen. If we do, you'll hear Hurree Singh sing; and if we don't, you'll see Tom Merry merry! Anyway, it will be a great tussle; and may the best team win!

* * *

I AM asked to state that subscriptions to the Remove Cricket Club are now due, and should be sent to the treasurer, Frank Nugent. Those who don't pay up within a given time will be put on a "Black List." The treasurer will take no excuses from people who are expecting postal-orders, which have by some mysterious means got hung up in the post!

* * *

So far, Vernon-Smith heads the list of the batting averages in the Remove Eleven. Bravo, Smithy. Some day our old Bounder will be seen playing for his county, and boundaries will figure pretty largely in his scores, I'll be bound.

* * *

I would warn thoughtless persons not to walk in front of the bowling screen when a match is in progress. It puts the batsman off his stroke, and usually results in his losing his wicket. Also, I would ask certain folk in the Remove to refrain from booing when a fellow "muffs" a catch. Accidents happen to the best cricketers. Some players take such treatment to heart and grow nervous, whereas a sympathetic "Hard luck, sir!" does a world of good.

FOYLED AT THE FINISH!

(Continued from previous page.)

got mixed up with them, and was unable to get clear for some time.

The sea was ruffer than ever by now. It was marvellous how our hero managed to keep afloat. He was tossed and buffeted, and biffed and battered, and lifted out of the sea, and hurled boddily through the air, so that he looked like a flying-fish.

But he struggled on gamely.

Shortly afterwards he was attacked by a shark, a fierce, ugly broot that came at him with bared fangs and lashing tail.

"Oh, help!" groaned Percy. "How am I going to dispose of this monster? I ought to have brought a harpoon with me."

He waited till the shark was about to bite his head off. Then, treading water, he shot out his fist with full force, and knocked the creature's front teeth out. Before the shark could recover Percy dived low and swam rappidly away under water. When at last he popped up to the surfiss again there was no sign of the shark. He heaved a grate sigh of releef, and continued his jerney.

His strength was failing him now, and his strokes were slow and feeble. But ahead of him he could see the French coast, which seemed to beckon to him with open arms. Percy was utterly whacked, and all the power seemed to have left his limbs.

But he struggled on gamely.

Neerer and neerer came the French shore. He could see the town of Cally quite plainly. Would he ever be able to reach it, and land safe and sound on terror firmer? Ah, that was the ques-chun! He was sorely spent, and his breth came and went in grate gasps. He had the cramp in his big toe, and he knew it would soon spread right up his body.

But he struggled on gamely.

Only a few more yards now! Only half a duzen more strokes! Percy could hear the frenzied cheers of his friends on the shore, urging him on. Would he get there? Would he? Could he? Wouldn't he? Couldn't he?

He summoned all his strength for a last desprit effort. But, alas! he was a spent force. All the stuffing was knocked out of him. He had swum the English Channel all but a yard. But he could not go on. With a strangled cry of despare, he turned round, and started to swim back again.

He had failed. But it was a glorious failure. And when Percy had swum all the way back to Dover he found a grate crowd waiting for him on the peer, and they cheered him to the ekko.

"What are you cheering for?" panted Percy, when he stepped out of the water. "I didn't manage it, after all. I swam the Channel all but a yard, and then I was obliged to turn round and come back again!"

"Never mind, Percy!"

"If at first you don't suxceed, try again!"

"Have another shot in Orgust, old chap."

And that is eggactly what Percy means to do. The odds are that he will suxceed next time, and his name will go down to prosperity with those of Oliver Cromwell and William the Konkeror, the only heroes in histery who have ever swum the Channel.

THE END.

[Supplement iv.



(Continued from page 12.)

force of the captain of the Remove's argument.

"I suppose it doesn't," he admitted; "but that doesn't explain who is responsible for this outrage, Wharton. And you must remember that you were in possession of my key."

Harry Wharton bit his lip. He could not solve that part of the mystery, and, until he did, a certain amount of suspicion was likely to rest on his shoulders.

For some few minutes there was an uncomfortable silence in the study.

At last the Remove master spoke. "Very well, my boys," he said coldly, "I will leave it at that. You may go!"

"But may we not clear up this—this mess first, sir?" asked Wharton.

"No!" said Mr. Quelch coldly. "I shall endeavour to put things right myself. You may go!" he added, as Harry Wharton & Co. remained in the study.

And the Famous Five went.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Sleeping Beauty!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry's powerful voice boomed out next morning as the laundry "squad" lined up in front of a long, narrow table, prepared to iron the previous day's washing.

Bob Cherry had been the first to commence operations. He began to wield the hot iron vigorously. But he suddenly called a halt in his labours as he became aware of a peculiar odour emanating from the pillow-case he was ironing. He lifted the iron from the linen, and gasped.

Instead of a sheening expanse of white linen, the natural outcome of linen dipped in starch and then ironed, meeting his gaze, he beheld a series of brown stains that spread all over the pillow-case as it drew the heat.

"What's wrong here, Harry?" he called out.

Before the words had left his lips a series of exclamations arose from the juniors, who, with aprons round their waists, shirt-sleeves rolled back, had commenced their first essay in ironing.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Look at these stains!"

"What's the game?"

The juniors "downed irons," and gathered round Harry Wharton. The captain of the Remove was looking puzzled, as well he might. No less than fourteen good linen pillow-cases were hopelessly "done in."

He picked up one of the articles, and looked at it shrewdly. Then he jumped.

"Some rotter has been pouring sulphuric acid over these things," he exclaimed. "Why, they are falling to pieces!"

"Oh, my giddy aunt!" muttered Bob Cherry ruefully. "More trouble!"

Ever since their slight disagreement with Gerald Loder, the Greyfriars domestics had been anything but a success. On arrival at the dormitories the previous night seniors and juniors discovered that their beds had been interfered with. Apple-pie beds seemed to be the order of the day, or, rather, the

night. In the kitchen on the following morning a quantity of salt had mysteriously gone astray. In any case, more than a taste of it had been discerned in the morning tea, whilst the porridge had borne a distinct flavour of soap.

And now the laundry!

"This is the limit!" said Harry Wharton. "I'd like to lay my hands on the rotter answerable for this wholesale ragging. First Quelch's study, then the dormitories, then the kitchen, and now the blessed laundry. I'm fed-up!"

"The fed-upfulness is terrific!" said Inky, shaking his head. "And the cadfulness of the esteemed and ludicrous blackguard responsible for this ragging is terrific!"

"Leave the pillow-cases alone!" said Harry Wharton at length. "We'll inspect the other articles for ironing before we start on them."

The previous day's wash was brought before him in wicker baskets. Each article was carefully examined, but so far as could be ascertained, these things were unspoiled. The sheets, on account of their dimensions, had been ironed by the huge rollers specially erected for the purpose. Luckily, the sheets had not been tampered with.

"Get on with the other stuff!" grunted Harry Wharton despondently.

The juniors lined up again at the ironing-table. The articles to be ironed were handed out proportionately, and operations were again commenced. For half an hour the juniors plied the irons without interruption. Then Billy Bunter, presenting a weird spectacle in an apron several sizes too small for him, suddenly emitted a wild howl and dropped his iron.

"Yaroooh!"

"What's the game, Bunter?" grunted Bob Cherry, who was working alongside the Owl of the Remove.

"Wow-ow! Help! I've burnt myself! Fire! Groooooough!"

The fat junior was prancing about like a war-horse, only his evolutions were not so elegant. His right hand was clapped to his mouth. And between the intervals of sucking the injured spot on his hand Billy Bunter continued to yell.

"Wow-ow-yowp!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites roared at Bunter's discomfiture.

"Groooooough!" wailed Bunter. "The beastly—yowp!—iron was hot!"

"Hot irons are usually hot, aren't they?" chuckled Bob Cherry. "That's why you were given a pad, you fat idiot!"

"Yah! But the pad slipped off—wow!" moaned the Owl. "I believe I shall lose the use of this hand."

"I wish you'd iron with your tongue, then," said Johnny Bull darkly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

In the general excitement of the moment the juniors failed to notice the distinct odour of burning cloth that began to rise from the ironing-table. Alonzo Todd, the Duffer of the Remove, was the first to become aware of it.

"Goodness gracious, my dear fellows," he said, blinking at the Removites. "I believe—in fact, I am almost certain—something is scorching!"

"Oh, great Scott!" exclaimed Nugent, snatching at an ironing-pad and grabbing a hot iron from a pile of linen. "That silly ass Bunter left his iron on these clothes. They are done in!"

"More trouble!" groaned Wharton. "Of course, Bunter would put his iron down on any other place except the stand made for such a purpose. You've done in three shirts, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Wharton!" said Bunter warmly. "A lot you care about my injury. Why, I might have lost the use of this hand. Unfeeling beast! Blow the blessed shirts!"

"Blow 'em, by all means," said Bob Cherry, who had been examining the name on the collars of the articles in question. "They belong to Loder!"

"Oh, lor'!" groaned Bunter, forgetting the smart in his damaged fin as he thought of the smart Loder would be likely to inflict when he saw his ruined shirts. "Yah! I'm fed-up with laundry work. I'm going into the Fifth Form-room. Sooner work under old Prout any day. Besides, I can't work now. My hand's crooked, you know."

"Jolly good riddance, old tulip!" said Nugent. "Ta-ta!"

But, on maturer consideration, Billy Bunter decided that he would sooner stay with the laundry squad in preference to working under Mr. Prout. Bunter was subject to these sudden changes of mind.

"I'll superintend the ironing, Wharton, if you like," he said magnanimously.

"But I don't like," grinned Wharton. "I'll put you on a job where you can't do any more damage. You give a hand with the stacking of the clean clothes in the airing cupboards."

This task seemed less irksome to the fat junior than ironing. He gathered up a basket of neatly-folded clothes and staggered away to the airing-cupboards, situated a few yards away.

With Bunter out of the way the ironing went on apace. In less than an hour the whole of the "wash" had been dealt with. But the Owl's first journey to the airing-cupboards was his last. Breathing heavily after his exertions, Bunter had laid out the linen on the racks in one of the spacious cupboards, and then, feeling drowsy, had occupied one rack himself in a cupboard that stood apart from the others.

His head began to nod, his mouth steadily opened wider and wider, and very soon the airing-cupboard resounded to his snores.

His absence from the laundry was noticed but not commented upon. Few of the Removites had time or inclination to worry about the fat and fatuous Owl of the Remove. But Harold Skinner, on passing the airing-cupboard when the laundry "squad" had ceased work for the day, heard Billy Bunter's deep snores.

He traced them to their point of origin, and grinned as he observed the fat, cumbersome figure of Billy Bunter curled up on one of the racks, fast asleep.

Skinner glanced round him craftily, but the place was deserted, save for himself and the slumbering Owl. Then gently, slowly, so that the hinges did not creak, the Cad of the Remove closed the door of the linen-cupboard and turned the key in the lock.

"Behold the sleeping beauty!" he chuckled, making his way over to the School House.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Not According to Plan!

"ANYBODY seen Bunter?"

Harry Wharton asked the question of a number of Removites just before dinner. But to all his questioning nothing satisfactory could be gained of the fat junior's whereabouts. Bunter seemed to have vanished from the face of the earth.

"Oh, he'll turn up, right enough!" said Bob Cherry. "Bunter wouldn't miss his grub for the King of England."

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But for once in a way Bunter's place at the dinner-table was vacant. Nobody seemed to worry about the Owl's absence, except Peter Todd, his study-mate, and Harry Wharton. But even they ceased to worry about so unimportant a person as William George Bunter as the dinner came in.

"Hurrah!"

A cheer went up from the whole school as Mark Linley and his fellow-cooks brought in the dinner, but the cheer suddenly died away, and gasps of amazement escaped the lips of the juniors and seniors alike. For at that moment, right at the tail-end of the procession of cooks, appeared a strange sight.

A huge, oblong-shaped cupboard, with a pair of fat legs enclosed in check trousers, appearing below the edge of the woodwork, wobbled into the dining-hall.

"Oh, great Scott!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"The walking cupboard!" ejaculated Tom Brown.

"Maskelyne and Devant!" said Nugent faintly.

"Bunter!" roared Harry Wharton, starting to his feet. "What on earth is—"

Bunter it undoubtedly was. There was no mistaking those fat legs or the loud pattern of the trousers that encased them.

Mr. Quelch jumped to his feet.

"B-bless my soul!" he gasped. "What utterly stupid boy is enclosed in that cupboard?"

"I say, you fellows——" shrilled a well-known voice.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Even as the check trousers were recognisable so was the voice. William George Bunter was yelling and pleading alternately at the top of his lungs to be let loose.

"Rescue! Groooough!"

"Carry me home to die!" said Peter Todd faintly. "Fancy our tame porpoise going in for circus stunts like this!"

"Help!" roared Bunter, still wobbling the cupboard into the hall. "Yah! I can't get out! Rescue!"

So surprised and amused were the juniors that for some moments no one made any attempt to go to the succour of the Owl. Even Mr. Quelch seemed incapable of speech or action; he could only stand and stare.

"Help! I'm f-f-falling!" wailed the fat junior.

Crash!

The walking cupboard wobbled perilously as the fat junior encased in it tripped up over his own feet.

"Look out!"

Another wobble, and the cupboard with Bunter yelling inside it, lurched heavily against a dining-table. It was unfortunate for Loder that he happened to be nearest the walking cupboard, for the edge of it struck his soup-plate, and sent the contents of the plate hurtling right into his face.

Swoosh!

"Hellup! Yowp!" roared Loder.

"Groooough!" came a hollow voice from within the cupboard.

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

Even Mr. Quelch could scarce forbear a grin. Never in the whole course of his career had he seen a sight to equal that of the present occasion.

"Pray release Bunter," he said, turning to Harry Wharton. "It appears that the cupboard door is locked. Doubtless you will have to force the lock."

Grinning broadly, Harry Wharton and a party of Removites surrounded the tilted cupboard.

"Can't you get out from underneath if

we lift the cupboard off, Bunter?" asked the captain of the Remove, noting that there was no bottom to the cupboard.

"No," howled Bunter. "I'm stuck. My blessed shoulders—groooough—are wedged in a rack. You will have to break open the door. Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors set to to break open the cupboard door. With the aid of a carving-fork the lock was forced, and the door swung open. A shout of laughter went up from the whole assembly in the dining-room as Billy Bunter was revealed. His head and shoulders appeared to be wedged in one of the racks of the cupboard. His jacket was torn in several places where the jagged ends of the broken rack had bitten into the material. His expression was one of woe-begone misery.

"Groooough!" he gasped faintly. "Some rotter locked me in the cupboard and left me!"

Despite the seriousness of the occasion the juniors burst into a howl of laughter. The Owl of the Remove was always surprising his Form-fellows, but his latest escapade—or, as Bob Cherry put it, masquerade—was undoubtedly prime.

The laughter died down as Mr. Quelch came to the front. Bunter had now stepped from the cupboard.

"Bunter!" said the Form master, trying his hardest to appear severe. "What do you mean by walking into the dining-hall in that absurd manner?"

"I was locked in, sir," replied the fat junior warmly. "Some beast—I mean, chap, sir, turned the key in the lock when I was inside the cupboard."

"Indeed, Bunter! And what were you doing inside the airing-cupboard in the first place?"

"Nothing, sir! That is, I was only sorting out the linen, sir," said the fat junior promptly.

"Think again, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Really, sir. I am sorry you doubt my word, sir. I hope you wouldn't think that I'm the sort of chap to crawl into a cupboard for an hour's sleep, purposely to dodge the laundry work. And, in any case, I didn't know that the cupboard was a disused one. I simply went to sleep on the bottom rack——"

"You what!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"That is to say, sir, I just looked into the cupboard, and some fellow pushed me in and locked the door. I believe it was Wharton—in fact, I'm sure it was Wharton!"

"What!" gasped Wharton. "You——"

"Bunter, you are telling falsehoods," said the Form master sternly.

"Me, sir!" exclaimed Bunter. "No, sir. A Bunter never told a lie."

"Never told the truth, you mean," whispered Bob Cherry.

"Then what makes you believe that it was Wharton, Bunter?" demanded Mr. Quelch.

"Now I come to think of it it wasn't Wharton, sir," said Bunter thoughtfully.

"Looked more like Morgan."

"But Morgan has been in the sanatorium these last three days," said Mr. Quelch, a ghost of a smile flickering at the corners of his mouth.

"Oh dear!"

The expression on the fat junior's face was worth, as Bob Cherry put it, a guinea a box.

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

"Bunter, you utterly ridiculous boy!" said the master of the Remove. "Go to your place. You appear to have been the victim of a practical joke. You will see that the cupboard is returned to its proper place. I understand that it is to be broken up for firewood. In future

you would do well to stay at your work and not steal off to a corner or a cupboard and slack. The consequences on this occasion might have been very serious.

"And I would warn the person with the misguided sense of humour," added Mr. Quelch sternly, "who was responsible for your incarceration to refrain from playing any more practical jokes."

The juniors moved back to their places, and soon dinner was in full swing. Whatever misery Bunter might have suffered whilst locked up in the cupboard was completely obliterated and compensated by the quantity of food he demolished.

Skinner, Snoop, and Stott exchanged knowing winks, but wisely remained silent. Harry Wharton glanced suspiciously at the cad of the Remove on one or two occasions and knitted his brows. He had a shrewd idea who was responsible for locking-up Bunter in the cupboard. He had more than a suspicion now that Harold Skinner was responsible for the wholesale ragging that had been going on during the last two days.

He confided his suspicions to Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, Inky, and Frank Nugent after dinner.

"I shouldn't be a bit surprised if you are right, Harry," said Bob. "Skinner's capable of anything. I've noticed that he's very pally with Loder lately."

"So have I," said Wharton grimly. "And when those two get together it usually follows that it's for our special benefit."

The remainder of the afternoon the Removites set to to clean up the grounds of the school. The drive was swept, the lawns were mowed, the brasswork cleaned, and a hundred and one domestic duties were cheerfully performed.

Harry Wharton & Co. returned to rest that night feeling that they had deserved well of their country. The novelty of domestic life was beginning to wear off, leaving only the rigours of hard work; but the majority of the Removites were still as willing in spirit as when they had first essayed the task.

Loder saw lights out, and glanced maliciously at Harry Wharton & Co. as he passed their beds.

"No larks, mind!" he cautioned grimly. "Or there will be trouble."

"Go and eat coke!" said Bob Cherry.

"What did you say, Cherry?" rapped Loder, wheeling round.

Snore!

Biting his lips, Loder of the Sixth withdrew from the dormitory, pausing only to whisper a few words to Skinner, who occupied a bed next to the door. In less than half an hour the Remove had settled down to sleep. But there was one junior in the dormitory who was very much awake. And that was Harold Skinner.

As the clock in the old tower chimed midnight the cad of the Remove sat up in bed and listened intently.

"Anyone awake?" he asked drowsily.

No answer.

Harold Skinner chuckled grimly to himself and slipped from his bed. Very cautiously he approached the bed occupied by Harry Wharton, and stood there listening. But the only sound that reached his ears was the captain of the Remove's steady breathing.

Skinner stooped and picked up Harry Wharton's shoes. Then, moving stealthily over to Bob Cherry's bed, he picked up his shoes. Then the cad of the Remove tiptoed silently out of the dormitory, and made his way down the staircase.

He walked along the passage until he

came on a level with Dr. Locke's study. No sound of any kind reached him from the interior of the room, and no beam of light shot out from beneath the door.

He tried the handle of the door. To his satisfaction the lock gave. Creaking slightly, the door was swung open and closed again.

Harold Skinner stood alone in Dr. Locke's study.

"Now for the stunt!" he muttered.

Placing the shoes he had taken from the Remove dormitory on the floor, the rascally junior turned on the electric light. Its sudden flash revealed to him all that he wished to see, and as quickly he switched it off again.

Barely had he done so when there came to his ears the soft patter of footsteps in the corridor without. Every nerve in Skinner's frame tingled, his hair almost stood on end, his eyes started out of their sockets in terror.

"Caught!" he breathed wildly. "Loder told me that the Head was retiring at ten o'clock. Caught!" he repeated, darting an apprehensive glance at the study door.

The footsteps grew louder. They halted outside the study door.

With a suppressed cry of fear Skinner darted behind a curtain that hung in one corner of the room, his heart thumping against his ribs as though it would burst. And just as he reached this haven of safety the study door opened and someone entered the room.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Too Clever of Skinner!

"WAKE up, Bob!" Harry Wharton shook his chum roughly by the shoulder.

"Grooough! Gerraway! 'Tain't rising-bell yet!" mumbled Bob Cherry sleepily.

"Wake up, you ass!" repeated Wharton. "And don't make such an infernal row!"

Bob Cherry sat up in bed, rubbing the sleep from his eyes.

"Skinner's not in the dorm," whispered Wharton. "I'm going out to hunt round. Are you game to come?"

"Like a bird," said Bob, slipping the bedclothes from him. "What's he up to?"

"Blowed if I know!" said Wharton. "I just woke up, and my mind was filled with Skinner. I hopped out of bed, and found that he wasn't in the dorm. His bed's warm, though, so he can't have been gone long. By the way, my shoes are missing."

"What's that?" said Bob Cherry, reaching for his own shoes. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! My shoes are missing, too!"

"That's jolly queer!" said Wharton. "There's something jolly fishy going on here!"

Full of disquieting thoughts the two Removites tiptoed in their stockinged feet from the Remove dormitory. They made their way down the staircase, and reached the passage. As they turned the corner they saw a beam of light suddenly disappear from a doorway at the extreme end of the passage. Followed the light clicking sound of a lock being turned, and then the pattering of footsteps.

"The Head's study!" whispered Wharton, clutching Bob Cherry by the arm.

"What's the game?"

"Blowed if I know!" grunted Bob.

"Was that Skinner, do you think?"

"It wasn't Dr. Locke, at any rate," said Wharton slowly. "I'd know



A huge cupboard, with a pair of fat legs enclosed in check trousers appearing below the edge of the woodwork, wobbled into the dining hall. "Oh, great Scott!" gasped Bob Cherry. "The walking cupboard!" ejaculated Tom Brown. "Bunter!" roared Harry Wharton. Bunter it undoubtedly was. "I say, you fellows——" shrilled a well-known voice. "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Removites. (See Chapter 9.)

his walk anywhere. Keep back, Bob; the fellow, whoever he may be, might be coming this way."

The chums drew back level with the wall and listened intently. But the footsteps, instead of approaching their direction, were receding from them.

"Quick, Bob!" suddenly whispered Wharton. "We must follow. I don't like the look of this!"

He made as if to dart along the passage, but Bob plucked his arm.

"Hold on," he whispered. "Better if we go along the Upper Fourth passage—that runs into our passage. We shall bump right into the chap if we go that way."

"Good wheeze," said Wharton tensely. "Come on."

With the sturdy Bob in close attendance the captain of the Remove half ran along the Upper Fourth passage. But they reached the point which merged into the Remove passage without encountering a soul.

The two juniors halted, perplexed.

"He must have come this way," said Bob, "unless—unless he's hopped along the parapet that joins the sanny just below the passage window."

"Oh, my hat!" breathed Wharton. "Skinner wouldn't have the nerve to walk along that parapet. He'd——"

The captain of the Remove broke off abruptly, and gripped Bob Cherry's hand tightly.

"Look!" he said hoarsely. "Look at that window!"

Bob Cherry started violently.

In the light of the moon, which shone faintly through the window, could be seen a youthful silhouetted figure—a

figure that moved along the narrow stone parapet that joined the School House and the sanatorium.

"The silly idiot will break his neck!" said Bob Cherry, dashing to the window. "Call him back, Harry!"

But Wharton's common-sense forbade such a course.

"Don't be an ass, Bob!" he said. "If you yelled at that fellow now, it's ten to one he'd start with surprise, and in doing so lose his balance, and then——"

Bob Cherry shuddered.

"What's he carrying, Harry?" he asked suddenly.

As the figure moved farther away from the window in the passage it encountered a stronger beam of light from the moon. The two Removites could now see plainly that the figure carried a fairly large parcel in one hand—could see, too, that the figure was attired in pyjamas.

"That's not Skinner!" exclaimed Wharton suddenly. "It's——"

"Trotter!"

Bob Cherry voiced the name the same moment as his chum. For the figure had halted outside one of the windows of the sanatorium, and the face of the midnight prowler was plainly obvious.

Wharton repeated the name unconsciously. Wonderingly, he watched the page-boy clamber in at the open window of the sanny and disappear from view. Then the captain of the Remove turned to Bob Cherry.

"What do you make of it?"

"Don't ask me!" replied Cherry, scratching his head in perplexity. "I

thought we were after Skinner. Blowed if—

"Boys!"

The two Removites started guiltily, and wheeled sharply. To their astonishment, they were confronted by the Head of Greyfriars himself, attired in a dressing-gown and slippers.

"Wharton—Cherry!" said Dr. Locke sternly. "What are you doing out of your dormitory at this hour of night?"

Wharton and Cherry seemed dumbstruck. To explain their presence satisfactorily meant sneaking. They could not explain without giving away Skinner—could not further explain without giving away Trotter. For that Trotter had been engaged on some shady expedition they had not the slightest doubt, although their common-sense and knowledge of his character contradicted such a thought.

"I—I—I—" began Wharton.

"We—we—we—" stammered Cherry.

"Follow me!" interrupted Dr. Locke sharply. "I was awakened by hearing the sound of footsteps in the passage and seeing a light in my study. Follow me to my study. You will catch your death of cold in these draughty passages! Ah, where are your shoes?"

The Head gazed at the two Removites sternly, and noted that they were in their stockinged feet.

With a grim expression in his face, Dr. Locke ushered the two "prowlers" to the door of his study.

From within the study came a rustling sound of movement and a half-stifled cry.

Dr. Locke's eyebrows came together in a frown.

He gripped the handle of the door, and made as if to swing it open; but, to his surprise, he found it locked.

"Bless my soul!" he gasped. "What on earth is going on in this school to-night? Did either of you boys lock my door?" he added, turning sharply on the two wondering Removites.

"Me, sir?" said Wharton and Cherry in unison. "No, sir!"

The Head compressed his lips. He felt that he was on the verge of a discovery. Bidding the two juniors remain where they were he hastened into his bed-room—situated a few doors farther along the passage—and returned a short while afterwards with a bunch of keys.

Meantime, Wharton and Bob Cherry had been exchanging a whispered conversation. They, too, had heard the sound of movement in the study, and a dawning light was beginning to break in on them. Dr. Locke's return put a stop to their conjectures.

The key grated in the lock, and the door was swung open. The Head reached for the electric switch, and flooded the room with light.

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry followed him into the study wonderingly. But the room appeared to be devoid of human presence save for themselves and Dr. Locke.

Suddenly the Head's eyes caught sight of two pairs of shoes in the middle of the floor. He hastened towards them and picked them up. Simultaneously the two Removites gasped.

"Our shoes!"

"Indeed!" said Dr. Locke sharply. "And pray what are they doing in my study? Come, come, my boys!" he added, a trifle testily, as the two juniors flushed uncomfortably. "You—"

He broke off, his eyes fixed on a spot below the curtain in the corner of the room. From beneath the edge of the curtain merged the turn-ups of a pair of trousers and two slippered feet. Whar-

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ton and Cherry looked at one another significantly, as they saw what had arrested the Head's attention.

"Boy!" thundered the Head, in a booming voice. "Come out from behind that curtain!"

The curtain shook as though a strong gust of wind had shaken it.

"Boy!" repeated Dr. Locke, in a voice that resembled thunder. "Step forth!"

The curtain parted, and the shrinking, terrified form of Harold Skinner came into view. He advanced slowly into the room, his face white with horror, his eyes downcast.

"What does this mean?" demanded the Head sternly. "What are you doing here, Skinner?"

The cad of the Remove was silent.

Before Dr. Locke could repeat his remark there came a tap at his door, and a second or so later the matron hurried into the room. She started, and hesitated as she beheld the juniors there.

"Dr. Locke," she stammered, bringing to light a parcel, "an awful thing has just happened."

"Calm yourself, madam!" said the Head gently, as he noticed the matron's agitation.

Wharton pushed forward a chair, and received a grateful nod from the Head for doing so. The matron sank into it, and gasped for breath.

"Oh dear, sir!" she said at last. "I have received the shock of my life to-night. It appears that Nurse Gelding was taken ill with influenza while attending to Trotter the page-boy, and during the time we were removing her to her room Trotter took it into his head to sleepwalk."

"What!" ejaculated the Head.

"The poor boy has been delirious this last two days, sir," continued the matron. "He keeps talking about some valuable ornaments that might be broken."

The Head's gaze strayed to the mantelpiece, and he started violently.

"Trotter must have walked in his sleep and visited this room about twenty minutes ago," went on the matron, "for he walked into my arms almost, with this parcel and this pass key just now. The poor lad said to me, quite happily: 'You will look after the ornaments, matron. Dr. Locke says they are valuable!'"

Dr. Locke's face softened.

"But how did he get out of the sanatorium, matron?" he asked.

"That's the nightmare of it all!" shuddered the matron. "He walked across the parapet that joins the sanatorium and the Upper Fourth passage. He might have killed himself!"

"He might indeed!" said the Head, with a shudder. "Thank Heaven he's safe!"

"He's much better now, sir!" said the matron. "We put him between the blankets without waking him, and there is a happy expression on his face now. What's more, his delirium has left him."

Skinner had listened to the matron's story with burning cheeks. He cursed himself for a blind fool. Had he known that it was only Trotter who had entered the study, he would have made good his escape before the door had been locked. He had been caught in his own trap.

"Then it must have been Trotter who locked this door," said Dr. Locke at length.

"Yes, sir," answered the matron. "When he first came into the sanatorium, you remember, he had Gosling's pass keys in his pocket. It was the pass key that he used to-night."

"I see," said Dr. Locke grimly.

He turned to Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry.

"You boys may go back to your beds," he said gently. "I think I understand the schoolboy code of honour sufficient to explain your presence in the passage to-night. Kindly take your shoes with you!"

"Skinner," added the Head, turning to the wretched junior, "go back to your bed. I will deal with you in the morning. You, doubtless, will be able to explain the presence of Wharton's and Cherry's shoes in my room, together with your own presence!"

Wharton and Bob Cherry bade the matron and the Head good-night, and hurried back to the Remove dormitory. Skinner was ten minutes behind them. The cad of the Remove had, despite the risk, made it his business to run along and see Loder of the Sixth.

What passed between them was never known, but on the following morning Skinner confessed to having invaded the Head's sanctum with the idea of creating chaos with the furniture, and leaving sufficient evidence behind him to lay the blame on Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry. He pleaded that the whole affair was a harmless joke. What part the shoes were actually destined to play in the drama he never made known, but Bob Cherry himself had a shrewd idea.

"The rotter!" he said to Harry Wharton and the rest of the Co. "I can see the game, Harry. Your shoes and mine are the only ones in the Remove dormitory bearing Phillips' rubber heels. Skinner's plan was to rag the Head's study, and then upset some ink or something on the floor, and imprint the soles of our shoes in it. When the crash came we should have found it very hard to explain that significant evidence."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Wharton. "I believe you're right, Bob!"

"He's right enough!" chimed in Johnny Bull. "Skinner's capable of any villainy! He's been responsible for all this rotten ragging!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Looks suspiciously like it," said Nugent thoughtfully.

"I say, Wharton—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Here's our tame porpoise. What's it this time, old fat lardtub—another expected remittance from Lord Bunter de Broke?"



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"Look!" said Wharton hoarsely. "Look at that window!" In the light of the moon Bob Cherry could see a youthful figure moving along the stone parapet that adjoined the School House. "Boys!" The two juniors wheeled sharply. To their astonishment they were confronted by the Head. "Wharton—Cherry," said Dr. Locke sternly. "What are you boys doing out of your dormitory at this hour of night?" (See Chapter 10.)

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, Cherry," said the Owl indignantly. "I am expecting a postal-order for a fiver—I mean——"

"A tanner!" broke in the cheerful Bob.

"A quid!" hooted Billy Bunter. "If any of you beasts—I mean chaps—would advance me a small loan until to-morrow, I should be obliged."

"And so should we," said Harry Wharton.

"Eh, good, Wharton, old chap," smirked Bunter. "I always thought you were an obliging fellow——"

"We should be obliged," continued Wharton gravely, "to consider it a dead loss. Like the lady in the song, it would be gone and lost for ever."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!" roared Billy Bunter. "For two pins, Wharton, I'd take you into the gym and give you the thrashing of your life!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton did not take that threat seriously. The prospect of William George Bunter taking anyone into the gym for a thrashing was like the eighth wonder of the world—not yet born.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly. "Here's Loder!"

The Famous Five turned on their heels and saw the unpopular prefect of the Sixth striding in their direction. There was an ugly frown on his face that boded ill for someone.

"Oh, crumbs!"

Billy Bunter uttered the ejaculation in a tone of dismay and tried to conceal his huge bulk behind Bob Cherry.

"What's the game?" demanded Bob.

"Bunter, by the look of it," grinned Johnny Bull. "Loder wants to see our porpoise about the shirts he ruined yesterday."

"I say, you chaps," piped Bunter in alarm. "Keep that rotter off! Don't let him touch me!"

"Got you, you little sweep!" grated Loder, reaching the Famous Five and

grabbing the crouching figure of the Owl of the Remove by the collar. "I'll teach you to spoil my shirts. Take that!"

The prefect cuffed Bunter's fat ear savagely.

"Yarooogh!" howled Bunter. "Lemme go, you rotter!"

But Loder had no intention of letting his victim off thus lightly. He boxed Bunter's other ear, at which there was a fresh wail of woe.

"Yoooop! Yah! Stop him!" roared Bunter. "He's been responsible for all this ragging, Wharton——"

"Eh—what's that?" asked the captain of the Remove, taking a step forward.

"Loder and Skinner have been plotting together," exclaimed Bunter.

Loder's face darkened, and an ugly scowl came over his features.

"You lying little toad!" he hissed, cuffing Bunter's ear again.

"Here, hold on!" chipped in Wharton, seizing the prefect by the arm. "This wants looking into!"

"Yah, the rotter!" wailed Bunter. "I heard him talking it over with Skinner this morning just after breakfast. Loder put Skinner up to the trick of mucking up the domestic work. He's been getting his revenge for the ragging we gave him the other day."

"You little sweep!" grated Loder. "Nothing of the kind!"

But there was a lack of conviction in his tone. His face flushed uncomfortably as Wharton's keen eyes regarded him. And for once in a way Loder of the Sixth felt abashed. Without another word he turned on his heel and stalked off.

"Are you sure that's true, Bunter?" asked Wharton, when the prefect had gone.

"Honest injun!" replied the Owl.

"I can see daylight now," said Bob Cherry. "If it weren't for the fact that Skinner is about to get it hot from the Head, we'd rag him baldheaded. He's a crafty worm, anyway."

And Inky nodded his head in assent.

"The craftiness of the ludicrous and unworthy Skinner is terrific!" he murmured. "But there is an old English proverb which says that too much cleverfulness will break the camel's backfulness!"

"So it seems!" chuckled Johnny Bull. "Listen to the sounds of woe!"

Skinner was undergoing his punishment at that moment. Joke or no joke, Dr. Locke had decided that a birching would, perhaps, readjust Harold Skinner's misguided sense of humour.

At the time Skinner thought it had had that effect himself, for when he crawled away from Dr. Locke's study all the humour in life had gone—leaving only the dull aches and the scorn of his Form-fellows. He even wondered whether the "consideration" he had received from Gerald Loder in token of "keeping his name out of the affair" was worth it. Certain it was the "consideration" had gone long before the aches and pains of the birching had.

Skinner was a very chastened Skinner when he took his place with the Greyfriars domestics on the following day. But as Bob Cherry remarked, the leopard cannot change its spots. And by the time Trotter—the last of the patients—had been given a clean bill of health, as it were, and Greyfriars had been discharged from quarantine, Skinner was the old Skinner.

But it is doubtful whether he will ever forget the downfall of his plans when he "volunteered" for a job with The Schoolboy Domestics!

THE END.

(Look out for next Monday's grand complete story of the chums of Greyfriars, entitled "The Parting of the Ways!" A real character yarn, introducing Vernon-Smith, better known as the Bounder, and Tom Redwing, the scholarship junior. Order next Monday's MAGNET early, chums!)

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With Richard Lion-Heart, the King, away in Palestine on the Third Crusade, well nigh all England was subject to the tyrannies and plunderings of the Norman barons who thronged the court of Prince John. But there was one man, by name **ROBIN HOOD**, who, with his band of outlaws, proved a dangerous thorn in the side of the rascally Prince John. Make his acquaintance in—



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Comrades of the Open Road!

NEVER shall I forget the day! It was May 1st, the year of our Lord 1192, and old Nottingham was merry-making. I, Tom Hadleigh, could see the crowds flocking towards the fair ground through the cobweb-hung doorway of Simon Rye, the goldsmith.

"Ay," I muttered, "if there were as many kind thoughts in thy withered old heart as there are cobwebs in thy house, Master Rye, I should not be toiling here when every other 'prentice in Nottingham makes holiday."

The thought was enough to make me cast aside my apron. Why should I not be free to laugh and frolic with my fellows? Well I knew the penalty of such rashness, for Simon Rye was but waiting his opportunity to cast me aside. Did I but break my indentures he could throw me out without any obligation to me, without having to repay a mite of that which I had done for him by my years of all but unpaid work.

They called me Big Tom, for, despite my youth—I was sixteen—I was head and shoulders taller than my companions, and of a very fair size. Without intending to boast, I could hold my own with any at fisticuffs and the quarterstaff. The good monks of Hadleigh Priory had taught me the latter, had taught me to read and to write, to paint on vellum, and to work in wood and metals. For it was the monks of Hadleigh who, finding me deserted in Sherwood Forest—by whom none knew—when little more than a babe, had given me shelter.

But now the Priory was no more than a heap of ruins. Hugo, Earl of Charndene, had found excuse to destroy and plunder it. Hugo, the worst enemy of England next to Prince John himself. For ever since Richard Lion-Heart, the King, had left England on the Third Crusade; and his brother held power in his place, the Norman barons had plundered where they would.

But to my story. Well I knew the price I would have to pay for thus leaving the work entrusted to me by my master, Simon Rye. At the moment of my triumph on the fair-ground, for I had succeeded, with a great measure of

luck, in overcoming a bearded giant with the quarterstaff, and was being carried shoulder high by my jubilant companions, a harsh voice, a high-pitched voice broke in upon my triumph; a voice I knew only too well.

"So, you whelp! Is this how you work upon the gold cup of my Lord Hugo of Charndene?"

The voice of my master, Simon Rye, the goldsmith.

Well, well, 'twas far better to stride out among the shady trees of Sherwood Forest a free man—I say man, for I had now a man's part to play. Far better, I say, than brooding over the petty tyrannies of my late master, Simon Rye. For it had happened even as I had foreseen. Master Rye had found excuse at last, and, to be sure, he had seized his chance of being rid of me. He had cast me out, and in so doing had been the indirect cause of my meeting one of the most extraordinary men of the age. Little did I know when I set foot in Sherwood Forest that five low-browed knaves had followed me for my gold, but five pieces in all. Little did I know that a great piebald horse, carrying on its broad back a small, slim man, from whose fascinating eyes danced the light of battle, would come to my succour in time of need!

Yet so it happened. The footpads were about to end my life when this human whirlwind on his gallant horse swept down upon them. 'Twould make poor reading to describe the fight, for Lantern—that was, I afterwards discovered, the name of my rescuer—made short work of it.

And so it came about that, an hour later, Lantern and I and Hereward—that was the name of the gallant beast he bestrode—were resting in a sheltered glade. I told him my story, and showed him the broken talisman of polished horn I wore around my neck. It had been found lying near me when the monks had discovered me as a babe in Sherwood Forest. On it were scratched the words—meaningless now that the other half was missing: "The cave betwixt . . . a split oak . . . follow the water . . . GOLD."

"Ah!" he said, when I had finished. "It would seem, then, Tom Hadleigh, that thou and I are brothers of the open road. I also have nothing in this world save that in which I stand, and my good friend Hereward here. How wouldst like to join forces with us?"

I sprang to my feet, speechless, and our hands gripped. To this day I cannot describe it—the rare quality within him. But I knew that even then right willingly would I have died for Lantern.

It seemed that our partnership was to be celebrated in unusual fashion, for scarcely had we built our fire and partaken of slices of venison, when an arrow came streaking through the air, to fall quivering in the short grass within a hair's-breadth of Lantern.

He seemed no whit perturbed, nor yet surprised. But he was on his feet, with his sword glistening in the firelight, ere I could draw breath.

And then they came bursting through the trees—a dozen or more of Earl Hugo's men-at-arms. Once again I gasped in admiration at Lantern's sword-play. But weight of numbers told 'gainst all his skill, and I made but a poor ally, for I possessed but a dagger. We were taken after a stern struggle, and then commenced a weary drag to the Castle of Charndene.

On the way Lantern whispered to me that he had once killed a squire of Earl Hugo's, and that the latter meant to avenge his squire with Lantern's blood. I shuddered, but Lantern's concern was for me. We cheered each other until such time as we entered the castle.

And then we were in the presence of the Black Wolf himself!

Lon, the Jester!

HE smiled when his brooding eyes fell upon us, and showed his wolfish fangs. Then he strode forward slowly, his mail giving a metallic ring in the hush that had fallen. Everyone in that courtyard feared him—everyone save Lantern. For I needs must own that my heart was icy as my eyes met those of Hugo.

He came to a standstill before Lantern, and one lean, scarred hand came up to rub his chin—for Hugo of Charndene was a clean-shaven man. His eyes fastened on his captive—he had scarce glanced at me. And suddenly he laughed.

'Twas a laugh so cold and cruel that I felt the flesh creep upon my bones. And then Lantern laughed, too—a laugh soft and mellow, and at sound of it all my fears fell from me.

"Ha, Hugo!" said he. "'Tis mighty pleasant when old friends meet! 'Tis mighty fine to see your evil old carcase!"

Hugo's eyes darkened.

"Welcome to Charndene!" sneered he. "Methinks there was a debt that you left unpaid last time you were in my demesne. Dost remember Phillipe de Tour?"

"Ay," answered Lantern coolly. "A squire of yours, was he not, Hugo? A black-hearted whelp from the old wolf's den, and methinks I call to mind cleaning a sword in the rogue's vitals one lucky day!"

There was a breathless silence at that. The Black Wolf's hand went to his dagger, and Lantern laughed again.

"You may jest," purred Hugo softly, as his hand came slowly from the knife. "But you did sadly inconvenience me when you slew that squire of mine. Prince John himself was upon a visit to Charndene, and at the tournament my new squire showed himself so sorry a fool before them all that I, too, was laughed at for some things he did. And I owe that to you! But you shall pay, you shall pay—"

He seemed almost to spit out the words. And then quite suddenly he broke off, and his eyes seemed to start from his head.

He was staring at my bared throat, where hung the talisman that Lantern had been holding when we were attacked in the forest. I suppose I had instinctively slipped it around my neck again as we sprang to our feet, but it came as a surprise to me to find it there. And now Earl Hugo's wolfish glare was fixed upon it. Strangely startled he seemed, and for the moment he had forgotten Lantern.

"So you are his companion, boy? What is that around thy neck?" snarled he.

But before I could speak he had snatched at it, and, since it was attached to the leathern plait around my neck, he all but dragged me off my feet, and I cried out as I felt the leather skin my neck. I saw Lantern's eyes flash. Then Hugo drew his dagger, and with one slash severed the cord.

Why the broken talisman should interest him I could not dream. He peered down at it, for the light in the courtyard was very dim, with the sun all but set. He muttered an oath, and

moved a little, trying to catch the light upon the polished horn.

It was all very silent, but for the deep, eerie baying of a bloodhound somewhere deep in the castle. And then came swift, light footsteps among the crowd. The men-at-arms stood aside, and there came darting through them the strangest figure I had ever seen.

He was clad in red and black and yellow, with bells around his knees and elbows, and upon his head was a great cap of scarlet shaped like a cockerel's comb. He was a little hunchback, with a great head rolling upon his shoulders, ever upon one side or the other. But 'twas only that it seemed big because of his stature, for when I had looked a moment more I saw that 'twas a fine-shaped head, mighty handsome beneath its paint, with its strange dark eyes and nose like an eagle's beak.

This, plainly, was Hugo's fool. As he came darting through the men-at-arms, twisting his face into the drollest of grimaces the while, he sang a snatch of foolish song.

"Ohohohoho!" cried he shrilly. "Our Lord Hugo has found a find! See now whether he can find the found!"

And with that he snatched the talisman from Hugo's hands.

In an instant he had darted away, laughing aloud. But 'twas clear enough that the fool had gone too far in his pranks. Hugo's face was black with passion.

"Lon!" he snarled. "By my head, man, but you are fool indeed to anger me thus! The talisman, man! The talisman, Lon, or by my head you have a taste of the torturer's hooks!"

Lon, the jester, only threw back his head and laughed foolishly as he capered away.

"Seize him! Seize him, you rogues, or you, too, shall be flayed as I will flay Lon!" snarled Hugo.

The men-at-arms and archers around us leapt to do Hugo's bidding. And Lon seemed suddenly to see that his master was in no jesting mood.

Terror seemed to leap into the fool's painted face. He swung round and faced his pursuers like a hunted fox, while the Black Wolf snarled curses

upon him and upon his men if the jester were not caught there and then. I wondered again why did Hugo of Charndene set such store upon the talisman that was rightly mine?

The hunchback gazed wildly round. 'Twas as though panic had seized him so that he scarce knew what he did—save that he wished to escape his master's dreadful wrath.

Suddenly Lon's eyes fell upon Lantern's horse. Despite his ungainly frame, he could run like a streak of light. In a moment he was beside the horse, and then in a single wondrous leap that brought a gasp from all, the jester was on Hereward's mighty back. The fellow who held the stallion's head was so startled as it reared that he let go his hold, and the next instant Hugo's fool, bending low on the back of the great piebald war-horse, was galloping madly across the courtyard to the archway behind us.

He came sweeping past me like a whirlwind. But for a fraction of time his eyes met mine in passing, and I started. For in Lon's eyes was a message, had I only been able to read its import. And though I knew not what he wished to say to me, I knew in that instant that all his pretence of jesting, followed by his seeming panic, was but a sham. That 'neath his apparent foolery in snatching the talisman from the Black Wolf's hand was some deep-laid design.

Then he was past me, and in another moment the great destrier with its strange rider was thundering across the drawbridge.

Hugo screamed to the guard, and they durst not disobey, though I'll warrant me they did but little relish facing Hereward. But they feared their master the more, and there being no time to lower the portcullis of the barbican, they sprang with levelled pikes to the drawbridge head to bar the jester's way.

Would he attempt to break through them? Could he succeed if he durst make that attempt?

Lantern and I scarce breathed as we watched the great war-horse, with Lon crouched high upon its back, thunder on across the moat towards the drawbridge head.



The great war-horse carrying Lon the jester gathered itself upon its haunches, and with a single mighty leap cleared its nemies. Over their heads—and they too scared even to collect their wits enough to strike up at the destrier as with streaming tail, it passed above. (See page 24.)

In Hugo's Dungeons!

WE could see it all through the great archway—Hereward, the mighty black-and-white war-horse of Lantern's, thundering across the moat with Lon, the hunchback jester, high upon his back; and, barring their way at the drawbridge head, Hugo's men-at-arms, their crimson surcoats blood-red in the light of the dying sun, their steel caps and levelled pikes glowing red, too, in that roseate glow from the sunset.

And Lon carried the talisman that Hugo of Charndene had stolen from me—that queer, broken piece of polished horn found with me when, as a babe, I had been discovered deserted in Sherwood Forest, the talisman that had aroused Hugo to this strange mad fury now that he seemed vastly likely to lose it.

What did it all mean? But I had no time to wonder that, so intent was I upon watching Lon's wild career.

Hereward's mighty hoofs drummed upon the drawbridge. For a moment, as he came sweeping upon them, the men-at-arms who barred his way seemed to quaver.

And then a snarling curse from Hugo, screamed out above all other sounds, kept them firm. However much they feared that great brute of a piebald horse, they feared the Black Wolf more.

'Twas impossible, I thought, for a moment then, for the horse and its rider to pass unscathed through that wall of levelled steel. And yet Hereward hesitated not. On he swept—and then a wild, excited shout broke from my lips as I saw the great war-horse gather itself upon its haunches and with a single mighty leap clear its enemies!

Over their heads; and they too scared even to collect their wits enough to strike up at the destrier as, with streaming tail, it passed above. They cowered in panic 'neath those great hoofs, while Lon and Hereward swept on from our sight.

Hugo's evil face was livid. He screamed to some cross-bowmen in the courtyard, and they raced across the moat, and I saw them turn their windlasses and fit their bolts. I knew only too well how wondrous far those deadly arblasts, as they call those queer bows, can send their shafts, and I trembled for the fugitive.

But though we longed mightily to know the finish of it, Hugo gave a harsh order, and we were seized and hurried across the courtyard and through a postern. Along a cold, dark corridor we were led by the light of a torch and down a winding stone stair. More passages, more steps; at last a low, iron-clamped door was flung open, and we, after they had cut the thongs that bit into our wrists and arms, were thrust through into the darkness beyond.

With a clang, the door was slammed upon us, and we could hear the heavy bolts sliding in their sockets. Muffled footsteps retreated, leaving us to the darkness and the silence—a silence eerie and horrible.

Helpless prisoners in the dungeons of Charndene!

Lantern's hand gripped my shoulder in the darkness.

"Bear up, Tom!" said he. "Hugo has well-nigh forgotten us twain in his rage over that talisman of thine. 'Tis mighty strange, methinks—mighty strange! Why is Hugo so intent on having it?"

"I know not," I answered. "Ay, 'tis mighty strange! Would that I knew the

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hunchback has escaped the bolts of the cross-bowmen!"

"We may learn that from our gaoler," said Lantern. "But let us find what sort of guest-chamber we are in! Do you feel the walls from the door that way, and I will do so in this. But be mighty wary, Tom—who knows what this accursed darkness holds?"

I did as Lantern said. We found that the dungeon was fairly large, with a low, vaulted roof and a single pillar in the centre from which hung rusty chains. Now that our eyes had grown more accustomed to the darkness of our prison, for at first they had been blinded after the torchlight, we saw a pale slit of light above our heads opposite the door. A gust of wind came through, and 'twas mighty refreshing, for the dungeon reeked very foul of damp and fungus and such things.

But very soon the narrow slit that served for a window was darkened out as night crept on. We could see a few stars atwinkle, and presently the moon arose. We had found a bundle of damp rushes, and these we strewed 'neath the little window, and there we sat talking. Lantern was wondrous cheerful, despite his wounded shoulder, and he cheered me vastly.

For a little time our entry scared the rats away, but now that we sat still they came back, and we could hear them in the darkness—pit-pat, pit-pit-pat, pitter-pat—and very horrible that pattering of theirs was. But more horrible even than the rats, which we could scare away for a few minutes by calling out and beating on the floor, were the toads that crawled around us, loathsome, slimy creatures—poisonous, too, as any man will tell you, though 'tis true they bit us not.

But for Lantern I should have gone mad, there in the darkness with our loathsome companions.

We had tasted no food since before noon, and hunger and cold and damp are no wooers of sleep. So that I remained awake as the hours went by, though Lantern was able to snatch some of the sleep for which I longed. And later, as the moon rose higher, a pale streak of light fell through the slit above us upon his sleeping face.

And then very suddenly I was all on the alert.

I had heard a splash of water—very faint—so faint that I should never have heard it save that my ears were quickened with listening for the rats.

Where it came from I could not tell, till I realised, upon hearing it again, that 'twas through the slit above.

"We are hard by the moat," I thought, "and some creature of the night is swimming."

I listened, and suddenly my heart leapt as something scratched upon the stones, very faint; and the next moment the moonlight that had streamed through the slit was blotted out!

Something was pressed against the narrow window! My heart was beating wildly as I stretched out a hand and roused Lantern.

"Stab me," says he, "have I been sleeping?"

Swiftly I put a hand upon his lips.

"Look!" I whispered. "What is that? See—"

And then I broke off, and my lips opened dumbly, and I heard a gasp from Lantern.

For a low voice had called to us, so that we knew it was a man's face pressed to the window of our prison. And 'twas the voice of Lon, the jester!

The Dagger!

"LON!" I cried, and the name echoed eerily around us in the dungeon.

"Hist, lad! The watchmen will hear!" said he in a voice very low. And then: "Ay, 'tis Lon."

Again came that faint splash as he drew himself higher from the water of the moat. It seemed that the slit in our dungeon wall was but a few feet above it.

"So you escaped the bolts of the cross-bowmen?" exclaimed Lantern. "But why—what does it all mean? How you have—"

"You shall know all in good time," said Lon in his low, hurried voice. "Know, then, that the talisman is mighty valuable! How came the boy by it? But I will learn another time, perchance. I have come to help you escape from here!"

Lantern drew in breath sharply 'twixt his teeth.

"If you can do that—" says he in a queer voice.

I saw the hunchback turn his head—listening, he seemed to be. A night-bird screamed in the woods below the castle, but all else was still.

Then something glittered in the moonlight, and I saw that 'twas a dagger Lon held.

At a swift word from Lantern I stooped, and he sprang nimbly upon my broad back. I heard the dagger scratch 'gainst the stone as it was passed through from one to the other, and I heard a low cry of exultation from Lantern.

"I have it safe," said he. "St. Christopher be praised!"

"With this dagger you must attempt to overcome the gaoler," whispered the hunchback. "If that is accomplished silently, so that no one hears and no alarm is raised, perchance you can escape."

Again he glanced round, listening to the faint footfalls of a guard upon the walls. These passed on and died away, and he turned to us again.

"Listen," said he. "If you can win your way from this dungeon go to the right. There is a little winding stair that leads from a dark recess where the passage meets another. Climb this, go to the right again at the top, and an arched doorway lies before you. Pass through it, and you will be in the great hall of the castle."

"You will be nigh one of the great pillars. Count from this three to the left, and a second arched doorway is there. Along the passage beyond there is a big window that looks upon the moat. You must swim the moat, and so escape. And at sunset I will be waiting for you in Sherwood Forest. There is a certain pool in the forest, shaped like a goose's wing. Dost call it to mind?"

"Ay," said Lantern. "Well I know it. You will be there at sunset?"

"At sunset."

"Then so shall we, also!" whispered Lantern. "But tell me, Lon, what of Hereward, my horse? Is—"

"Your destrier shall be there, too," whispered Lon. "Ah, but there is not such another stallion in Sherwood as that piebald monster of thine! 'Twas like riding on the storm!"

Lantern laughed cheerily. To praise Hereward was to please him vastly.

"But tell us what it means—why you come to us—why you snatched the talisman from the Black Wolf's hand—"

"Nay, nay; 'tis dangerous to tarry longer!" muttered the jester. "I must go now. May Heaven be with you these next twelve hours! And remember, the pool like a goose's wing!"

And with that he was gone. We heard the wash of water as he slipped back into the moat, and not another sound from him. Once more the moon shone its pale ray down into our prison.

"Oh, this is rare—rare!" murmured Lantern gleefully, as he felt the dagger's edge, and held it out in that shaft of moonlight for me to see. The steel gleamed mighty pleasant to our eyes. "I know not his reason for thus aiding us, but may St. Christopher reward him! Lon knows the castle well. We shall be safe to follow his directions, Tom."

"How did he know where to find us to-night?" I said.

"Oh, no doubt, with his knowledge of the castle and those within its evil walls, he could guess well enough where to find us," answered Lantern lightly. "Perchance he tried other dungeon slits also ere he chanced upon us. Oh, 'twas rare luck to find such a friend as he!"

He seemed very confident, I thought, that 'twould be easy now to win our freedom. But when I considered that we must first pass through the great hall of the castle, and then swim the moat in view of any who chanced to be upon that side of this grim old pile, I must own that my heart went heavy.

We slept no more that night. After what seemed an eternity, dawn came. We could hear the birds singing right gaily in the woods at the foot of the hill—could see the golden sunlight that streamed down upon Sherwood and all the lands around in all the glory of a sweet spring morn. In the dungeon the rats still pattered in the darkness, the toads still crawled around; but I could picture the fair countryside, and suddenly my heart swelled with the longing for life and freedom that is within us all.

I no longer doubted that Lantern and I, with such a prize to win, would fail to grasp it!

How eagerly we listened to hear the footsteps of our gaoler—to know that our dash for freedom could begin!

We knew not what Hugo thought to do with us—whether to drag us forth to execution, or leave us rotting in his dungeons, or even give us to the torturer. But 'twas vastly unlikely he would visit us so early that he came to gloat upon the man he hated ere the gaoler himself had passed upon his rounds.

And we heard those footsteps at last.

Someone was coming towards our door, faint and muffled though the footsteps were by the thick oak. In an instant we were crouching 'gainst the wall behind the door, and my heart was beating in my ribs so that I almost wondered that others also could not hear it.

Nearer and nearer drew those footsteps. How slow they seemed! And then at last they stopped, and we heard the heavy bolts drawn back. The stout door swung inwards, and there appeared in the gloom, standing there on the threshold outlined 'gainst the light of a horn lantern set upon the floor of the passage, as loathsome a ruffian as ever I clapped eyes upon.

He was a big fellow, as a gaoler needs must be. Clad in black he was, with great long arms like an ape's, and a mighty, swelling neck. His face was deep with grime—he was as foul to look upon as his dungeons—and his ragged locks hung black and shaggy o'er his eyes. Fat and evil was he, with a great whip hanging at his belt. He stood there quite unconcerned, for he did not fear unarmed men, such as he imagined us to be.

He had brought us some foul water in a chipped pitcher and a big flat, wheaten cake. He set down the water and tossed this cake into the dungeon, peering round



Lantern, who knew many a trick of sword play, seized a chance to send the fellow's sword spinning from his hand. And then we turned and ran for the window. (See page 26.)

to see us. He moved in a little, thinking, doubtless, that we were hidden by the pillar. And then Lantern sprang.

The gaoler's lips opened swiftly, and his hand flew to his belt. But Lantern's hand closed o'er his mouth, and I dragged the whip from his fingers. Then the dagger flashed. For full six seconds did that ruffian stand swaying ere he fell forward upon his ugly face with a horrid thud.

I closed the door on the instant, closed it with scarce a sound. 'Twas lucky that he had fallen into the dungeon, for that saved us the noise we must have made had we needed to drag him through the door. Lantern picked up the wheaten cake at his feet, and ran the dagger into it to clean the blade.

"Our meal," said he, with a grimace. "See, 'twas mildewed. We could ne'er have eaten that."

And he held the knife across to me.

"Take it, lad," said he. "You may need it."

I laughed and shook my head, and showed him the great leathern whip I held.

"This is my weapon, Lantern," said I. "One could all but brain a man with this."

"'Tis a nasty weapon enough," he agreed, and slipped the dagger into his belt. "And now for that limpid pool 'neath the greenwood tree, shaped like a goose's wing!"

Softly we opened the door and stole through, closing it behind us. Silently I pushed home the great bolts, while he picked up the gaoler's lantern.

And so we stole down that black passage with gleaming eyes, silent as the flying owls. We soon came to the winding stair of which Lon had told us, and up this we climbed, round and round, round and round, as the worn stone steps twisted up into the darkness.

At last we reached the top, and came once more into the light of day. We put out the lantern then. 'Twas a dim passage we were in, lit by narrow, barred windows, and 'twas good to breathe the sweet morning air that came drifting in to us, after the foulness of the dungeons.

And thus, ere many moments passed, did we slip through the low, arched doorway into the great hall itself.

Very fine it was, with the great vaulted roof and the mighty pillars soaring upwards, and old banners drooping from the walls with the scars of old

battles upon them. Coats-of-arms were painted on the walls with painted shields and burnished mail and ancient arms, and many a fine tapestry hung in that fine hall. But our eyes were all for the little door by the third pillar. The sooner we left this great hall the better, for 'twas here our greatest danger lay.

'Twas as Lon had said, there by the third pillar. The hall seemed empty, but for a few hiremen away at the farthest end, and they would never see us. So Lantern and I slipped from the shelter of the great pillar towards that little door.

And then, as we were about to push it open, a mighty shout rang out. Swiftly we glanced round, and beheld four knights, vassals of Hugo they must have been. They had seen us, and, though they were not clad in mail they had their swords, and these they had already drawn as they came racing across the vast floor in hot pursuit.

"Run, lad—run!" gasped Lantern.

He snatched the dagger from his belt, and I swung back the little door. Through it we raced, side by side, crashing it behind us. And in the passage beyond a mighty unpleasant surprise was awaiting us!

Scarce five yards away, staring at us in startled surprise, were two men armed cap-a-pie. Squires they seemed to be. They all but filled that narrow passage; we could never pass while they stood there. And through the closed door we could hear the shouts and racing footsteps of our four pursuers!

We were trapped!

Pursuit!

AND yet Lantern never paused as he ran.

I had come to a swift, startled halt, but he kept on. And so, though 'twas madness in my eyes, I raced on again swift on his heels.

At first, 'twas clear, the two squires had not realised anything of what was afoot. But the shouts of our pursuers sounded mighty loud now, closed though the little door was, and suddenly they sprang back, and their hands flashed to their swords.

But already we were on them!

Lantern sprang at one—a red-headed fox with little black eyes—and bore him to the ground. There they struggled, but Lantern's wiry strength was too much for the other, and in a moment Lantern's dagger was at his throat.

The other squire had drawn his blade, and he sprang to cut at Lantern. But while his arm was yet raised I brought my whip whistling down upon his head. I had no need to strike again. He crumpled up with a groan, and his sword clattered to my feet. I stooped to seize it, while Lantern, with his left hand, snatched out that of his snarling prisoner.

Lantern leapt to his feet with a gleeful shout, very joyous to feel a sword's hilt in his fist again. We sprang across the two prostrate men, with the one unconscious, just as the door crashed open and the four others on our trail came racing through.

We could see the window at the end of the passage, the window doubtless from which we could gain the moat. But 'twas too late now for flight. Shoulder to shoulder, Lantern and I faced our foes, our swords in our hands.

"Stab me, but this is rare luck!" murmured Lantern. "For what more could we desire than a brisk passage of arms to

ease our muscles ere we go on our way to that little pool shaped like a goose's wing?"

Then his lips tightened, and his nut-brown face set grim and firm—'twas ever thus when he fought. But his golden eyes danced joyously the while.

I had learnt sword-play from the Prior's men-at-arms when I was at Hadleigh, and I own that I, too, looked forward keenly to crossing steel with these villains of Hugo's. For my blood was up, hot as fire, and I itched to feel my blade tickle their ribs. And in another moment we were at it!

A thin, hawk-faced man, with a badge of five white roses embroidered on his tunic, was my adversary, while Lantern had two blades to deal with. But the passage was not wide enough for more than three to stand abreast, and so the other two could not attack us. But the squire whose sword Lantern held turned suddenly and went running back into the great hall. Soon a 'hornets' nest would be about our ears.



ROBIN HOOD.

From the corner of my eyes, as I fought, I saw Lantern with two blades at his breast. But wiry and vigorous he kept them back, his sword playing with theirs like summer lightning. Then he stepped forward in a flash, his steel screeched along that of the bigger of his two opponents, and with a lunge the man was finished as far as that fight was concerned. His sword clattered to the flagstones, and back he leapt with blood streaming from his forearm.

But the fourth man took his place, and luckily for me 'twas Lantern that he attacked. For I was having all I could do to hold my own with hawk-face.

For he was mighty nimble with his blade, was he with the tunic of the five white roses. He pressed upon me, and I fell back, our swords ringing. For a time we thrust and parried, and then he lunged at me, and I sprang back. I heard his oath as he all but overbalanced, and his sword was lowered for a moment as he nearly fell.

'Twas due to no skill of mine, I must own, but 'twas with keen delight nevertheless that I took my chance. He fell in a swoon with a sword-cut across his

forehead. And at that moment Lantern disposed of another.

There was but one left then. Lantern, who knew many a trick of sword-play, seized a chance to send the fellow's sword spinning from his hand. And then we turned and ran.

The window was not far away, and we were through it mighty swift, I can vow, with our precious swords held 'twixt our teeth.

The water of the moat was very foul, with scum floating, and slime and weeds. But to us the water was like sweet nectar, for these were the waters of freedom!

I gave a joyous shout as we gained the farther side and stood there dripping wet, our swords gleaming in the morning sunlight. Along the castle walls three bowmen were running, and we waved our swords to them gaily as we turned to run down the hillside to the woods below.

There came the song of an arrow in flight, and a shaft streaked past my ear. But the wind was high, and though half a score of cloth-yard shafts came singing round us, they all went wide of the mark. The quarrel—or bolt—of a cross-bow crashed upon a boulder hard by, and on the wind came the sound of a great shouting within the walls.

"Stab me, but the Black Wolf's litter are yelping!" murmured Lantern.

Armed men came running round the corner of the castle from the direction of the drawbridge, which was hidden from us. But we were running for our lives, and soon outdistanced them.

And then I glanced round again, and a cry broke from my lips.

"Look!" I cried, and seized Lantern's arm.

For forth from the castle there had come galloping a troop of horsemen!

A score there were, at least, and foremost among them, mounted on a big grey war-horse, I could make out the Black Wolf himself.

Never had I run as I ran that day down the hillside towards those blessed trees, with Hugo and his horsemen galloping upon our heels! We reached the woods at last, but there was scarce a hundred yards betwixt us and them when we darted in amidst the trees. Panting, with the sweat streaming down into our eyes, we plunged into the thickest undergrowth, where the horses could not follow.

We heard Hugo shouting to his companions to dismount, and in another minute they were crashing after us.

"They will never dare far into Sherwood!" gasped Lantern. "They are afraid of being caught there by Robin Hood!"

But it seemed that Hugo of Charn-dene was a stubborn man. For though we plunged deeper and deeper amidst those mighty trees, we could still hear them crashing on our track through the bushes, shouting foul curses after us.

And at last my limbs began to flag, though Lantern, I do believe, could have run on for ever. Tired and hungry as we were, I think they expected soon to catch us. But somehow I kept on at Lantern's side—on and on, the blood streaming on our faces and hands where the thorns had clawed at us in passing, and our clothes in tatters, deeper and deeper into the heart of mighty Sherwood.

Then, all suddenly, we burst through a screen of hawthorn-trees upon a sight so wondrous to our eyes that I wondered dully if I were dreaming.

For there, in that sheltered glade, were a score of bowmen, and every man was clad in Lincoln green!

They sprang to their feet as we burst in upon them, and in a flash each man had a cloth-yard shaft notched upon his great war-bow of English yew.

I heard Lantern's startled gasp, and then his eyes danced right joyously, for they were fixed upon a tall, handsome man in the centre of the band—a man with a pointed, golden beard, and a silver horn at his waist, with wondrous, steady eyes looking keenly from his nut-brown face. A very king among men, standing there all in a pool of sunlight that fell through the foliage above.

And I knew who this gallant figure was even ere I heard Lantern's shout: "Robin Hood!"

The Bowmen of Sherwood!

AY; how wondrous to look upon he was!

Though I had pictured him strong and brave and gallant, as I knew him to be, though Lantern had told me that no man could describe Robin Hood—even so, now that I saw him in the flesh, standing there bronzed and fearless, he surpassed all my imaginings of him. He was clad, like his bowmen, in Lincoln green, but with touches of silver here and there, and the hilt of the knife in his belt was a-glitter with jewels, as was the silver clasp that fastened the feather in his cap. His six-foot bow was in his hand. When he smiled, you caught your breath. His eyes— But there, Lantern was right. No man can describe Robin Hood.

Lantern waved his sword, and cried out in greeting as he ran forward. Robin Hood grasped his hand and wrung it, and mighty proud I was to feel that the little swordsman was also a friend of Robin Hood.

How splendid they all looked, there in the twilight of the trees, those bowmen of Sherwood! I counted a score but one—all fit and strong and light of foot, be they tall or short, slim or burly; all with the lean, tanned faces and keen eyes of men who lived wild and free in the forest of Sherwood, gay and fearless 'neath the greenwood tree!

I had forgotten our pursuers. I glanced around with shining eyes, hoping to see Tuck, the Friar, among their number, or Little John, the giant, either of whom I knew I should recognise by his stature. But it seemed that neither was there. And then one of the little band crossed t'wards me. He was a tall, lean man, with eyes that twinkled like the evening star, with fingers that seemed strangely long and restless, with a sword buckled at his waist, and a little harp slung upon his back.

"You are a friend of Lantern's?" said he, in a voice that was strangely musical. "Welcome!" He held up his hand. "But hark!"

In the distance the sound of our pursuers had broken upon our ears. Faint though it was he had heard, and he looked at me questioningly.

I laughed.

"'Tis Hugo of Charndene and his men," said I; and laughed again to see his face.

"The Black Wolf!"

"Ay! He has been hunting us through the forest all the morning!"

The eyes of this lean fellow were shining vastly, and he swung round as if to run to Robin Hood. But I caught his arm.

"Nay," I cried. "See, Lantern is telling him our tale already! You can see it in their faces!"

"You are right, lad," said he. "See our leader's eyes—he is planning rare sport with Hugo, I'll warrant me! Methinks Hugo will soon learn that Sherwood is no place for such as he!"

He clapped his hand upon my shoulder as we stood watching Robin Hood and Lantern, with the outlaws crowding around them, mighty eager. We could still hear the far-off crashing of branches as our pursuers followed hot upon our tracks.

I glanced at my companion, and his lean face was alight, and those merry eyes of his were a-twinkle more gaily than ever. As he stood there with his hand upon my shoulder, he hummed a tune, and sang a snatch of song 'neath his breath—a song that ere many weeks had passed I was to have learnt to love:



"Heigho!
He bends his bow!
Flies the shaft of Robin Hood—
A streak of ash through the free green wood!
Flying straight, flying true
From the humming string of his six-foot yew!
Heigho!"

'Twas the song of the bowmen of Sherwood; and as the man at my side softly sang them, those words thrilled me. My eyes fell again upon his little harp; and "Why," I cried eagerly, "you are Alan-a-Dale!"

"How did you know my name?" laughed he.

"Everyone knows the gleeman of the outlaws!" I answered. "Your harp told me you were he!"

Then Robin Hood called to Alan-a-Dale, and Lantern beckoned to me, and at the gleeman's side I hurried, with swift-beating heart, to Robin Hood!

"This is Tom of Hadleigh!" said Lantern, turning to the captain of the outlaws. "He and I have joined forces; we are brothers of the open road, wanderers

free!—so soon as we have thrown the Black Wolf off the trail!"

Lantern's golden eyes danced into mine as he looked at me with his head on one side. I knew what he was thinking—that he had promised I should see Robin Hood, and that already that promise was fulfilled. And a desperate villain I must have appeared to the outlaw, with my tattered shreds of garments hanging round me, and my face deep with grime and smeared with blood, where the thorns had scratched me in our desperate flight. But Lantern himself was in an equally sorry state.

"Tom," said he, "we have had rare luck to stumble upon this company of outlaws—with their captain himself one of their number! Robin Hood goes now with his bowmen to teach the Black Wolf to keep his evil carcass out of Sherwood!"

"Ah!" I cried. "And we go with them?"

Lantern laughed, and so did Robin Hood.

"What! Has there not been enough fighting for you yet?" laughed Robin Hood. "With such a wild-cat spirit in that big frame of yours, you will make a fine soldier for the Lion-Heart's cause when he comes back from the Crusades!"

I knew not what he meant then, but later I realised that Robin Hood knew already what many of the barons themselves did not know—that Prince John was scheming to seize his brother's throne.

"Nay, nay, Tom!" said Lantern, smiling. "It is better that you and I remain here. For, see you, you and I are both mighty weary, and though our spirits are willing enough, our limbs needs must flag, and so hamper the others. 'Tis better that we leave the harassing of the Black Wolf's men to these gallant bowmen. Trust their cloth-yard shafts of Sherwood ash to do the work well!"

And so it was that Lantern and I rested in the glade with two of the bowmen, and bathed our weary limbs in a stream that trickled 'midst the trees at the farther side, while Robin Hood and Alan-a-Dale crept away at the head of the rest t'wards the sounds made by our clumsy pursuers. In a moment the outlaws had vanished from our sight, for in their garments of Lincoln green they were well-nigh invisible 'midst the foliage.

It was very still in the forest. Up above, where the spring sunlight blazed golden on the tree-tops, a blackbird warbled with rare beauty. And then again the trees stirred to whispers, as the suddenly a terrible scream came ringing through the woodland.

"Someone of your comrades has loosed his shaft!" said Lantern, and the two bowmen nodded.

"Ay," said one, a broad, fair fellow, with eyes very blue; "each one of those bowmen can slay a knight who rides with so much as visor raised. Let us hope 'tis the Black Wolf who gave tongue so heartily!"

And then, through the trees, came the sound of the running fight.

We heard the shouts and screams and the crashing of undergrowth—all very faint and swiftly dying away. How we all four longed to be there! Lantern, indeed, picked up his sword from beside him, and made passes in the air, as though in imagination he were thrusting at the Black Wolf.

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