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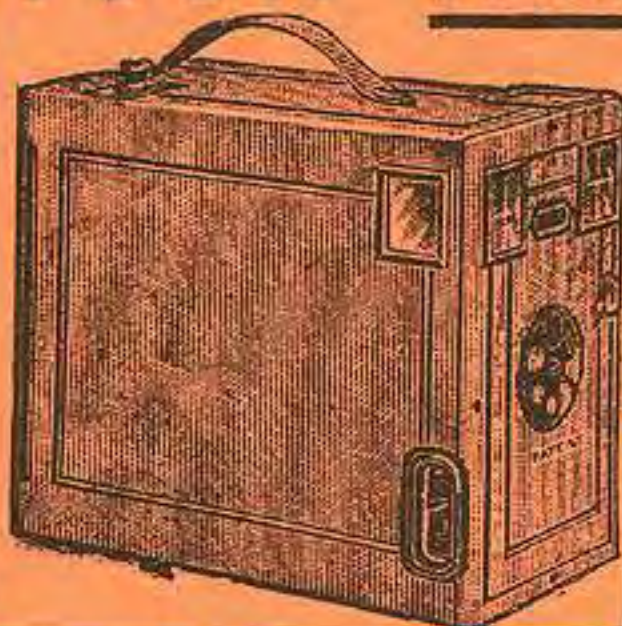
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By
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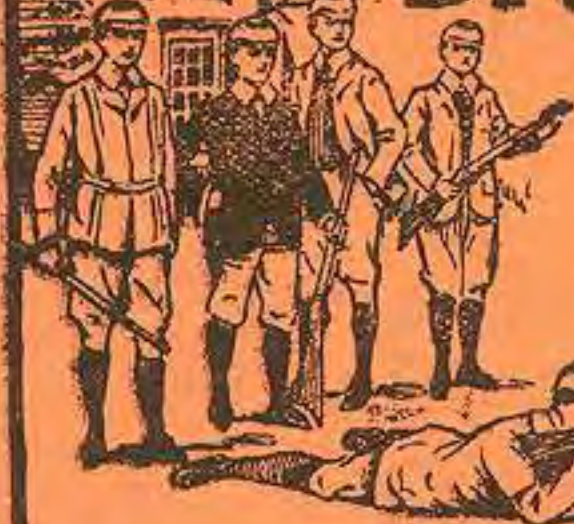
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A TALE OF HARRY WHARTON
AND HIS SCHOOL CHUMS.



A JOLLY OUTING. By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Little Joke on the Nabob.

TICK, tick, tick!
Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove at Greyfriars, looked puzzled.

The Remove—the Lower Fourth Form—had just come into their class-room, and the boys had taken their seats, when that loud and aggressive tick, tick, ticking! fell upon the ears of the Form master.

Mr. Quelch glanced up at the clock, but the sound evidently did not proceed from that. It was a strident tick that could only be made by a cheap, German clock. But where was the clock?

Tick, tick, tick!

The clouds gathered on Mr. Quelch's brow. The boys of the Remove were trying not to grin, but without much success. Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, and Frank Nugent, who sat at the same desk, looked round towards Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, the Indian chum of the Lower Fourth. The dusky junior was opening his books, and seemed unconscious of the growing merriment in the class.

Tick, tick, tick!

"Boys!"

Mr. Quelch's voice was deep and severe. The class were all attention at once, and the grins died away. Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh looked up.

"Boys, someone has introduced a clock into the class-room!"

The juniors sat silent. Bob Cherry attempted to make signs to Hurree Singh, from whose direction the ticking seemed to proceed. The Indian chum did not comprehend them, but Mr. Quelch did.

"Cherry!"

Bob gave an inward groan.

"Yes, sir?"

"What were you making signs to Hurree Singh for?"

"I—I— Oh, nothing in particular, sir!"

"Hurree Singh!"

"I am here, sir!"

"Yes, I can see that you are there!" said the Form master.

"Is it you, Hurree Singh, who have introduced a clock into the class-room?"

"I, sir? Certainly not, sir!"

"You can hear the clock ticking?"

"Yes, sir. I can hear the clockful tick with the perfection of clearness," said Hurree Singh, in his unique and beautiful English. "I cannot account for the proximity of the sound."

"It seems to come from your desk," said the Form master, looking at him suspiciously.

"Certainly, sir; it does so seem," said the Nabob of Bhanipur, looking puzzled. "But as I have not introduced the honourable clock into the respected and esteemed class-room, I attribute this seemfulness to the delusion of the snare and trick of the imaginative faculty!"

Mr. Quelch coughed, and the Remove grinned.

"Boys, tell me at once where that clock is!"

There was no reply.

"A clock, especially one with such a hideous ticking, can only have been introduced into the class-room for an absurd

joke!" said Mr. Quelch severely. "I insist upon that clock being produced immediately!"

But the clock was not produced.

"The sound comes from that desk!" said Mr. Quelch. "Is it you that have the clock, Bulstrode, Hazeldene, Skinner?"

"No, sir!" said three voices.

"Then it must be you, Hurree Singh!"

"I assured the honourable teacher, sahib, that the clockful timekeeper is not in my esteemed possession!" said the nabob. "Can I do more than make the truthful statement with the open heart and the clear conscience?"

"Come out before the class, Hurree Singh!"

The nabob rose to his feet.

"If I may speakfully address a word——"

"Stand out here!"

"With the greatest respectfulness, honoured sahib, I would point out that the stand-outfulness is an implied doubt of my honourable word!" said the Nabob of Bhanipur, gently but firmly.

Mr. Quelch gasped.

"My hat!" murmured Harry Wharton. "Inky ought to have a first prize for nerve, and no mistake!"

"Stand out here, sir!" roared the Form master.

"I shall be very pleased to obey your ludicrous request, after having pointed out——"

"Will you come here?"

"Certainly, sir!"

And Hurree Singh walked out before the class.

Tick, tick, tick!

The ticking had not ceased for a moment, and it accompanied Hurree Singh as he moved. When he stood before the class, the ticking was still close to his person. The Remove burst into an irresistible giggle. It was evident that the Nabob of Bhanipur had the clock about him, and equally evident that he was quite unaware of the fact.

Mr. Quelch fixed a terrifying glance upon him.

"Hurree Singh——"

"I am here, sir, awaiting your honoured remarks with extremely great attention!"

"You have brought a clock into the class-room, and denied doing so——"

"Please excuse me, sahib! A Nabob of Bhanipur does not lie!" said Hurree Singh, with great dignity. "I have stated with the plainness of the truth that I did not bring any clockful timekeeper into the honourable class-room!"

"Why, you—you—— Cannot you hear the ticking now, sir, where you stand?"

"Yes," said the nabob, looking round him with a puzzled expression; "I can certainly hear the ticking, and it seems to proceed from the immediate vicinity of my honourable person, but I assure you——"

"Turn out your pockets!"

"That commandful order seems again to imply a doubtfulness of——"

"Turn out your pockets immediately!"

The nabob slowly obeyed.

From the pocket of the loose jacket he was wearing he produced a cheap, tin German clock, of the alarum variety. Everybody but the nabob had known it was there by the way the pocket sagged.

The nabob's expression of amazement at the sight of the clock made the Removites roar.

"Dear me!" murmured Hurree Singh. "This is certainly a clockful timekeeper, and it was in my pocket!"

"Hurree Singh——"

Tick, tick, tick!

"If you please, sir——"

Micky Desmond, the joker of the Greyfriars Remove, rose in his place. Mr. Quelch turned a freezing glare upon him.

"You may sit down, Desmond!"

"If you please, sir——"

"You may sit down, Desmond!"

"Yes, sir!" said the undaunted Micky. "But if you please, sir, it was I who put the clock in Hurree Jampot's pocket, sir!"

"Oh, I see!"

"You see, sir, he's the Crocodile, so I thought——"

Mr. Quelch looked at the Irish junior, as though wondering whether he had taken leave of his senses.

"He is what, Desmond?"

"The Crocodile, sir!"

"The—the Crocodile?"

"Yes, sir; and so I thought I'd put the clock into his pocket. But I didn't know he'd come into the class-room with it."

"Desmond——"

"May I speak, sir?" said Harry Wharton. "Desmond means that Hurree Singh is going to take the part of the Crocodile in a representation of 'Peter Pan,' which we are giving in the vacation. You know, sir, the Crocodile

has swallowed a clock, and it ticks wherever he goes, and warns the pirate captain that he is coming."

Mr. Quelch's face relaxed a little.

"Indeed, Wharton! But that is no excuse for——"

"Begorra, sir, and I niver thought Hurree Jampot would bring it into the class-room!"

"Stop that clock at once, Hurree Singh, and put it under your desk!" said Mr. Quelch. "I will take your word, Desmond, and overlook the occurrence."

"Sure, and I——"

"You may sit down!"

"Have I the permissibility to return to my honourable seat, sahib?" asked Hurree Singh.

"Yes!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"I thank you with the hearty gratitude! It was quite without my knowledge that I brought the clockful timekeeper into the esteemed class-room."

"Yes, I understand. Go back to your place!"

"I, therefore, offer the terrific apologies——"

"Go back to your place!" roared the Form master.

"Certainly, sir!"

And the nabob returned to his desk. The class were giggling joyously, but the giggle died away as Mr. Quelch took up a pointer with a businesslike air and glanced round.

The lesson proceeded in the midst of an owl-like gravity.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter Is Generous.

"LAST lesson, and a jolly good thing, too!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as the Remove left the class-room that afternoon. "Nothing more for a week!"

"Ripping!" said Nugent.

"The joyfulness of the occasion is terrific!" said Hurree Jampot Ram Singh. "And all the more so because we are going to enjoy such an exceedingly happy holiday at the dwelling of the esteemed Wharton."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I hope you'll all have a good time!" he remarked.

"Anyway, we shall be able to dig up some fun, and the 'Peter Pan' show will be a success, I think."

"Oh, rather!"

"The rathorfulness is terrific!"

"We're off first thing in the morning," Harry Wharton remarked. "There are the boxes to pack, and all our props to put together. We shall have to take care to get the costumes down safely to Wharton Lodge."

"True!"

"And no more of your funny tricks, Micky," said Harry, with a warning look at Desmond. "There might have been a row over that clock to-day."

"Sure, there was a row!" said Micky, with a chuckle. "I niver heard a machine make a fearful row like that clock before!"

"It's all the better for the part," said Harry Wharton. "The tick has got to be heard whenever the crocodile comes on the stage, and so it will have to be loud enough. It's a bit raucous, I admit!"

"The raucousness is terrific——"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Inky will make a ripping Crocodile, and his chivvy won't have to be seen, so that will save all the trouble of making him up."

"I say, you fellows——"

"I'd like to squeeze in time for another informal rehearsal this evening——"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Hallo, Billy! Were you speaking?"

"Yes, I was," said Billy Bunter, in an aggrieved tone, blinking at the chums of the Remove through his big spectacles. "I've been trying to speak for about ten minutes. It's a rather important matter, too."

"Oh, go ahead!"

"What I think is——" began Bob Cherry.

"I say, Cherry, do let me speak!"

"Oh, go on, Billy! Cut it short."

"I really don't see any reason why I should cut it short, Cherry, when I am speaking upon a most important matter——"

"Will you come to the point, or shut up?" bawled Bob Cherry.

"Yes, certainly, Cherry. I am coming to the point as fast as I can; but you keep on interrupting me, and——"

"You're wasting time, ass!"

"I should be sincerely sorry to waste time. What I was thinking about is this—I'm expecting a postal-order by the first post to-morrow morning——"

There was a general grunt from the Removites. They knew all about that postal-order which was always coming for Billy Bunter, and which never seemed to materialise.

"Oh, get off that!" said Nugent. "Now, I——"

"I say, Nugent, do let me finish. I'm expecting a postal-

order to-morrow morning, and I think we ought to have a ripping spread to celebrate the holiday, you know. Many schools don't have any vacation at Whitsun, and so I think the occasion ought to be celebrated in some way, and I should like to stand a feed to all of you—"

"Sure, and now you're talking!" said Micky Desmond.

"We won't say no."

"Certainly not!" said Bob Cherry. "It shall never be said that Robert Cherry, Esquire, refused a feed when it was free of charge."

"You can depend upon us, Billy," said Nugent.

"The dependfulness is terrific. I shall be happy to come and feedfully eat with the honourable and esteemed Bunter."

"Quite so," said Hazeldene.

Billy Bunter blinked at Harry.

"Will you come, too, Wharton?"

"Certainly!" said Harry Wharton. "It's very kind of you, Billy, and we shall all be pleased to come."

"Not at all," said Billy Bunter modestly. "I have had a jolly good many feeds from you fellows, and it's really time I stood one. I should have done so before, you know, only there has been some delay in my postal-order coming."

"Yes; we've noticed that," said Bob Cherry.

"Still, it's all right now."

"The all-rightfulness is great, and everything is garden-fully lovely!" said the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"That's settled, then."

"Right!" said Harry Wharton. "Now, let's get to the study, and—"

"Just a moment, Wharton. There's one thing more."

"Well, what is it?"

"We shall be in a fearful hurry in the morning, as we have to catch an early train, especially as we have to meet Miss Hazeldene first. Perhaps it would be better to get the feed over this evening instead of to-morrow morning."

"Good wheeze," said Nugent heartily. "I'm pretty peckish now, as a matter of fact."

"Do you think it's a good idea, you chaps?"

"Yes; rather."

"Then, there's one more point. I'm stony until I get my postal-order to-morrow morning. If one of you chaps will stand the bill, I'll settle with you then."

"When?"

"When my postal-order comes."

Harry Wharton laughed, but the rest of the Removites glared at Billy Bunter as if they would have eaten him.

"You young rotter!" roared Bob Cherry. "Do you mean to say that you're inviting us to a feed, to pay the bill ourselves?"

"Oh, no, Cherry; nothing of the sort! I only mean that I can't settle until my postal-order comes, and so—"

"Oh, rats! Cut off!"

"Come along!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "We ought to have known Billy better."

"But I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, seat!"

"To tell you the truth, it wasn't wholly hospitality that made me ask you. I want a feed myself," said Billy Bunter, with engaging candour. "I'll settle up the whole bill when my postal-order comes."

"Oh, rats!"

"I say, I'm hungry!"

"Then, go and eat coke!"

And the chums of the Remove walked away.

Billy Bunter blinked after them disconsolately through his big spectacles, which had earned him the name of the Owl in the Greyfriars Remove.

"I really think they are rather selfish," he murmured. "I should have expected better treatment from Wharton, considering that he relies upon me for my services in the Dramatic and Operatic Society. It would really be a good wheeze to refuse to take the part of Nibs in 'Peter Pan,' unless I am better treated in the way of grub. Hallo, Hoffmann! I say, Hoffmann!"

Hoffmann, the German junior, stopped.

"Vat is it tat you vant, Punter?" he asked.

"Can you change a postal-order for me, Hoffy?"

Hoffmann felt in his pockets.

"I tink I change it if it not too pig," he replied. "I oblige you if I can, Punter. How much is the postal-order for?"

"I expect it will be for ten shillings."

Hoffmann stared at him.

"Ach! You expect! How you not know?"

"You see, the postal-order hasn't come yet," explained Bunter. "I'm expecting it by the first post in the morning, and—"

Hoffmann let the money fall back into his trousers pocket.

"I tink, Punter, tat you—"

"Oh, it's quite all right!" Bunter hastened to assure him. "The postal-order is coming by the first post, only I want a feed this evening, and— Hoffmann—Hoffmann!"

But the German junior was walking away.

"Really, everybody is awfully inconsiderate!" murmured

Billy Bunter. "I meant to be very generous when my postal-order came, but I think I shall have to reconsider my intentions. It's no earthly good being generous in a selfish world like this. Hallo! Is that you, Meunier? I say, Meunier!"

The French Removite stopped.

"Vat you say, Buntair?"

"Can you lend me ten bob till— Why, he's gone. The beast is worse than the German beast! They're all beasts. I think this is a beastly place. Well, I suppose I'd better get along to the study, and see what kind of a tea they've got."

And Billy Bunter, with a dissatisfied sigh, wended his way to No. 1 Study in the Remove, where the chums were rehearsing "Peter Pan."

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

An Interrupted Rehearsal.

IT had been Nugent's idea, in the first place, to represent "Peter Pan," but the suggestion had not been readily adopted. The Wharton Operatic and Dramatic Company, consisting of the chums of Study No. 1 and two or three other fellows in the Remove, had had a try at a thrilling drama called "By Order of the Tyrant"; but the great dress rehearsal in the Remove-room had ended in a scrimmage, and "By Order of the Tyrant" had consequently been dropped. Nugent's idea was revived, and "Peter Pan" was adopted, and since then, as Bob Cherry put it, they had used no other.

Of course, it was not easy to assign the parts. There never was an amateur dramatic company in which every individual member did not consider himself entitled to play the title role; and the Wharton Dramatic Company was no exception to the rule.

In the present case, each of the juniors was willing to take the part of the pirate captain instead of that of Peter Pan; and Harry Wharton, as general manager, had to come down heavy with the hand of authority.

Peter Pan was reserved for Harry himself, and Bob Cherry was contented with the part of Captain Hook. Nugent had to be satisfied with the role of Great Big Little Panther, the Indian chief; while Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was unanimously assigned the role of the Crocodile—that agreeable animal who, having devoured one arm of Captain Hook, was always on the prowl looking for the rest of him.

Billy Bunter had claimed successively the parts of Peter Pan, Captain Hook, Great Big Little Panther, and the Crocodile, and had had to be content with that of Nibs, a member of Peter's band.

He consoled himself with the reflection that he would be on in the flying act, and that in a scene of that kind there was room for a fellow of real genius to distinguish himself.

Micky Desmond—whose smooth face and musical, Irish voice made him easily take a feminine part—had the role of Tiger Lily, the Indian maid. Wendy was to be played by Hazeldene's sister Marjorie.

Hazeldene was Gentleman Starkey, and Harry had taken the two foreign juniors into the company also—Hoffmann being Nana, the dog who put the children to bed, and Adolphe Meunier taking the part of Tinker Bell.

Meunier had entered into the thing with all the vivacity of his Parisian nature. He had taken a bicycle bell to use for giving the well-known "tinkle"; and when he was practising, the buzzing of that bicycle bell rang through Greyfriars.

The cast, so far, used up all the members of the Wharton Operatic Company; for the minor parts, there would be fellows at home who could be called upon. Harry could not take half the Remove home for the Whitsun holiday, and he would have needed to do so to take a full cast for "Peter Pan."

Harry had just been reciting his speech in the children's bed-room, when Billy Bunter arrived in the study.

"Hallo! You're just in time," said Bob Cherry. "You can begin now, and you'd better do all the speeches of the kids."

"I'm jolly hungry—"

"What the dickens does that matter? We're going off to-morrow morning, and this is our last chance of a rehearsal before we go."

"That's all very well, but when are we going to have tea?"

"Blow the tea!"

"I'm afraid my constitution will suffer if we don't have tea at the proper time. Nothing is so unhealthy as meals at irregular times."

"There's a cold sausage in the cupboard," said Nugent. "Jam it into his mouth, and then he can make his speech."

"How can he make a speech with a cold sausage jammed into his mouth?"

"Well, I'll do my best," said Billy Bunter, going to the

cupboard, and immediately commencing operations on the sausage, and then attacking some ham and tongue. "I'm sincerely sorry if I keep you waiting."

"You'll be sorrier soon," said Bob Cherry darkly. "I'll give you one minute before I start on you."

"Really, Cherry—"

"Oh, shut up, and be quick, ass!"

Billy Bunter opened his mouth to make an indignant reply, but on second thoughts filled it with ham instead. Bob Cherry looked in earnest, and there was no time to be wasted.

Buzz-z-z-z-z!

The juniors started at the sound of a violent ringing of a bicycle bell in the corridor.

"It's that ass Meunier—"

Buziziziziz!

Bob Cherry opened the door and glared out into the passage.

"Meunier—"

"Me voici," replied the French junior cheerfully.

Buzuzuzuzuzuz!

"You ass, keep that bell quiet—"

"I am Tinker Bell—"

"Ass—"

"Ze bell ring ven I approach," said Meunier obstinately. "I play ze part to ze life. I zink you ze ass, Sherry."

"You villain, you'll have the prefects on your neck in a minute if you make that unholy row here. There have been complaints already."

"Ciel—"

"Shut up!"

Buzuzuzuzuzuz!

Bob Cherry caught the French youth by the shoulder, and yanked him bodily into the study.

"Now keep quiet, or I'll rub your head in the grate!" he exclaimed.

"I zink zat I rubs your head in ze grate first, Sherry!"

"Ass—"

"Peeg—"

"I tell you—"

"Cochon—"

"Shuttez vous up!" yelled Bob Cherry, in a new and original variety of French. "Holdez le tongue. Keepez votre mouth shut!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Nugent. "You understand that, Meunier?"

"I understand not—"

"Oh, be quiet, all of you!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Let's get to business—"

"I zink—"

"Shuttez vous up! Squattez vous down! Rats!"

"I zink—"

"Non talkez," said Bob Cherry. "Non jawez-vous!"

"I zink—"

"The jawfulness on the bothful sides is terrific," said the nabob. "Suppose that Bob Cherry and the honourable Frenchful youth are gagged with the handkerchiefs for a shortful time? That would give us a restfulness."

"Well, they need it," grinned Wharton. "I say—"

"Bow-wow-wow!"

The sudden barking of a dog in the passage interrupted the discussion.

"My hat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "What's that? It can't be Gosling's mastiff got into the house surely."

"Sounds like it."

"Bow-wow-wow! Gr-r-r-r!"

"By Jove, it is!" said Harry Wharton. "Let's have a look—"

"Keep the door shut," said Billy Bunter nervously. "I say, you fellows, that dog's dangerous, you know. Don't open the door."

"Sure, and ye're afraid, ye gossoon—"

"Nothing of the sort, Desmond. There are very few fellows braver than I am. But it's no good running unnecessary risks—"

There was a bang at the door.

"There he is, you sec. Don't open the door."

But the door opened of itself. The broad, grinning face of Fritz Hoffmann presented itself to view.

Bow-wow-wow!"

"You ass!" exclaimed Hazeldene. "We thought it was Gosling's mastiff got into the house."

Hoffmann chuckled.

"I vas Nana te tog," he explained. "I parks mit meinself to keep up te character, pecause I vas Nana te tog."

"What does he mean by Nana te tog?" exclaimed Bunter. "Are you off your silly rocker, Hoffmann?"

"I vas Nana te tog—"

"He means Nana the dog," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "But Nana isn't supposed to bark in the passages at Greyfriars, Hoffy, so you can keep quiet out of doors."

"I tinks I keeps up te character—"

"Good; but draw a line somewhere. We don't want to have the prefects down on us. They're not too fond of this study now."

"Bow-wow-wow!"

"Buzuzuzuzuzuz!"

"Ach! Stop tat row, Meunier."

"Sherman ass! I vas Tinker Bell."

"You vas yun idiot to make such a fearful row mit a picycle pell, I tinks."

"You vas Sherman peeg—"

"Vat you call me—"

"Sherman peeg—"

"I tinks I trash you for tat—"

"I zink zat no Sherman peeg able to trash Frenchman."

"I soon show you—"

"I zink—"

The German and the French junior rushed at one another with simultaneous accord. But the chums of the Remove rushed between.

Harry Wharton seized the German junior by the collar and slung him away, and he bumped against Bunter, and the two went to the floor together.

Bob Cherry gripped Meunier by the shoulders, and dragged him down on the hearthrug, and sat on his chest.

"Now then, you silly bounders, keep quiet!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "If you want to row, go into the gym. You're not going to row in this study."

"I trashes him—"

"I punishes him—"

"Will you shut up—"

"I say, you fellows, where are my spectacles? That utter idiot Hoffmann has knocked them off, and I'm afraid they will be trodden on. If they are broken I shall expect you to pay for them. I say—"

"There they are, under your nose, ass!"

"So they are, Nugent," said Bunter, picking up his spectacles, and putting them on. "Fortunately, they are not broken. If they had been, I should have expected—"

"Let me get at tat French pounder—"

"Let me get at zat Sherman peeg—"

"You silly asses, we'll sling you both out if you don't shut up!" exclaimed the exasperated manager of the Wharton Operatic Company. "Do you think we are going to have two members of the cast punching one another's heads—"

"Zat is all ver well, but—"

"But I trashes tat—"

"Sherman peeg—"

"French peast—"

The two juniors wriggled themselves loose, and rushed at each other again. They were locked in a terrible embrace the next moment, and went reeling and trampling round the study.

"Chuck them out!" shouted Bob Cherry.

"Out with them!"

The chums of the Remove laid violent hands upon the struggling aliens. They were hurled towards the door. At the same moment the door opened, and Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, looked in.

"What is all this thundering row about? Ow—"

Hoffmann and Meunier, still struggling furiously, bumped right into the captain of Greyfriars, and sent him reeling across the passage. Wingate brought up against the opposite wall, and the two juniors rolled at his feet. The captain of Greyfriars gasped for breath.

"You young rascals!" he roared. "What do you mean by this? I—"

"Ach! I tink—"

"Ciel! I zink—"

Whatever Meunier or Hoffmann might tink or zink, they did not stay to give it utterance. Without wasting a moment they took to their heels, and vanished down the passage. Wingate looked into Study No. 1 again.

"There has been too much row in this study!" he exclaimed. "I've had complaints from all sides. You can go into the common-room till bed-time. Off with you, and I'll turn out the gas."

"But I say, Wingate—"

"Don't say anything. Cut off!"

"But—"

"Look here, do you want to be sent to bed at once?" exclaimed Wingate angrily.

"No; but—"

"Cut off, then!"

There was no help for it; the juniors had to obey. They fled out of the study, and the gas was turned out, and the last rehearsal of "Peter Pan" was thus cut short abruptly.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Off for the Holidays.

A BRIGHT sunny June morning!

Bright and sunny, too, were the faces of the Greyfriars juniors, as they came out of the house to mount into the brake which was to bear them to the station at Friardale.

At Friardale they were to take the train, but before doing so they would be joined by Hazeldene's sister Marjorie, who was to change there to join her brother and the party for Wharton Lodge.

The brake had rolled into the green old Close, and drawn up before the School House. Gosling, the porter, was busy carrying down bags and boxes. There was always a week's vacation at Greyfriars at Whitsuntide, an institution naturally very popular at the school. The Wharton Operatic Company were going off a little earlier than the rest, and a crowd had assembled to see them go.

Billy Bunter came out with a lunch-basket slung over his shoulder. The fat boy of the Remove did not mean to risk getting hungry in the train.

Gosling, the porter, came down the steps with a big trunk on his shoulders. Gosling always made the most of his work, for the sake of exciting sympathy and getting tips, and he affected to be hardly able to deal with the trunk.

"Is it very heavy, Gosling?" asked Bob Cherry, with a sympathetic tone in his voice, and a merry twinkle in his eye.

"Hawfully 'eavy, Master Cherry!" gasped Gosling.

"Shall I help you?"

"Thank you kindly, sir."

Bob Cherry took hold of the trunk behind.

"Now, then, make an effort, Gossy!"

"It seems 'eavier than hever!" gasped the porter. "I can't git it along!"

The juniors standing round chuckled gleefully.

It was not surprising that Gosling could not get the trunk along, for Bob Cherry, instead of helping him, was holding it back with both hands.

"Oh, make an effort, Gossy!" said Bob Cherry encouragingly. "You're not a weak man, you know. You'd be quite strong if you didn't drink so much."

"Wot I says is this 'ere——"

"Oh, make an effort!"

"You hain't a'elping——"

"I'm helping now."

Bob Cherry gave the trunk a push, and the porter went staggering forward. Then he pulled it back, and Gosling stopped.

"You don't seem to be getting on, Gossy."

"You young himp!"

"My hat! Hark at him, you fellows! That's what he calls gratitude for a helping hand!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Catch me helping him again!"

"Wot I says is this 'ere——"

"Oh, get on! You're lazy, that's what's the matter with you, Gossy. I'll give you one more shove, and then you'll have to manage it yourself."

And Bob Cherry gave one more shove, and Gosling staggered, and the box went with a crash on the stone steps. It crashed from one step to another, and burst open as it touched the ground. Shirts and collars and other articles were distributed.

"My word," gasped Gosling, "you've done it now!"

"You've done it, you mean!" said Bob Cherry. "I never saw such a clumsy ass in my life! Fortunately it isn't my box. I should be tempted to kick you severely if that were my box, Gossy."

"Wot I says is——"

"It's my box, though!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Cherry, you ass——"

"Blame Gossy! I gave him a helping hand!"

"You ass! Pick those things up, you fellows!"

The articles were crammed into the trunk again. The lock was broken, but the lid was jammed down and fastened with a strap, and the trunk was lifted into the brake. Other trunks joined it, and the juniors took their seats in the vehicle, and the driver gathered up his reins. Gosling stood looking at the brakeful of juniors very expressively.

"No good, Gossy," said Bob Cherry, in a chiding voice. "You can't expect a tip after busting up a fellow's trunk in that reckless way."

"I should say notfully," said Hurree Singh. "The recklessness of the esteemed Gosling is only equalled by the crimsonness of his honourable nose and the wateriness of his respected eye. I attribute his clumsiness to the drinkfulness of his beastly habits."

"You young warmints!"

Harry Wharton laughed as he drew a half-crown from his pocket and tossed it to the incensed porter.

"There you are, Gosling!"

The porter's face cleared at once. Half-crown tips were not common at Greyfriars, even among the fellows of the

EVERY TUESDAY, **The "Magnet"** ONE HALFPENNY. LIBRARY.

Sixth. Gosling stowed the coin into his waistcoat-pocket, and was comforted.

"Thank you kindly, sir! You're a gentleman, you are!"

"The admiration of the worthy Gosling is cheap at half-a-crown," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "I imagine that the esteemed Wharton would have become a nobleman in his estimation for the trifling sum of five shillings."

The driver cracked his whip, and the brake rolled off. Loud cheers from the Remove followed it.

Harry Wharton's face flushed a little, and his eyes sparkled as he listened to them, and waved his hand in reply to the waving caps of the Removites.

He had not been long at Greyfriars, but what a change had come over himself and his prospects even during the short period of his career there.

It was safe to say that, on his first coming to the school there had not been a more unpopular fellow at Greyfriars.

Even Hazeldene, once called the cad of the Remove, had not been so heartily disliked by his Form-fellows as Wharton, the "outsider."

Harry Wharton had won the affection and the respect of his comrades. He had won it by first winning a victory over himself. Sometimes, perhaps, the old obstinacy, the old uncertain and wayward temper, showed itself, and seemed to hint that the passionate nature was still there, but slumbering. But Harry was popular now, and was hailed almost unanimously as captain of the Remove.

Something like moisture came into his eyes as he waved his hand to the cheering Removites. It was not many weeks since those same voices had been raised in hissing and derision.

The brake rolled out of the gates of Greyfriars, and the shouts died away. Under the green branches of overhanging trees they rolled on towards the country village, nestling at the foot of the hill amid rich orchards and cornfields.

"Jolly weather, and a jolly occasion altogether," said Bob Cherry. "I say, Wharton, is my necktie straight?"

Harry Wharton stared at his chum for a moment in astonishment. Bob Cherry was never known to care whether his necktie was straight or not; and, as a matter of fact, it seldom was straight. Bob could no more keep his necktie straight than he could keep his cap from going on the side or the back of his head.

"Well, no," said Wharton, "it isn't straight; but as it never is, that needn't bother you, Bob. It looks all right—and like you."

Bob laughed uneasily.

"You might give it a shove for me," he said.

"Oh, I'll do that!" said Nugent, and he took hold of Bob's necktie and gave it a shove.

"Thank you, Nugent!" said Cherry. "Is it all right now?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"That's according to how you want it," he replied. "It's not so straight as it was before, now."

Bob Cherry turned red.

"Nugent, you beast——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Nugent.

"I'll chuck you out of the brake, if you start being funny with me!" growled Bob Cherry. "Put it straight for me, Wharton, there's a good chap."

Harry Wharton put the offending necktie in its place. It was doubtful if it would long stay there, however.

"That's better!" said Bob. "Thank you, Wharton! I hate an untidy chap, you know."

Harry stared, as well he might.

"Oh, don't you catch on?" chuckled Nugent. "Bob is thinking of Miss Hazeldene, whom we're going to meet at the station."

"Oh, I see!" Wharton comprehended at last. "All right, Bob, old chap. I'll give your necktie another shove before we get out of the brake."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry's colour deepened. But the reminder that they were to meet Marjorie at the station was not lost on the juniors. Each of them, with the exception of Hazeldene, made furtive efforts to make himself look a little more tidy than usual. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh took off his silk hat, and gave its glossy surface an extra polish with his sleeve.

"I say, Inky," said Billy Bunter.

The Indian was always polite. The other fellows did not always listen to Bunter, but the nabob's courtesy was never known to fail.

"I am listening to your addressful remarks, my worthy chum," he said.

"Would you mind lending me your hat?"

"For what purpose, my esteemed Bunter?"

"I want something to rest my feet on," said Bunter, whose little fat legs were dangling from the seat. "If you wouldn't mind——"

"My worthy Bunterful chum, the request seems to me to

"I was glad of the change. 'Peter Pan' is ever so much better, and I like Wendy's part very much. I suppose you are Peter Pan?"

"Yes," said Harry.

The train was signalled. Bob Cherry gave a grunt, and Nugent looked quickly at him. He was surprised by the sombre look on his chum's face.

"You're quite right, Nugent," said Bob, with a forced laugh.

"I believe I usually am," said Nugent, with a grin. "But what are you referring to at the present moment, Bob?"

"Oh, I was thinking of your remark about my features."

Nugent coloured.

"I was only joking, Bob. I can't understand you to-day. What do you mean by taking a little bit of chipping so seriously?"

"I'm not," said Bob Cherry. "It's true, you see. I never was a beauty, or clever either, like Wharton, for instance. He's good-looking, isn't he?"

Nugent glanced at Harry Wharton, as he stood talking to Marjorie. Certainly Harry looked very handsome, then, with his athletic, well-proportioned figure, and his fine face rich with the glow of health, and a sparkle in his eyes.

"Yes, he's a beauty," said Nugent. "Not bad-looking, anyway; but I don't see that there's anything to grumble at in that, Bob."

"I wasn't grumbling."

"Then what the dickens do you mean, anyway?" demanded the puzzled Nugent.

"Nothing."

The train came in then, and the talk stopped. Harry had taken first-class tickets for the whole party. He handed Marjorie into the carriage, and the juniors followed. The party pretty well filled the carriage. But just as the train was starting, the door opened quickly, and a portly gentleman with a very red face and white whiskers essayed to enter.

"Sorry, sir, no room," said Hazeldene.

"Boy—"

"There are ten here already, and—"

"Boy, stand aside."

"Rats!"

The old gentleman turned the colour of a turkey-cock with anger. He brought up a gold-headed heavy Malacca cane, and gave Hazeldene a poke on the chest with the gold head of it, and the Removite sat down suddenly in Billy Bunter's lap. The old fellow jumped into the carriage, and a porter slammed the door behind him.

"Hah!" exclaimed the gentleman with white whiskers. "No room, hey? In my young days boys stood up to make room for their elders. Hah!"

The train glided out of the station. There was a wail from Billy Bunter.

"Vaseline, you ass, you've squashed my tarts!"

Billy Bunter had opened a bag of tarts the instant he had sat down. Hazeldene had plumped on his knees and squashed them over his trousers—and Hazeldene's.

"Vaseline, I'll punch your head! Ow! Look at that!"

"It's all that old bounder's fault!" exclaimed Hazeldene wrathfully. "What does he mean by shoving himself into a carriage where there isn't room for him?"

"Hah! In my young days boys made room for their elders!"

"It's no good telling us what boys used to do in the reign of King George, sir," said Nugent.

The old gentleman glared. He had certainly seen at least sixty-five winters, but he did not date back to the days of the Georges.

"Boy, you are insolent!"

"Well, you see, sir, you're too numerous."

"In my young days—"

"You had no right to enter a carriage that was already full, sir," said Harry Wharton respectfully but firmly. "But now you are here you can have a seat."

"I shall insist upon having a seat."

"If we didn't choose to give you one, it wouldn't do you much good insisting," said Harry. "Squeeze up on that side, kids!"

"Oh, rats!" said Nugent. "You squeeze up on that side!"

"Can't be did! I suppose you don't want to make Miss Hazeldene uncomfortable?"

"Really, I—"

began Marjorie.

Nugent looked daggers at Wharton.

"Of course not!" he exclaimed hastily. "We can squeeze up on this side quite easily, or Hoffmann can stand."

"I not stand mit meinsel for any old shentleman mit vite viskers pefore, ain't it?"

"Then Meunier—"

"I zink zat I prefer to sit viz myself on ze seat."

"Well, if a couple of aliens can't stand, it stands to reason that we can't," said Nugent. "Billy Bunter had better sit on the lunch-basket."

"I want to open it every now and then—"

"Couldn't you have one good big tuck in, and then leave it for a bit?"

"Really, Nugent, you will make Miss Hazeldene think that I am greedy."

"Which would be hard on you, of course," said Harry Wharton.

"Really, Wharton—"

"Oh, squeeze up!" said Bob Cherry. "There you are, sir, there's room for you, if you can make it do."

"In my young days boys were always polite to their seniors."

"In my old days I intend to be always polite to my juniors, sir."

This answer rather took the white-whiskered gentleman aback. He sat down and drew out a newspaper, and commenced to read as the train moved on. On the other side of the carriage Harry and Marjorie were talking in subdued tones. Bob Cherry sat strangely silent, but the rest of the juniors were in a buzz of talk.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Taking the Stranger In.

"BOYS!"

The gentleman with the copper complexion and the white whiskers rapped out the word as suddenly as the popping of a champagne cork, and the Greyfriars lads all looked round at him.

"Hallo! Hallo! Hallo!" said Bob Cherry.

"Did you speak, sir?" said Nugent, with demure politeness.

"Yes, sirrah, I did! I cannot read my paper in comfort while such a buzz of inane talk goes on in this carriage."

"It is regrettable and unfortunate that the talkfulness prevents the reading recreation of the esteemed old codger," said the nabob. "But the questionfulness arises, is a railway-carriage the proper place for the esteemed sahib to read?"

"Sorry, sir," said Nugent, "but we can't help your troubles. You pushed yourself into a carriage that was already over full, and you've only got yourself to blame."

"I insist upon silence!"

"To the insistfulness of the honourable sahib, we can only reply ratfully," said the Nabob of Bhanipur.

And the juniors all replied:

"Rats!"

The old fellow grasped his malacca cane, and seemed inclined to commit general assault and battery upon the spot. He caught the glance of Marjorie Hazeldene, and coloured a little, and laid down his cane and his paper.

"Very well," he said, "if you must make a noise, I will not read."

"Really, sir, I think you are a little unreasonable," said Harry Wharton quietly. "The carriage was full when you entered. But apart from that, can you expect a party to travel without speaking a word, in order that you may read a paper? Isn't it asking a little too much?"

"In my young days, boys never spoke without permission in the presence of their elders," rapped out the old gentleman.

"Then there's been a lot of improvements since your young days, sir," said Nugent.

"A set of young ruffians," murmured the old gentleman, opening his paper again. "A set of young hooligans! Things are changed after fifteen years in India!"

He was evidently unconscious of speaking aloud, and the juniors grinned at one another. He laid the paper over his face to keep the sun off, and settled back in his seat for a nap. Bob Cherry's eyes suddenly twinkled.

He leaned across to Harry Wharton and whispered:

"I say, let's give him some more surprises, to show him how things have changed since his young days."

Harry grinned as he caught on to the joke at once. Bob Cherry took a matchbox from his pocket and put a couple of marbles in it, and shook it up.

The sound was very much like the rattling of dice in a cup, and the old gentleman in the corner was observed to give a start under his newspaper.

"Highest number in three," said Bob Cherry, "for half-a-crown, mind."

"I'm game," said Harry Wharton.

Bob rattled the marbles, and pretended to throw. He kept his back partly turned towards the stranger, so that the old fellow should not see what kind of dice they were.

"Six!" exclaimed Bob. "There you are!"

Harry Wharton threw next.

"Five!"

"There you are again—double six!"

"That's good! My turn—nine!"

"Eight!"

"Rats! Only four!"

"I've won, kid! Hand over the spondulicks!"

"Here you are, old sport!"

The old gentleman threw the newspaper aside, and glared at the boys.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Weren't you asleep?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"I was not, sir!" roared the veteran from India. "I was not asleep! I see that you are gambling. Is that one of the improvements among boys in modern times? But, mark my words, sir! If you do not immediately cease that black-guardly gambling, I will report you to the police at the next station! Hah!"

"Of course, we expect you to keep it dark, like an old sport!"

"Scoundrel——"

"Here, draw it mild!"

"You gambling young ruffians! I will have you flogged—I mean—— By Jove, I'd have you flogged if I had you with my regiment in India!"

"Rather lucky for us you haven't, then!" Bob Cherry remarked coolly.

"The ratherfulness is terrific!"

"But, mark my words, I will report you!"

"Oh, we'll chuck it, if you like!" said Bob Cherry, putting the matchbox and marbles into his pocket. "You seem to be a lot behind the times in India. Didn't boys ever throw dice in railway-trains in your young days?"

"Rats!" said Hazeldene. "There weren't any railway-trains in his young days! He used to travel by stage-coach!"

"Yes, my mistake! I suppose they get awfully behind the times in India, too!" Bob Cherry remarked thoughtfully. "Fancy a fellow not knowing that it's a common custom for schoolboys to play with dice for money!"

"He'll be surprised when he sees us drinking at the next station!" laughed Hazeldene.

"Hah! Drinking! I shall not be surprised! Disgraceful—disgraceful!"

"Got a cigar about you, Wharton?"

"No, I haven't one left!"

"Can you oblige me with a cigar, sir?" said Bob Cherry respectfully. "I've left my pipe at home on my racing-calendar!"

"No, sir!" roared the Anglo-Indian. "I cannot oblige you with a cigar! Disgraceful! In my young days——"

"Let us listen respectfully, my worthy chums, to the narration of the manners and customs of the worthy sahib's young days," said the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Certainly!" chorussed the juniors. "Please tell us about the manners and customs in your young days, sir!"

But the kind attention of the Greyfriars juniors seemed to have the effect of drying up the sources of information respecting the old gentleman's young days.

He glared and muttered, and retreated behind his newspaper again, without enlightening them further, and the juniors chuckled as the train swept on through the sunny June landscape.

Harry Wharton and Marjorie resumed their discussion of the parts they were playing, and Bob Cherry began to buzz a tune on a paper and comb, and the rest of the juniors kept time with their feet; and so the last state of the Indian veteran was worse than his first. But there was no help for it, and he endured it as best he could.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise.

"FERNBRIDGE!"

It was the station for Wharton Lodge, and there was a bustle in the carriage as the juniors heard the porter call out the name.

"We get out here," said Harry.

Bob Cherry threw open the door, and the juniors alighted on the long plank platform of a country station, bordered by grass and flower-beds.

Harry assisted Marjorie to alight, being just a moment before Bob Cherry, who also wanted to render his services.

Harry looked up and down the platform.

"I expect the colonel will be here in the car," he remarked. "Blessed if I know how we shall all get into it, though! Hallo, Jukes!"

A man with a straw in the corner of his mouth came up, touching his cap.

"Welcome home, Master Harry!"

"Glad to see you, Jukes! Is my uncle at the station?"

"Yes, sir; he's in the car, and I've got the waggonette for the young gentlemen and the luggage."

The white-whiskered gentleman was alighting from the carriage now. He signed to a porter to approach.

"Ho, there, my man!"

"Yes, sir?"

"Is there a conveyance at this station from Wharton Lodge?"

Harry started.

"Yes, sir; there's the colonel's motor," said the porter.

"Good!" said the old fellow to himself. "Thank you!"

He was walking away, when Harry stepped quickly towards him.

"I beg your pardon, sir——"

The old gentleman twisted his white moustache, and glared at him.

"Do you want to speak to me, boy?"

"Just a word, sir!"

"Ah, you wish to beg my pardon, I suppose? Perhaps manners have not deteriorated so much as I supposed since my young days!"

"I cannot see that I have anything to be pardoned for, sir," said Harry. "I was about to ask you if you were going to Wharton Lodge, as I could not help hearing what you said to the porter."

"Hah! A confounded impertinent inquiry, by Jove!"

"Not at all!" said Harry, flushing. "I am Colonel Wharton's nephew."

The old gentleman started.

"My old friend Wharton's nephew?"

"I am Harry Wharton."

"Hah! Then I shall be able to tell my old comrade exactly what his nephew is like at school, and what he needs to correct him!" exclaimed the old gentleman.

"I may tell you——"

"You may tell everything to your uncle, sir!" said the other. "I shall certainly not fail to report to him the disgraceful scene of gambling in the carriage! It's my duty, sir, and George Chutney never yet failed in his duty to his country or his friend, sir! You can look out for trouble!"

"But——"

George Chutney waved a bronzed hand.

"Not a word!"

And he stalked out of the station.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I'd have been a bit more careful if I had known he was a friend of the governor's," he remarked. "But I can't see that we were to blame."

"He seems to be a rather unreasonable old gentleman," Marjorie remarked.

"The unreasonableness is only equalled by the fiery fierceness of his estimable and respected temper!" remarked the nabob.

The juniors trooped out of the station. A waggonette was waiting and a handsome Napier car, and beside the car was the tall, soldierly figure of Colonel Wharton, talking to the chauffeur.

"Wharton!"

The colonel turned quickly round.

"Major Chutney! I am glad to see you!"

The old soldiers grasped hands. Colonel Wharton looked attentively at the beetrootlike hue of the visitor's face.

"Nothing wrong, I hope, Chutney?"

"Yes, sir; confoundedly wrong, by Jove, sir!" said the major.

"Indeed, what is it? Ah, here is my nephew! You came down in the same train——"

"Hah! In the same carriage, sir, by Jove!"

"Indeed, then——"

"And I should not be doing my duty, sir, if I did not report to you the disgraceful—yes, sir, disgraceful—conduct of this lad who is not worthy to be your nephew!"

The colonel's brow darkened a little.

"Indeed, major!"

"Yes, sir; indeed, by Jove!"

"I should be very sorry to learn that my nephew was guilty of any conduct that could be called disgraceful!" said the colonel, rather coldly. "I imagine there must be some mistake."

"No mistake, sir! Under my very eyes, sir, he was gambling with dice with this other lad, equally depraved with himself. I have no doubt!"

Colonel Wharton's brow grew very stern.

"Is this possible, Harry?"

"Confound it, sir, I suppose you don't doubt my word?" roared the major.

"Not at all, but——"

"But I tell you——"

"I suppose I must hear my nephew before I condemn him?"

"This lad has the dice-cup and dice in his pocket!" exclaimed the major. "Produce them, sirrah—produce them! Do you hear?"

There was a twinkle in Bob Cherry's eye. The juniors were all grinning, and even Marjorie was smiling, but that only added to the major's excitement.

"Produce them, sirrah!" roared the major.

Bob Cherry hesitated.

"If you have a dice-cup, Cherry, pray produce it at once!" said the colonel.

"I'm afraid the major would be angry, sir."

"Never mind! Produce it!"

Bob Cherry drew the matchbox and marbles from his pocket, and held them out innocently to the colonel.



"A set of young ruffians!" murmured the Anglo-Indian. "A set of young hooligans! Things are changed since my young days!"

"These are what we were playing with, sir. I think the major must have judged by the sound that they were dice, but it was quite a mistake."

Major Chutney stared at the marbles in amazement.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry, unable to resist the expression of the major's bewildered face. "You jumped to conclusions a little too suddenly, sir."

"But—but—"

There was a twinkle in Colonel Wharton's eye now.

"Did you actually see any dice, major?" he asked.

"No, but I heard; and I thought—"

"Ha, ha! I mean, it was evidently a mistake! I am afraid you have been the victim of a joke, major."

"I—I—I—"

"The major seemed to think we were a set of rotters, so we gave him something more to be shocked at, uncle," said Harry Wharton. "I didn't know he was a guest of yours, of course."

"I never dreamed of it, sir," said Bob Cherry.

"Come, major, you must overlook this little disagreement!"

"I have been made a fool of!"

"Case of born so!" murmured Hazeldene.

"Come, come—"

"I think the major owes us an apology, sir," said Harry Wharton. "He jumped to the conclusion that we were a set of blackguards without any evidence."

The major looked as red as a beetroot.

"Well, I'm sorry," he said at last. "You are a set of mischievous young rascals, but I'm glad to find that I was mistaken!"

"Thank you, sir! You won't find us such a bad lot when you get to know us better," said Harry Wharton.

And the major afterwards found Harry's words to be quite true. And the juniors grew to like the Indian veteran, too, in time; for, in spite of his peppery temper, he had the kindest of hearts.

"Miss Hazeldene will come in the car, with her brother, the major, and myself," said Colonel Wharton; "the rest in the waggonette. And now let us be off!"

And the whole party were soon rolling swiftly towards Wharton Lodge.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Lesson in Flying.

MAJOR CHUTNEY improved upon acquaintance. He could be genial as well as fiery; and when he found that he had done the Greyfriars juniors an injustice, he leaped to the other extreme, and quite forgave all the chipping he had received in the train. The first evening at the lodge was very pleasant for the whole party, and they went to bed feeling very satisfied with themselves and things generally.

The Greyfriars lads had assigned to them a large room with a row of beds, which reminded them of the dormitory at the school.

Billy Bunter looked round the room as they entered.

"Jolly comfy quarters, Wharton," he said. "I think I shall enjoy my holiday here. I very seldom really enjoy a holiday, as there are very often difficulties in the feeding line. Your uncle certainly seems to know that boys have appetites."

Harry laughed.

"I'm glad you are satisfied, Billy."

"Well, as a matter of fact, I am satisfied for once," said Bunter. "And I've managed to bring up some of the sandwiches we had for supper, in case we get hungry during the night. I mean in case I get hungry."

"Ha, ha! Nothing like forethought! Though how you could ever get hungry again, Billy," said Bob Cherry, "after the supper you put away, puzzles me!"

"You didn't do so badly yourself, Cherry."

"True," said Bob Cherry, laughing. "I'm not a bad trencherman. Now, kids, I suppose we're not going to bed just yet?"

"Hardly!" said Wharton. "We've got to get on to the flying business, or we sha'n't be up to it when the time of the performance comes round."

"Vat is tat flying piziness?" asked Fritz Hoffmann.

Harry Wharton explained.

"You know Peter Pan flies through the air—"

"Ach! I don't know, pefore!"

"Well, you know now, after," said Bob Cherry. "Peter Pan can fly, and he teaches the kids in the play to fly."

"Ach; tat vas not easy after!"

"Of course; it's done by stringing them on wires," said Harry Wharton. "The wires are invisible, and there you are."

"Where?"

"I mean, that's how it is."

"Ach! I see."

"Ciel! It is useless to attempt to get zat Sherman ass to comprehend anyzing," said Adolphe Meunier. "He is as stupid as nevair vas, I zink."

The German looked wrathful.

"Vat you say mit yourself, you French peeg?"

"I say zat you more stupid zan efer—"

"French peeg!"

"Sherman rottair!"

"Shuttez vous up!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "There's the two silly asses starting ragging again. Bump Hoffmann on the floor, Wharton, and I'll do the same for Frenchy!"

"Ach! I tink—"

"Ciel! I zink—"

"Are you going to stop ragging, or will you be tied up to two bedsteads with your own braces?" demanded Harry Wharton.

"Aoh! I tink I stops ragging, ain't it!"

"I zink I do anyzing to oblige my friend Wharton!"

"Shut-up then! Now, about the flying act. I've got the ropes here to practice with, and a big iron hook to fix in the ceiling."

Nugent looked up at the ceiling dubiously.

"Will a hook in the ceiling stand the weight, Harry?"

"Oh, yes! The ceiling is oak under the whitewash, like most of the house," said Harry. "It will stand anything."

"Good!"

"There's a step-ladder here to get up to it. Some of you hold the ladder while I put in the hook," said Harry.

"I'll do that if you like, Wharton," said Billy Bunter.

"It's best to make sure that it's all safe."

"Don't bother, Billy—"

"But I say, Wharton—"

"Oh, checse it! Bring the steps here, Bob, and some of you fellows hold them. I've got a big hook with a screw."

"That will be first-rate!"

"Of course, we shall have to have invisible wires when we do the real performance in the dining-room downstairs," said Harry. "I don't quite see yet how we shall fix it up, either. But we can see to that later. At present the business is to practise the flying. We never had a chance to do that at Greyfriars, and it's a most important part of the business."

"We had better begin with Bunter," said Hazeldene. "He's the heaviest, and if the hook bears his weight, it will bear anybody's."

"No, you won't Vaseline—"

"Oh, it will bear twice the weight of the heaviest fellow here!" said Harry Wharton, as he ascended the steps.

"There's no danger at all."

"I say, Wharton, you can start with me if you like."

"I'm afraid you're too clumsy, Billy."

"Now, look here, Wharton—"

"Steady with the steps!" said Harry, as he stood on the top and began to drive the screw of the hook into the oak.

"Right you are!"

"I say, Wharton, you had better start the flying act with me. You need a fellow of more than average intelligence for the work. I'll just have a snack at these sandwiches while I'm waiting."

"Oh, we'll start with you if you like, Billy!"

"Very good! I should be sincerely sorry if any of you fellows started and made a muck of the thing through clumsiness. I believe the major sleeps under this room, too, so we mustn't have any tumbling about and making a row."

The fixing of the hook was not an easy task, but it was finished at last. The rope was slung over it, and Harry Wharton descended.

"That's all ready."

"So am I," said Billy Bunter. "I suppose I had better take my glasses off. They might fall off while I am flying, and they might break, and then I should expect Wharton to pay for them."

"Hand them over, ass!" said Bob Cherry. "I'll take care of your blinkers."

"I wish you wouldn't call me an ass, Bob Cherry. I don't like it. I—"

"Are you ready, Bunter?"

"Yes, Wharton, I am quite ready!" said Billy Bunter, turning towards Harry. But without his glasses the short-sighted Owl was quite in a fog, and he ran straight into the steps, sending them flying with a terrific crash.

"You ass!" roared Bob Cherry.

"What is that?" asked Billy Bunter, peering round. "Has some clumsy ass knocked the steps over?"

"Yes," said Harry, laughing; "you have!"

"I thought I knocked against something. It was rather thoughtless to put them in my way, wasn't it," said Bunter.

"Never mind; no harm done—"

"If the major's gone to bed, that'll wake him up—"

"Never mind the major now. I am quite ready for the flying act, Wharton. Will you fasten the rope to me?"

"Certainly! Wrap this blanket round you under the arms, so that the rope won't hurt you. We shall have to pad you somehow when the real flying act comes off."

"That is very thoughtful of you, Wharton. It would not do for me to be hurt. Don't fasten the rope too tightly."

"Ass! Do you want it to let you drop?"

"Certainly not! But— Oh! What are you doing?"

Bob Cherry jerked at the end of the rope, and nearly whisked Bunter off his feet. Billy glared round indignantly.

"What do you mean by jerking me like that, Hazeldene—"

"Ha, ha! It was Cherry!"

"Well, then, Cherry, what do you mean by—"

"It's all ready," said Harry. "Take the end of the rope, all of you, and sling Bunter into the air. We have to let him go from one side of the room to the other with a swing, and he flies out of the window—"

"Stop—stop! Hold on—"

"What's the matter now?"

"I'm not going to fly out of the window. I refuse to do anything of the sort. The window's fifty feet from the ground, and I should break my neck. If you want somebody to fly out of the window, you can have Bob Cherry."

"No fear!" said Bob Cherry. "You claimed the honour of taking the first flight, and you can't crawl out of it now. We can't have all this trouble for nothing."

"I won't fly out of the window—I won't—"

"You young ass!" said Harry Wharton impatiently.

"Of course you're not to fly out of the window. You're to do that in the play, but not now!"

"Oh, I see, Wharton! That alters the case, of course. I am quite ready. Please raise me from the floor very slowly, so as not to make me giddy."

"Rats!"

"I must insist, Wharton—"

"Stand him on this chair first, on this side of the room—"

"But—"

"Then there won't be any danger of him banging on the floor as he flies across the room. If he did, it would make an awful row."

"Really, Wharton—"

"It might damage the linoleum, too!" agreed Bob Cherry.

"Here you are, Billy! On the ball—I mean on the chair! Now, pull on the rope, and I'll let him go!"

"Really Cherry—"

"I will give the signal," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, "and the let-gofulness should be instantaneous. Are you ready?"

"Really, Inky—"

"Quite ready!"

"Haul on the rope!"

"Right-ho!"

And the juniors hauled. The hook with the rope over it was in the centre of the ceiling. Bunter stood on a chair at the side of the room. When the rope was hauled and he left the chair, he would fly right across the room, if nothing went wrong.

"Then go!" said Hurree Singh, holding up his dusky hand.

Billy Bunter went.

But the nabob had thoughtlessly stood in the middle of the room to give his directions, and the flying junior came swinging straight towards him, and before Hurree Singh could get out of the way, Bunter plumped right into him.

"Ow!" yelled the heir to the throne of Bhanipur.

He went staggering, to fall in a heap on the floor, and Billy Bunter spun round like a top suspended at the end of the rope. The juniors let it out, and he bumped on the floor.

"Did I knock against anything?" gasped Bunter, blinking round.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "He wants to know if he knocked against anything! Did he knock against anything, Hurree Jampot?"

"Oh, I am stunned! I am knocked fearfully into the confounded cocked hat! I feel terrifically shakenupful!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Did I knock against you, Hurree Singh?"

"Yes—ow—yes!"

"I'm sincerely sorry. But what did you get in the way for? It was really a most careless thing to do!"

"Ow!" groaned the nabob.

"It was careless to get anywhere near Bunter," grinned Bob Cherry. "Let's have another try."
 "I say, you fellows, I feel rather giddy!"
 "Don't you want to try again?"
 "Certainly I do; but I think I had better have another sandwich to keep up my strength," said Billy Bunter.
 "You young cormorant! Get on the chair again."
 "But I say—"
 "Stick him on the chair!"
 Bunter was lifted upon the chair at the side of the room. The juniors hauled on the rope again. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh prudently retired out of reach of the amateur flier.
 "Are you ready, Bunter?"
 "Ye-e-e-es."
 "Then go!" cried Harry Wharton.

Billy Bunter swung across the room again. This time there was nothing in the way, and he swung across as far as the window, making that fact quite evident by putting his foot through the glass. There was a crash and a scattering of glass outside the house. Billy Bunter gave a gasp as he swung back.

Back he went across the room again, straight towards the door. His foot bumped on the door with a crash.

"I—I say, you fellows—"
 Back he swung to the window, and there was another crash as his foot went through a second pane. The juniors were yelling with laughter, and Billy Bunter was yelling to be let down.

But they did not intend to interrupt such a successful rehearsal to please Billy Bunter. He had asked for it, and he could not complain if he had a little more than he wanted of it. Back he went to the door again with a swing, and at the same moment the door opened, and Major Chutney entered.

The major had gone to bed shortly after the boys, but he would have had to be stone-deaf to be able to sleep under the room in which the Greyfriars juniors were carrying on the rehearsal of the flying act in "Peter Pan."

He had come up to remonstrate, but he came in in an unlucky moment. If the door had not opened then, Billy Bunter's foot would have crashed on the upper panels. As it was, it crashed upon the major.

"Oh! Ha!"
 Major Chutney gasped out the words. Billy Bunter's foot crashed right on his chest, and he went flying.

"Oh!" roared Billy Bunter, as he swung back to the centre of the room.

Two or three of the juniors had run forward at sight of the major, and Billy, as he swung back, swung right into the midst of them, and knocked them right and left. There was a chorus of yells, and the other fellows naturally let go the rope in the confusion, and Billy Bunter bumped on the floor.

He might have been hurt by the concussion, but fortunately—from his point of view—he bumped upon Hoffmann, and flattened him down on the linoleum.

"Ach!" gasped Hoffmann.
 "Oh," panted Bunter, "you horrid asses!"
 "Hah!" roared the major, struggling to his feet and glaring into the room. "Hah! Another of your little tricks—hah!—by James!"

Harry Wharton ran to the door, trying hard not to laugh, but the tears were running down his cheeks.

"Sorry, sir—so sorry!"
 "Hah! In my young days we—"
 "It was quite an accident, sir!"
 "Ach! I am crush—"
 "Ciel! Ze Sherman peeg is squashed like ze pancake!"
 "Ach Himmel!"
 "Hah! I have been knocked over and—"
 "What is the matter?"

It was the colonel's deep voice, and Harry's uncle appeared upon the scene.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Bob Cherry's Little Secret.

COLONEL WHARTON looked into the room in amazement. The juniors in various stages of undress, the beds pushed back, the rope suspended from the hook in the ceiling, several boys sprawling on the floor and gasping, and Billy Bunter sitting on Fritz Hoffmann's chest. The sight was certainly curious.

"By Jove! What is the matter?"
 "Matter, sir!" roared Major Chutney. "I have been knocked over by a boy flying through the air, sir, that's what's the matter, sir, by James!"

"Dear me!"
 "It was quite an accident, sir!"
 "By Jove!"

"The explainfulness is quite simple," said the Nabob of Bhanipur. "If the honourable majorful sahib will have the patience of the moment, as your estimable poet Shakespeare expresses it, he shall be enlightened as to the true inwardness of the unfortunate situation. The whole contretemps is due to the clumsiness of the esteemed fathead Bunter!"

"Oh, I say, Inky!"
 "He offered voluntarily to perform the rehearsal of the flying person in the playful pantomime of the 'Peter Pan,' and it has ended in a muck-up, owing to the door being opened by the esteemed major at the wrongful moment."

"Hah! By James!"
 The colonel smiled.
 "Let me see. You were rehearsing the flying act in 'Peter Pan'?"

"Exactly, sir."
 "With Bunter on the rope?"
 "Precisely."

"And the major opened the door as he swung this way?"
 "You have hit the correct nail exactly upon its honourable head."

"You see, major," said the colonel, turning to the irate Anglo-Indian, "it was quite an accident."

"I hope Major Chutney will receive our assurances on that point," said Harry Wharton. "We hadn't the least idea he was going to open the door."

"I came up to ask you to make a little less noise," said the major.

"Could you hear us down below, sir?" asked Bob Cherry innocently.

"By James, I should say so!"
 Colonel Wharton laughed.

"I could hear you from the dining-room," he said. "I really think you had better leave the rest of the rehearsal till the morning."

"Certainly, sir!"
 "You see, you could practise the flying act from the branch of a tree, with the soft turf to fall upon in case of accidents."

"Good wheeze!" said Nugent. "I mean, sir, it's a good idea, and we'll do it."

"Only," said Colonel Wharton thoughtfully, "I really don't see how the flying act is to come off when you give the play on the stage in the dining-room. It looks to me as if you will have difficulties you have not reckoned upon. However, your stage-manager must settle that. Good-night, boys!"

"Good-night, sir!"
 "Good-night!" said the major, rubbing his chest. "And no more flying in the air indoors."

The door closed, and the juniors grinned at one another.
 "It was funny," Nugent remarked. "The major isn't such an old bouncer when you get to know him. His hurricanes don't last long. What are you grunting about, Hoffmann?"

"Tat Punter flop on mein chest, and knock de vind out of me after."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "It is no matter for te-cackle. I vas hurt."

"You couldn't expect to get a weight like Billy's on your chest without being hurt. Don't be unreasonable, Hoffmann!"

"Ach! I tink—"
 "I am sincerely sorry, Hoffmann, if you are hurt; but really it is very fortunate that you were underneath when I fell, as I might have been hurt myself."

"Ach! I tink—"
 "Ciel! I zink it very fortunate!" grinned Meunier. "It not hurt ze fat Sherman peeg to fall upon him!"

"If you call me peeg, you French pounder, I—"
 "Sherman peeg!"

"Ach! I vipes up te floors mit you pefore!"
 The juniors dragged them apart.

"If you row now, we'll hang you out of window for the night on that rope!" said Bob Cherry darkly. "I mean it, so look out."

The foreign juniors never quite knew how to take Bob Cherry. They thought upon the whole that they had better regard his words, and they glowered at each other, and went to bed. The others followed their example, and the room was soon deep in slumber.

In the bright June morning the boys were early awake. Harry Wharton was the first up, however, and the others had not yet stirred when he slipped out of bed and dressed himself.

It was Harry's first visit to his home for some time. As he had never been away for so long before, he was eager to revisit the old, familiar places which had been his early haunts before he went to Greyfriars.

He left the house quietly, and crossed the velvety, green lawn towards the river, breathing in deeply the rich clear air of morning.

As he came in sight of the gleaming river he uttered a sharp exclamation. Under the trees by the riverside he caught a glimpse of colour, and the next moment he was looking at Marjorie Hazeldene.

The girl was evidently an early-riser also. She smiled at sight of Harry, and they shook hands.

"Jolly here, isn't it?" said Harry. "It's jolly to be home again for a bit. How do you like the place?"

"It is beautiful, and I was tempted to come out very early and see it," said Marjorie brightly. "I did not expect to find anybody astir so early, though."

"Would you like a pull on the river before breakfast?" Marjorie's eyes danced. It was plain enough that she would like it.

"I can get my skiff out of the boathouse," Harry said. "That's what I was thinking of when I came out. Would you like it?"

"So much."

"Then we'll have it out."

Harry and Marjorie walked down to the boathouse, chatting cheerfully. Harry soon had the boathouse open, and he carried his skiff down to the water. As he launched it Bob Cherry came in sight on the bank.

"Hallo!—hallo!—hallo!" he called out.

Harry looked up.

"Hallo, Bob! I didn't know you were out of bed."

"Well, here I am," said Bob, colouring a little. "Are you going on the river?"

"Yes, we're just off. Like to come?"

Bob Cherry hesitated.

"Oh, do come!" said Marjorie.

"Shall I, Harry?" asked Bob Cherry, in a low voice.

Harry Wharton looked at him in astonishment.

"Of course, Bob! What are you so jolly mysterious about?"

Bob Cherry laughed uneasily.

"Oh, all right, I'd like to come," he said.

He stepped into the boat. They were soon pulling up the broad, gleaming river. The two juniors took the oars in turn, and Marjorie steered. It was a pleasant pull in the joyous June morning, and the three thoroughly enjoyed it.

When they came back to the planks outside the boat-house, Billy Bunter was there, sitting on a bench, and eating the remains of the sandwiches he had captured the previous night. They landed, and the skiff was put up, and Harry Wharton looked at his watch.

"Good time for breakfast," he said cheerfully.

Marjorie had gone into the house while the juniors were putting up the boat. Billy Bunter finished his last sandwich and rose.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Bob Cherry.

"Really, Cherry, I think you are very rude! I was going to say that it would be a foolish thing to be late for breakfast. Come in, now."

"Get along, you young cormorant, and don't bother me!"

"I mean to get along; but I think you're very rude, Cherry."

"Oh, rats!"

Billy Bunter toddled off to the house, looking amazed. Bob Cherry was usually as patient as anybody with him. Harry was surprised, too, and he looked curiously at his friend.

"Nothing wrong, is there, Bob?" he asked.

Bob Cherry had his hands in his pockets, and was staring away across the sunny river. He did not meet Harry's eyes.

"No," he said, after a pause, "nothing; except that I am a confounded fool!"

"What the dickens do you mean?"

"Nothing."

Harry laid his hand lightly on Bob's shoulder.

"I say, old fellow, if there's anything up, why can't you tell a fellow? If there's anything I can do—"

Bob Cherry laughed shortly.

"I'm an ass, Harry. But—but what a ripping girl she is, isn't she?"

Harry Wharton looked astounded.

"She! Who?"

"Marjorie."

"I—I—what do you mean? I know she's a ripping girl—one of the best, Bob—but that's nothing to grouse about, is it?"

"No, I suppose not."

Harry stared at him blankly. Something of the truth came into his mind, and he was strongly inclined to laugh; but the look on Bob Cherry's face banished that inclination. Bob's face was quite white.

"Bob, old chap, you're right; you are an ass," he said. "Why, you're younger than I am, and I'm only fifteen. Bob, you are an ass, old chap."

"I know I am. Of course, it's all rot," said Bob hastily; "only—only she doesn't seem to have eyes for a fellow at all; when you are around, at all events."

"My dear Bob—"

"Oh, don't say any more; I know I'm an ass! But not a word, for goodness' sake; if I were chipped about it, I should go mad," said Bob Cherry, in a low voice.

"You may be sure I sha'n't say a word," said Harry quietly. "But I'll give you a word of advice. Fellows of our age must be silly asses to think of falling in love; and I suppose that's what's the matter? Brace yourself up, and keep it right out of your mind. Remember, if Marjorie got a hint of any nonsense of that sort, she could never be chummy with you. Bear that in mind. Now, let's go in to breakfast."

"I know I'm an ass," said Bob Cherry.

And with that candid statement, which really in the present instance was not very far from the truth, he walked in with Harry.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Some Fun with the Allens.

"ARE you ready, Billy?"

"Ready for what, Nugent? Is there a feed on?"

"My hat; and it's only half an hour since breakfast! No, Bunter, my lad, it's not a feed; it's a flying rehearsal."

Billy Bunter shook his head decidedly.

"No, Nugent; I'm not ready."

"Well, how long will you be?"

"A jolly long time, Nugent—in fact, never. I've had enough of flying through the air at the end of a rope. I'm not going to do any more rehearsing."

"But if you're going to take your part in the play, you'll have to be up to it, Billy."

"H'm! Well, I'll see you other fellows do it first!"

And Billy Bunter was firm upon that point. The chums of Greyfriars were in the old, shady garden, and the low-hanging branches of a huge apple-tree afforded facilities for flying practice that could never have been found indoors. Hazeldene was in the branches of the tree, fastening the rope. Marjorie was among the group of juniors, and Harry was explaining to her the proposed rehearsal. But volunteers for the first practice were not forthcoming. Billy Bunter's misadventures on the previous night had rather discouraged the juniors.

"Ach! As a Sherman, I vill offer to take te post of danger!" said Fritz Hoffmann. "A Sherman is praver tan any oder—"

"Ciel! Vatever a Sherman can do, a Frenchman can do better," said Adolphe Meunier. "I zink I take ze place."

"I tink you do noting of te sort."

"I zink I do as I please, vizout asking Sherman peeg."

"I punches te nose of te French pounder—"

"I vipes up ground viz Sherman peeg—"

The two aliens were rushing at one another, when Harry and Bob dragged them apart. Wharton jammed Hoffmann against the apple-tree, and Bob Cherry hurled Meunier into a mass of bushes.

"Now, you silly asses," exclaimed Harry Wharton, "you've got to make it pax for the whole of this vacation. Do you hear?"

"The paxfulness is imperative," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "It is rudeful and beastly of the esteemed rotters to quarrel in the presence of the noble lady. Where is the Parisian politeness of the honourable Meunier?"

"Ciel; I am hurt!"

"The hurtfulness will be terrific if you alarm the esteemed Marjorie by further quarrelfulness," said the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Ma foi; I am sorry! Pardonnez-moi," stammered Meunier. "I am sorrowful, mademoiselle, zat I did forget for ze moment zat ze charming miss was present."

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"Ach; I pegs te lady's bardon!" said Hoffmann contritely. "I pegs pardon of te peautiful Fraulein!"

Marjorie smiled.
"Then why do you not leave off quarrelling?" she said.
"Why don't you make peace for the rest of the vacation?"
The two aliens looked at one another doubtfully.

"I tink——"
"I zink——"
"Shake hands and be friends," said Marjorie encouragingly.

"Ze vord of ze fair mademoiselle is law to ze Parisian."
"Te vish of te peautiful Fraulein is a command to te Sherman."

"I vill make ze friend viz Hoffmann——"
"I vill take te hand of te French peeg—I mean te prave Frenchman."

"I vill embrace him——"
"Ach; and I vill emprace te Frenchman also!"

And the two foreign juniors rushed into one another's arms and embraced. Hoffmann hugged Meunier, and Meunier kissed the German on both cheeks. To the English boys, unaccustomed to the sight of the demonstrative affection of the Continent, the scene was irresistibly comical, and they roared with laughter.

"Mon ami; ve vas friends for evair!"
"Tat is so, mein friend Meunier."
"Ve nevair quarrel more."
"Neff—neffer!"

The two foreigners beamed round upon the yelling juniors.
"Ve are friends now," said Adolphe Meunier; "we quarrel no more."

"Neff!" beamed Hoffmann.
"Till the next time, I suppose," said Bob Cherry. "Now, let's get on with the washing."

"The impatience with which I await for the washfulness to proceed is terrific."

"I vill take te post of danger."

"Nevair!" exclaimed Adolphe Meunier. "I cannot permit my friend Hoffmann to take ze post of ze danger!"

"Asses! There isn't any danger."

"My tear Meunier——"

"Mon ami Hoffmann——"

"I vas really insist——"

"Ze insistence is on my side!"

"I could not permit——"

"I could not allow——"

"My only hat!" roared Bob Cherry. "Their politeness is more trouble than their rowing! Yank them both under the tree, and let them start together!"

"Good wheeze!"

"I am mooch satisfied!"

"Zat is ze good idea!"

And the rope was attached to the two foreigners and tightened. The juniors took hold of the loose end, and drew the aliens off the ground. Naturally, they began to turn round and round.

"Ach! I tink tat I grow giddy, ain't it?"

"Ciel! I feel vat you call sick, mes amis!"

"Give them a start."

"Ach; stop!"

"Parbleu; stop!"

But the juniors were not inclined to stop. The flying act might not be a success as a rehearsal, but it was decidedly funny. Colonel Wharton and the major and Miss Wharton were standing on the lawn, watching the scene and laughing; and the juniors were yelling as the two aliens made frantic endeavours to extricate themselves from the rope.

"Ach, stop! Ain't it?"

"Ciel! Vill you let us down?"

"Give them a swing," exclaimed Bob Cherry; "they're not flying yet! They can't keep up this humming-top business all the time!"

"Ha, ha! Shove them along."

Bob Cherry and Micky Desmond caught hold of the swinging foreigners and gave them a shove, and they flew through the air.

"Arrah; and they're started intirely!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The unfortunate aliens swept through the air, and swept back, yelling frantically to be released.

"Keep them going!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows," exclaimed Billy Bunter, coming towards the group under the apple-tree; "I want to—ow—wow!"

The Owl had walked right in the way of the swinging aliens. He was fairly lifted off his feet and sent whirling, and he plumped down on the grass and sat there; not much hurt, but utterly amazed.

"My hat! What was that? Something hit me!" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Was it an earthquake, you fellows?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ach; let us go!"
"Ciel; I vill be let down!"
The juniors let the rope loose, and the two aliens dropped upon the sward. They sat up and glared at one another.

"I say, you fellows, can you see my glasses? They've fallen off, and I'm afraid some silly ass will tread on them, and then——"

"Ach! You poonch me in te ribs mit your elbow while I vas sving on te rope, you French pounder!"

"You vas dig me in ze neck viz your head!" roared Meunier. "I zink zat you a rotten Sherman peeg!"

"French peast——"

"Sherman rottair——"

The next moment the two foreigners were rolling over and over on the grass, fighting like cats. The juniors were laughing too much to interfere.

"I say, you fellows, have you seen my spectacles? If they get broken I shall expect you to pay for them you know. I really——"

"There they are, Billy, close to your hand."

"Thank you, Cherry! What is all that noise about? Is somebody fighting?"

"Ha, ha! Yes."

Hoffmann and Meunier were certainly fighting. They were rolling along the greensward, which had a slope in this place, down towards the river. A mischievous idea flashed into Bob Cherry's brain, and he caught Harry by the arm.

"Give them a roll over," he whispered. "It's only a few more yards to the water, and a ducking would cool their tempers."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Good wheeze!"

The juniors hailed the idea with delight. They rushed on the struggling juniors, and Hoffmann and Meunier, still locked in a fierce embrace, were rolled down the slope and through the rushes, and went with a heavy splash into the water.

There was a cry from Miss Wharton, and another from Marjorie. But there was no danger; the water was shallow there, and the two aliens rose in a second or two, dripping and very much cooler. The water came only up to their waists, and they scrambled out towards the bank.

"French pounder!" hissed Hoffmann, giving his foe a glare.

"Sherman peeg!" retorted Adolphe Meunier.

Then they scrambled ashore. The colonel was on the bank by that time, laughing as heartily as any of the juniors.

"You had better cut off to the house and change your things, or you will catch cold!" he exclaimed.

"Certainment, monsieur!"

"Gewiss, mein Herr!"

And the two aliens cut off to the house. The colonel laughed heartily, but as the foreigners disappeared into the house he became grave.

"I'm afraid that flying act will have to be omitted, Harry," he remarked. "It will be more troublesome in the real performance than in the rehearsals, I imagine, and it has caused trouble already."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"I was just thinking so, sir. We shall have to modify our plans a little."

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

"Peter Pan."

"I SAY, Wharton——"

It was the afternoon. Harry Wharton was coming down to the water, when he sighted Billy Bunter sitting on a bench on the bank, with a paper bag on his knees. Harry stopped, with a smile.

"Hallo, Billy! What have you got there?"

"Tarts," said Billy Bunter, with a seraphic smile—"jam tarts. I say, your aunt is the rippingest old lady I've ever met! I wish I had a few like her at home. She seems to know by instinct that a healthy chap is liable to get hungry between meals, and she takes care that a chap wants for nothing. She gave me these tarts."

Harry laughed. He had warned Miss Wharton to be prepared for a human cormorant in the shape of Billy Bunter, and the old lady had risen nobly to the occasion.

"They are jolly nice!" said Bunter. "I've got a dozen here. Would you like some? That's why I called to you."

"Thank you, no. I'm not hungry."

"Well, I'm not exactly hungry," said Billy Bunter. "But a fellow can always eat jam-tarts, especially such ripping ones as these. I wish you'd have one. I say, Wharton——"

"Well?"

"I—I wanted to speak to you. Sure you won't have a tart?"

"Quite sure. What is it?"

"You see—I say—Hazeldene's sister is a ripping girl, isn't she?"

"Yes, she is one of the best."

"Have you noticed that she—she—"

"She what?"

"That she seems to look at me a lot?" said Billy Bunter bashfully. "Of course, I'm not a conceited fellow, but I've thought so. I admire her awfully, you know. Have you noticed that she looks at me a lot?"

"Yes, I've thought so. She would naturally be interested."

"Do you really think so, Wharton?"

"Oh, yes! She can never have seen such a funny little animal before, you know—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Unless it was at the Zoo—"

"Oh, really—"

"And perhaps she finds it amusing to watch you eat, too. And then you blink about, like a blind horse, in a very amusing way. And then it's interesting to wonder what would happen if you got on a slope and started rolling—"

"Really—I say—"

"Naturally she is curious."

"If you are only going to make jokes on the subject, Wharton—"

"Well, what else could you expect me to do, unless I chucked you into the river?" exclaimed Harry. "You silly, fat, conceited little ass!"

"Oh, really—"

"Never mind, Billy; shut up, and don't be a silly cuckoo any more," said Harry, remembering that Billy Bunter was his guest, though at the same time he felt strongly inclined to scouse him in the river.

"Oh, very well, Wharton! If you think there's nothing in it, I dare say you are right. Perhaps she would like you better, in one way, for although you're not so—well, to be candid, not so distinguished-looking—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't mean to hurt your feelings by saying that, Wharton. Some fellows are distinguished-looking, and some are not. As I was saying, although you are not so distinguished-looking, you have done her brother a lot of favours—especially in getting him out of the clutches of that money-lender—"

"You ass! She doesn't know a word about that; and if you ever breathe a syllable, I'll make pork-pies of you!"

"Oh, I wonder you don't tell her! You see—"

"Oh, shut up!"

"Vaseline would have been expelled from Greyfriars if you hadn't— Hallo! Who is that coming? Is it the major?"

A slim, graceful form had appeared from the trees. Only the Owl could have mistaken Marjorie Hazeldene for the major. Harry turned red. He knew that the girl must have heard much of what Billy Bunter had said, as she came through the trees.

"Do shut up, you ass!"

The girl's colour was heightened as she came up. Harry was red and conscious. They walked on together, leaving Billy Bunter staring after them and eating his tarts.

They stopped by the bank of the shining river. The girl looked straight at Harry with her deep, clear eyes.

"I could not help hearing what Bunter was saying," she said. "I have had some hint of this before. I knew from my brother that he was under deep obligations to you."

Harry was silent.

"You need not mind my knowing," said Marjorie softly. "You do not know how happy I was when I knew that my brother had found a friend in you. It was what he needed."

But, this moneylender—I am not curious, but is it—is it all over?"

"Yes. It was nothing. Hazeldene fell into the clutches of a man named Isaacs—a rascally usurer. I thought hardly of him at first, but I learned that he had borrowed money for an honourable purpose, and then the Shylock swindled him right and left."

"And you saved him?"

"I helped. I was glad to do so."

"And it is all-over now?"

"Quite all over. Hazeldene is clear of all that."

The girl held out her hand.

"I am glad to know that," she said. "I am glad to know that you saved him, and that you are his friend. I hope you will always be so."

"Always," said Harry, taking her hand.

Bob Cherry came through the trees. He caught sight of them, and quickly stepped back, unseen, and walked swiftly away.

"PETER PAN!"

Selections—performed by

the Wharton Operatic and Dramatic Company.

That was the amended programme of the dramatic company, and the less ambitious plans were a great success.

On the evening of the performance, old friends of Harry's and many grown-up friends of his uncle packed the long, oak dining-room at Wharton Lodge to see the "Selections from 'Peter Pan.'"

Each of the juniors had a good part, under the circumstances, and each was greeted with applause. The evening was a great success.

Perhaps the heartiest applause was awarded to Harry and Marjorie, but the whole of the company had reason to be satisfied with the appreciation shown by the audience.

After the performance—which was only marred by one row between Hoffmann and Meunier—the whole company were called before the curtain and cheered. They were very well satisfied with themselves.

"Jolly sensible lot of people seem to live in this part of the country," Bob Cherry remarked. "They know a good thing when they see it."

"Exactly," said the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The goodness of the performance was only equalled by the excellent appreciativeness of the honourable and ludicrous audience."

"It has been a great success," said Marjorie to Harry, at supper. "I think the Wharton Operatic and Dramatic Society should be perpetuated. It is a good idea."

"We sha'n't let it die," said Harry, laughing; "at least, so long as we can depend upon our heroine."

And Marjorie laughed, too.

The holiday at Wharton Lodge was an enjoyable one. The Whitsun vacation came to an end all too soon for the juniors. But when the time came to take the train for Greyfriars, they all declared that they had spent at Wharton Lodge one of the happiest Whitsuntides of their lives, and they carried many happy recollections back to Greyfriars.

THE END.

(Another long, complete tale of Harry Wharton and Co. next week, entitled "Roughing It!" Please order your copy of THE MAGNET in advance. Price One Halfpenny.)

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NEW STORY SHOWING HOW TWO BOYS SUCCEED AS DETECTIVES.

By LEWIS HOCKLEY.

GLANCE OVER THIS FIRST.

Frank Dennis and Bob Lomax, two City clerks, are thrown out of employment. Having no prospects they decide to make the detective business their profession, and assume the name of "Maxenniss."

Grip, their dog, in a strange manner is instrumental in getting their first client—a Mrs. Brewer—who is continually receiving threatening picture postcards from Leigh-on-Sea from a man evidently aware that his victim is coming into a legacy. Lomax visits Leigh, and pursues his investigations among the regular senders of picture postcards in the district. Meanwhile, Dennis having strong suspicions of one of Mrs. Brewer's lodgers—"Sleeping" McDonald, a pugilist—visits Wonderland. McDonald loses his fight, and, in a fit of temper, savagely attacks Dennis on leaving the building. However, Dennis eventually reaches home, and is awakened the next morning by Bob Lomax, who reports that the first of the postcards were sent to Mrs. Brewer as a malicious joke by a schoolboy at Leigh named Martin. Lomax then agrees to interview Mrs. Brewer again, while Dennis confronts Abrams, a rascally postcard printer, with one of the cards. McDonald is explaining to Abrams that he lost the fight because "that feller was there!" "Vat fellow?" asks the Jew.

When Greek Meets Greek, then comes the Tug of War.

"Th' chap as I saw in th' mornin'—one of 'em!" McDonald replied impatiently.

"But who—?"

The Jew was interrupted by a sudden ringing of a bell in the room, the bell that was moved from the button outside the closed shop-door; it had followed upon repeated knockings, but these had been unheard.

With an imprecation, he went to see who was there, leaving McDonald in his chair staring sullenly at the fireplace. All at once the pugilist got on his legs; he could hear voices, those of the Jew and the visitor. He went to the door, opened it gently, and put his head to the crack, listening for a few seconds. Then he straightened up.

"Blow me!" he whispered. "Why, if it ain't the fellow bisself!"

Frank Dennis, having arranged to meet his chum at seven o'clock in the evening at the office, so that both might have the benefit of whatever Punch, the light-fingered pugilist and champion of McDonald's victim, might have to say, walked straight down to Houndsditch, found, and knocked at the door of No. 142.

No. 142 was a shop; but the shutter was drawn down, covering the entire window front, and the door was fast. "F. Brown & Co., Fish Salesmen, and Wet and Dried Fish Merchants," appeared on the fascia, but there was no evidence that the shop had been used for such business for quite a while. There was nothing, indeed, to show that the establishment was used for any business, or even that it was inhabited at all. The windows were entirely bare, the lower panes in every frame coloured a dark-red, almost chocolate with age and dirt. If Mr. Solomon Abrams carried on his picture postcard designing and printing here he did so very quietly, and in a fashion little likely to arouse any attention.

There was no knocker, but Frank rapped hard on the door with his knuckles. Several times he knocked; but there was no reply, and, going out on to the kerbstone, he examined the front of the building thoroughly. The place seemed to be deserted; but there was the number plain enough on the fascia, 142, and that was what his chum had stated as Mr. Abrams's domicile, and Punch had said likewise. He hadn't made any mistake.

He went back to the door and a small black button, hitherto unobserved, caught his eye; he pressed it, keeping his finger-tip there for several seconds, and awaited results.

Within a minute he had a demonstration that the shop was not abandoned. He heard footsteps, quick and light, approaching; a chain was removed, bolts were drawn back, the door opened about a foot, and he saw a long strip of the face and figure of the answerer of his summons—a face olive coloured, fleshy, and clean-shaved, with dark eyes, and dark, greasy-seeming hair above, and below, garments of the conventional kind, and respectable appearance.

"Vat ith it you vant?" this individual demanded.

"I am anxious to see Mr. Solomon Abrams," began Dennis civilly. "I understand that he—"

"Well, vat ith it? I am Mr. Abrams," his interrogator inquired.

"Is that so? I am pleased to hear it, very pleased! I imagined at first I had made a mistake. I was afraid the shop was empty," Frank answered, with amiable volubility. He was beginning to really like this detective work, and his self-possession did not desert him. He did not feel nervous and awkward as when he interviewed Mrs. Biddlecombe. "I was anxious to see you, Mr. Abrams, and I sincerely hope my visit is not made at an inconvenient time, that I am not disturbing you. I should have been very sorry to have—"

Mr. Abrams interrupted his visitor's easy flow of language a trifle impatiently.

"Have you come on buthineth, thir?" he asked. "I am—"

"Yes, yes; I am on business, important business," Dennis hastened to assure him. "And we may as well come straight to the point at once. You manufacture picture postcards, is that not so, Mr. Abrams?"

"Yeth, it ith," the Hebrew admitted. "Ith it about them you have come?"

"Yes, it is."

"To give an order?"

"Well, not exactly to give an order; but concerning them. I should like to have a few minutes' conversation with you about them, if I may, Mr. Abrams."

The Jew hesitated; he didn't know this young man; had never set eyes upon him before so far as he was aware; but he was on business, and Mr. Solly Abrams was not the man to turn that away. He asked his visitor to enter the house, and led the way to the room where he had been talking with "Sleeping" McDonald. The presence of the prize-fighter wouldn't matter; or, if it were necessary, he could ask him to leave the room for a few minutes. Apologising for the darkness, he took Dennis along a narrow and dusty passage, and pushing open the door, which was slightly open, invited Dennis to walk in.

As he stepped into the room himself after Dennis, a hasty exclamation rose to his lips, as he glanced about. The room was empty, McDonald had vanished!

Dennis turned round.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Abrams!" he said politely. "What was it you said? I did not quite hear."

He looked round him as he spoke. Abrams was not smoking, there was neither cigar nor cigarette end lying on the table or elsewhere, yet the scent of freshly-lighted tobacco was plainly evident to his nose.

Frank Dennis was beginning to take notice of little matters such as this.

"No, no; I did not thay anything; I did not thpeak!" Mr. Abrams answered hastily.

He was wondering where on earth the prize-fighter could have vanished. He hadn't gone out by the passage; he couldn't have passed through the second door the office-parlour boasted, for that was locked, and the postcard maker himself had the key; as for the window, it was

fastened, and strongly barred. Abrams wondered whether McDonald had hidden himself beneath the table.

But what had he hidden himself for, anyway? Had he been afraid the ringer of the bell was a policeman, come to make good his ridiculous—and costly—fears of the previous evening, whatever those fears might have been for.

Dennis was also doing a bit of wondering. A cap of a hideous shepherds-plaid pattern and of the exaggerated golf-snape, hung on the back of a chair, where McDonald in his hurry had overlooked or forgotten it. Dennis spotted that cap immediately; its colour seemed familiar; he was sure he recognised it, that he had seen it somewhere and quite recently; but his memory proved elusive, for the life and soul of him he couldn't "place" that startling head covering.

"Vell, thir," began Abrams tentatively, "after a minute's silence, seeing that his visitor made no haste to get to work; 'vat ith it I can have the pleathure of doing for you?'"

"Postcards, my dear sir, postcards!" Frank answered genially. He was feeling not a little pleased with himself, the glamour and fascination of the work of the detective-hero of fiction was beginning to appear in this work he was doing himself, giving it an interest it had somehow lacked before.

"You have a trade-mark, haven't you, Mr. Abrams," he went on, "by which all your work may be identified?"

"That ith tho," admitted the Jew, wondering what was coming. "An 'A' inthide a ring, bottom right-hand corner."

"That is as I am informed," Dennis said briskly. "Your cards, then, may be easily recognised. Can you tell me, sir, if this is one of your make of cards, or only a forgery?"

He came round the littered table to where Mr. Abrams was standing, and held before his eyes, grasping it tightly in either hand, a glaringly-coloured picture postcard. The scene presented was a gorgeous landscape; in a blank space, about three-quarters of an inch wide beneath the picture were written some words in an unformed, roundish hand.

As he held out the card for inspection, Dennis's eyes were turned, not to it, but upon the cardmaker's face.

"Thertainly, thir, that card ith one of mine!" Abrams replied without the slightest hesitation. "You can thee—"

And then he stopped suddenly. Dennis, watching him closely, saw his eyes open a fraction wider, and his thick, fleshy lips come apart slightly. He stopped in the middle of drawing a breath, and stared at the card as if he saw something that fascinated him. And Frank could see that his eyes were not upon the picture, but were resting upon the few lines of writing beneath.

The ghost of a smile twinkled in Dennis's eyes. The postcard Abrams was staring at was that which had fallen from the pocket of Sandy McDonald and Grip had picked up.

For a good minute the silence in the little dirty room was so profound that the young detective could distinctly hear the ticking of Abrams' watch and his own.

It was Dennis himself who broke it.

"Then I can safely assume that you were the maker of this card, Mr. Abrams?" he said, in a tone of relief, and appearing not to have noticed his companion's abruptly broken off sentence.

"Vat ith your name, thir? Why did you vant to know thith?" asked Abrams.

He was still staring at the card, and did not look up as he spoke; but his lips had shut firmly again; he had regained his temporarily lost self-possession.

"I'm afraid you wouldn't know my name if I were to tell you," Dennis answered lightly. "My object, as I said, was to learn if the card be a forgery or not. I am in hopes of tracing the writer. Perhaps you could help me; perhaps you keep books, and it might be possible to tell me to whom you sold the batch containing this card, and from that it may be possible to trace the writer."

Almost involuntarily Abrams' fingers went out towards the card as Dennis spoke; but, without appearing to notice the motion, Dennis drew it away.

Suddenly the Jew stirred; he moved away from the table, and he looked Frank

Dennis squarely in the face. The slight quivering of his heavy eyelids was the only sign of agitation that he allowed to be visible.

"Will you let me have another look at that card again?" he said quietly. "I am beginning to think it ith not one of mine, after all; that it ith, ath you thaid, a forgery. I will have another glanth at the private mark."

But Dennis did not give it him; he waited, saying nothing.

"If it ith a forgery, and I can thoon tell," went on the Jew still calmly, though the flickering of his eyelids increased in quickness, "I will find out who it ith, who ith copying my regithtered trade-mark, and I will have him prothecuted; let me have the card again, mithter."

"Thank you, but I don't think it's worth while," Dennis replied, and he did not speak with the same airiness as before.

"But I do, thir!" the Jew exclaimed quickly.

"Then I differ from you." And Dennis put the card back in his pocket.

For a few seconds Abrams regarded the young detective steadily, then he stepped quickly to the door, and put his back against it.

"Who are you? And vat'th thith game you're playin'?" he cried thickly.

"A question I might ask you!" retorted Dennis. "What d'you mean by your action?"

For answer, Abrams' hand sought the lock, turned the key, and then he came forward a pace.

"Vat ith it you're up to, mithter?" he demanded, and his olive cheeks became livid in colour.

"I've told you twice," Dennis rejoined coolly. "I mean to find out who is the writer of this postcard!"

There was no need to keep the mask on any longer; all pretence was thrown aside, and the two faced each other with drawn blades, acknowledged adversaries.

"Give me that card, or you don't leave thith room alive!" the Jew exclaimed; and menacing as were his words, they were as nothing compared with the expression in his eyes.

Dennis laughed shortly.

"Don't talk such melodramatic nonsense," he said. "This card is mine, I shall not give it to you, and if you're not a fool, you'll unlock that door and make no attempt to prevent me leaving. I have learned all I want to know, and I am going!"

"Oh, are you?" sneered the Jew. "Not with that card. I mean vat I thay. Hand it over, an' quickly, too, or you're ath good ath dead."

"Open that door!"

"Give me that card!"

"Open that door!"

"Give me that card!"

The men faced each other, both with flaming eyes, determined lips, and quivering nostrils. The muscles of each were suddenly braced, as if they were only awaiting the signal for action.

It was an intensely dramatic situation.

In point of physique—were the decision of the two points to be put to the argument of bodily force—the Jew was

vastly the inferior. Compared with Frank Dennis, he was a little man, even though the frame and muscles of the youthful detective lacked the set firmness of fully-developed manhood. Frank topped him by a good four inches; in weight he held the advantage of an extra forty pounds. If it came to a scrimmage between the two for the possession of the postcard or the unlocking of the door, the odds were decidedly against the Hebrew. Even though, as it was likely, Abrams was no novice in the use of his hands, that would avail him but little, the room was too small. And, for that matter, Dennis himself knew more than a bit about boxing, and, in addition, possessed a very considerable acquaintance with the no less useful art of wrestling.

(Another long instalment of this splendid serial next week.)

For Next Week

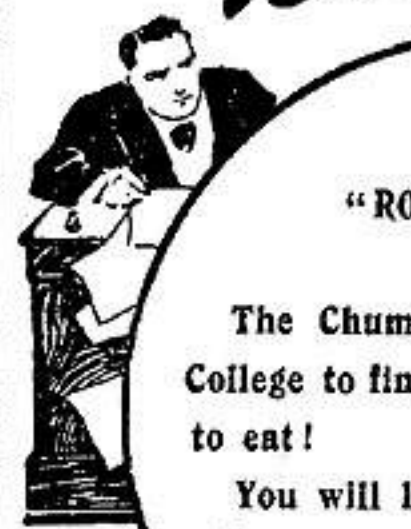
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THE EDITOR.



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