

'THE INVASION OF GREYFRIARS!'

THE
Magnet

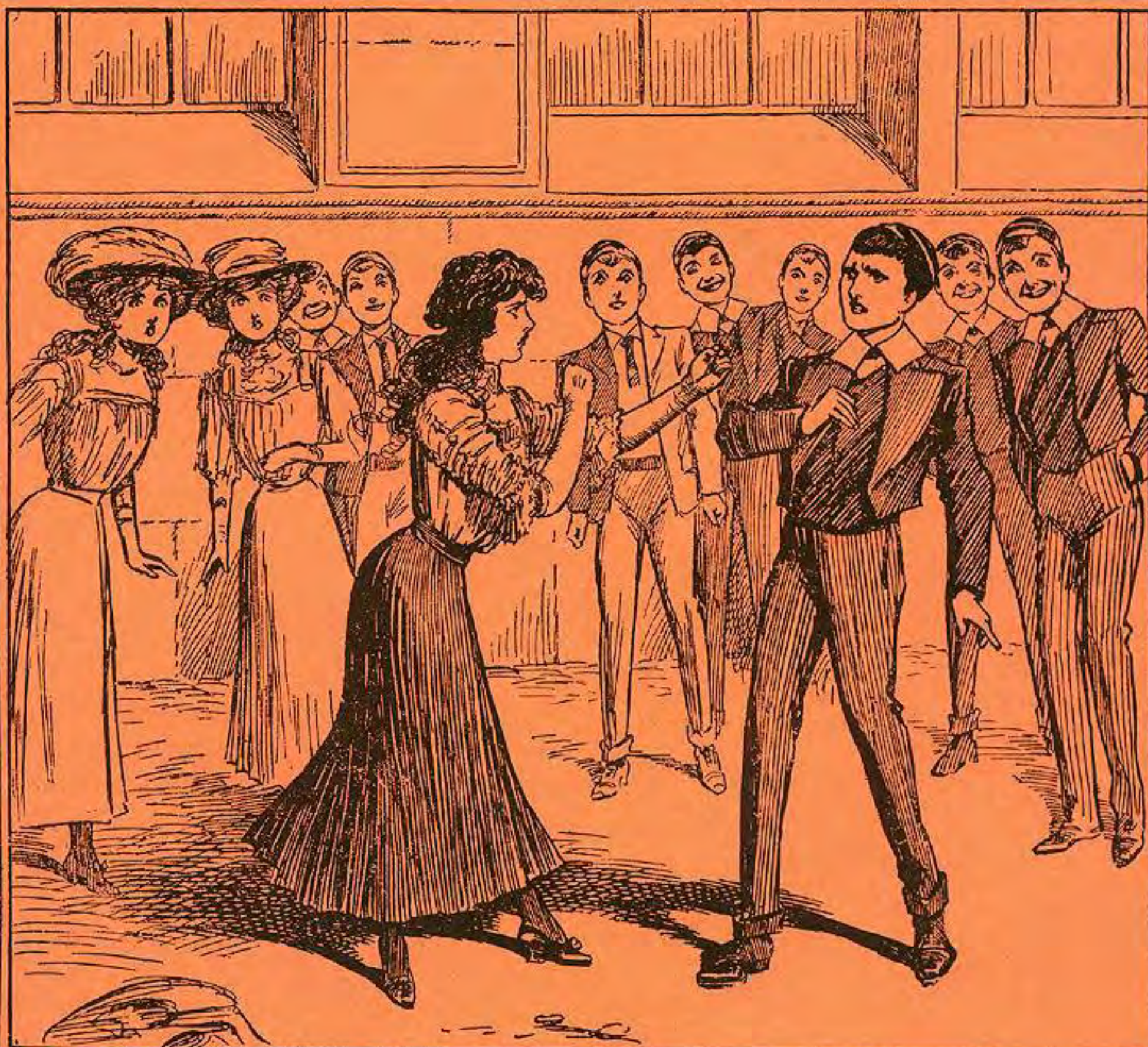
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NUMBER 68.

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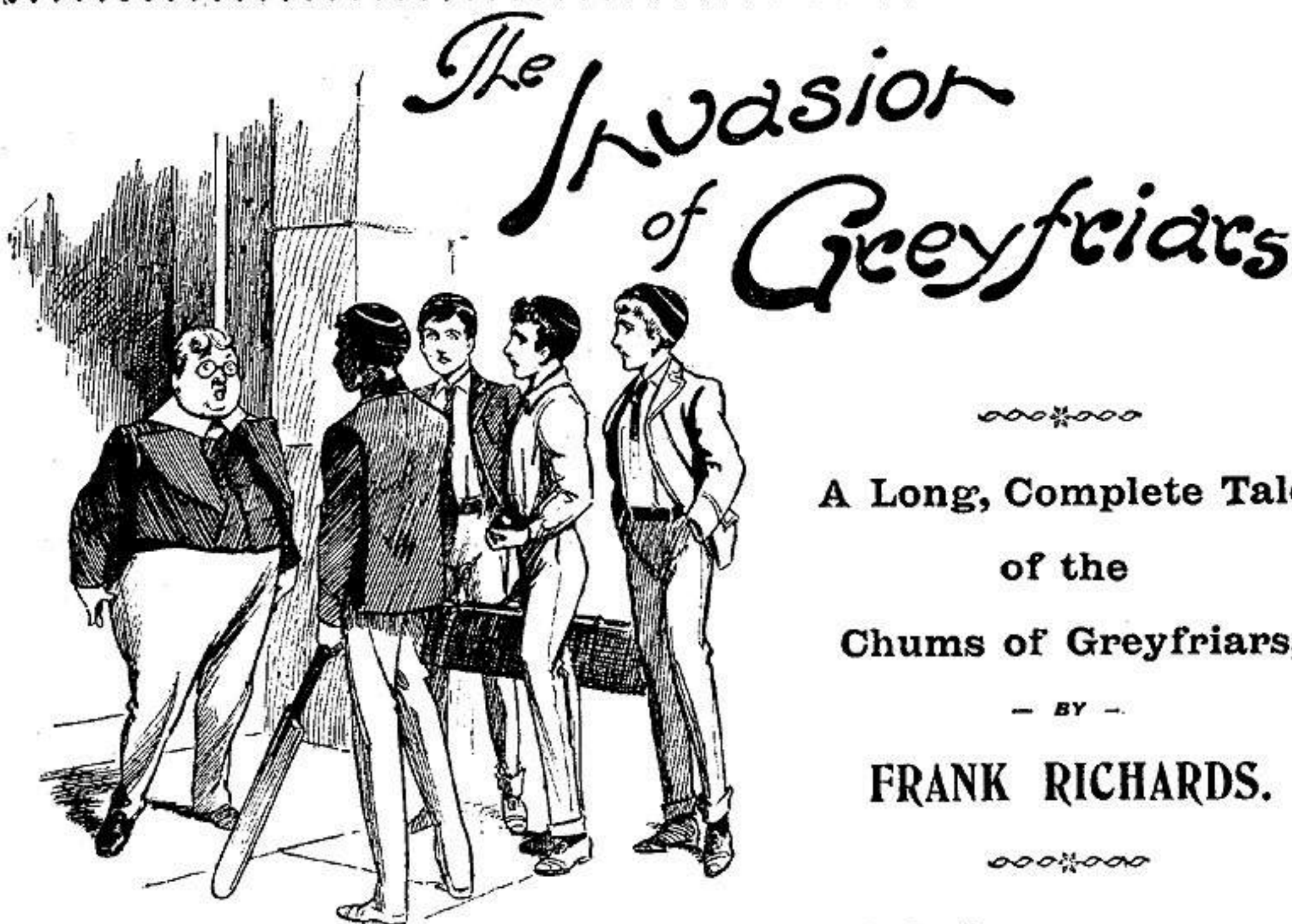
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THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter in Search of a Scapegoat!

"Oh, dear—oh, dear!"

"What's the matter, Billy?"

"Oh, dear!"

Four juniors in flannels, looking very ruddy and fit, were coming in from the cricket-field at Greyfriars, when they were stopped by Billy Bunter's woeful lamentations. Bunter was standing near the doorway with an expression of utter dismay on his fat face. He blinked dismally at the Famous Four through his big spectacles.

"Oh, dear! Oh, crumbs!"

"What on earth's the matter?" exclaimed Harry Wharton in surprise and alarm. "Are you ill?"

"Oh, dear!"

"He's been eating again," said Bob Cherry. "I knew what would come of that in the long run. So long as Bunter kept to only enough for six full-grown persons he was all right. It must have been the extra rabbit-pie that did it, Billy."

"Oh, really, Cherry! I'm not ill."

"Then what are you making that row about?" demanded Wharton.

"It's a row! Oh, dear!"

The juniors stared at him. They did not know in the least what to make of Billy Bunter, but it was evident that he was in a state of extreme trepidation.

Frank Nugent took him gently by one fat ear.

"Now then, explain yourself, young ass! What is it?"

"It's a row! I'm in for it!" groaned Billy Bunter. "I am going to be called before the Head!"

"Phew! What have you been doing?"

"I—I really haven't been doing anything. It was really you fellows—"

"Well, I like that!" said Bob Cherry. "Have you been wolfing the Head's lunch, or raiding sausages from the kitchen?"

"Of course I haven't! It's that Cliff House business. You remember when we had tea there the other day, and I made Miss Primrose's parrot say things with my wonderful gift of ventriloquism—"

"Yes, and I came jolly near giving you a thick ear on the spot," said Harry Wharton, frowning. "It was rotten bad form to play tricks on a kind hostess, and nobody but you would have done it."

"Well, I really did it to please you fellows— Ow! Don't pinch my ear, Nugent! I—I mean I really didn't do

it to please you fellows. Ow! Now Miss Primrose's come over to complain—that's her carriage there."

"Phew!"

"She's just gone in to the Head," said Billy Bunter, almost in tears. "I shall be called in in a minute. Of course, I didn't know that Miss Primrose knew I was a wonderfully gifted ventriloquist. Marjorie Hazeldene must have told her. Now she's come over to complain——"

"How do you know she's come to complain about you?"

"What else can she have come to complain of?" said Bunter peevishly. "She's fond enough of you fellows. People always pick on me to complain about, for some reason. I'm always being persecuted. Look here, Wharton, as you were really to blame——"

"I?" said Harry, staring.

"Yes, you're the head of our study, and so you were really the person to blame, you see. You can't have all the pleasure of being leader without taking the responsibilities, too. It's not fair to shove off the responsibility on to me. As you were really to blame, couldn't you go in now to the Head, before Miss Primrose has had time to complain, and own up?"

"Own up! Own up to what?"

"Why, about the ventriloquism, you know."

Bob Cherry burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha! I think Bunter improves every day."

"Or Bob Cherry could do it," said Bunter hastily, not quite liking the expression upon Harry Wharton's face.

"Bob Cherry was really the one in fault——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! It's I now, is it?"

"Or—or Nugent," said Billy Bunter feebly. "Couldn't you go into the Head, Nugent, and—and own up?"

Frank Nugent only laughed. Billy Bunter's sublime coolness amused him.

The fat junior turned in despair to the fourth of the party—Hurree Jameet Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur, whose good-nature was a proverb in the Remove.

"I—I say, Inky, you were with us, you know, and—and I think you might go to the Head and own up about it."

"The coolfulness of my worthy fat chum is terrific," murmured the nabob, "and the refusefulness on my esteemed part is also great."

"Oh, really, Inky——"

"The best thing you can do, Bunter, is to go to the Head and own up yourself," said Bob Cherry admonishingly.

"Cut into the study now, before Miss Primrose has unfolded her terrible tale, and take the words out of her mouth. Own up to your fault like a giddy Eric, and weep on the Head's shirtfront, and he's bound to look over it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter gave the four chums a look of deep reproach, and turned away. He moved off slowly in the direction of the Head's study, but they did not suppose for a moment that he was going to own up. That was not Bunter's way. He was never known to own up to anything until he had exhausted every device of untruthfulness, and was driven to his last ditch, as it were.

"The young ass!" said Bob Cherry, in disgust. "This is what comes of being a conceited little beast! As if Miss Primrose would drive over from Cliff House specially to complain about that fat little oyster. I don't suppose she's got anything of the sort in her mind."

"Then she's come over about something else," said Nugent thoughtfully.

Bob looked at him admiringly.

"Did you work that out in your head?" he asked.

"Oh, don't be funny! I was thinking—what has she come about? Perhaps there is going to be a garden-party at Cliff House, and she wants us all to go."

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"I hardly think so," he remarked. "There's been a rumour lately of illness in the girls' school, and certainly we haven't seen any of the girls for some days. Hazeldene rode over to Cliff House to see his sister yesterday, and wasn't admitted. He says Marjorie waved her hand to him from a window."

"Then she's all right, at all events," said Bob, with a breath of relief.

"Yes, but it looks as if there's something up. Whatever it is, Miss Primrose has more likely come over about that, than about Bunter."

And the chums of the Remove thought it out. They were a little anxious, to tell the truth. They were on the best of terms with the girl pupils of Cliff House, and Hazeldene's sister especially was their chum. Anything seriously wrong at Miss Primrose's school caused them real concern.

While they were thinking about Cliff House, Billy Bunter was thinking about himself. The fat junior had jumped to the conclusion that Miss Primrose had come over to complain about him—it was a case of a guilty conscience.

THE MAGNET.—No. 68.

NEXT WEEK: "THE BULLY OF GREYFRIARS."

Bunter had quite worked it out to his own satisfaction that anybody but himself was to blame for the ventriloquial incident, and he was feeling deeply aggrieved against the chums of the Remove.

"Oh, dear!" he murmured, as he walked away in troubled thought. "The Head is certain to take the matter seriously—these school-masters have no sense of humour! I may get a flogging, as Buletrode did the other day. It's rotten! Wharton's the head of the study, and he ought to own up. It's mean! I hate a fellow being mean! Oh, dear! What shall I do?"

"Anything the matter, Bunter?" asked a kindly voice.

Billy Bunter blinked at Mark Linley, the lad from Lancashire. Hope rose in his breast once more.

"I say, Linley," he said eagerly, "I'm in for a row unless somebody goes in to the Head and owns up about that ventriloquial trick the other day at Cliff House. If you like to own up——"

"But I don't know anything about it," said Linley, amused. "How can I own up?"

"Oh, that doesn't make any difference. You can tell the Head you did it——"

"Do you want me to go and tell the Head a lie for the special purpose of getting a licking?" asked Mark, too amused to be angry.

"Well, not exactly a lie," said Bunter, wriggling. "You—you can just tell him you did it, you know. I'll make it worth your while. I shall be getting three pounds on Saturday from the Patriotic Home Work Association, and then I am going to stand a series of extensive feeds, and I'll ask you to all of them. Besides, you know, the chaps call you the scholarship boy, and a rank outsider, and all that. Look here, I'll chum up with you, and show everybody we're on friendly terms."

"Will you?" said Mark, looking at him very queerly.

"Yes," said Bunter eagerly. "I know you used to work in a mill, or a mine, or something of that sort before you got a scholarship and came to Greyfriars. Of course, it's no good pretending that you're the same sort of chap as I am, but I'm not proud: I'm not above associating with you. I'll take you up and make a chum of you—Ow! Leggo my ear!"

Mark laughed, and let go.

"You're not worth licking," he said. "It amazes me how Wharton can stand you. It's his good-nature, I suppose. I'm afraid I couldn't stand you as a chum, Bunter, so I shall have to refuse your generous offer."

Here, I say, Linley, don't walk away while I'm talking. I say—Well, of all the beasts! This is what comes of letting factory-lads into a respectable school; and I offered to take him up, too! Catch me being friendly with the rotten outsider again. Oh, dear! What shall I do? The old lady will have pitched her yarn to the Head by this time. I—I've a jolly good mind to run away from school!"

Bunter wrinkled his forehead over his spectacles, thinking it out. He appeared to suddenly make up his mind, for he walked off to the Head's study, and tapped on the door. He entered without waiting to be bidden, and blinked at the two occupants of the study.

Dr. Locke, the Head of Greyfriars, was engaged in conversation with Miss Primrose—a stately, kind-faced old lady in an Early-Victorian bonnet. Both were looking very serious, and were deeply engrossed in their talk, and they had not noticed either the tap on the door or Bunter's entrance. The fat junior stood blinking uncomfortably at them. He coughed to attract attention, and Dr. Locke turned round suddenly. He started, and frowned at the intruder.

"Bunter! What do you want? How dare you enter here without permission?"

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"I—I—I knocked, sir. If you please, it's important!" stammered Bunter.

"I am engaged now. Go at once!"

"It's—it's important, sir. It's—it's about what Miss Primrose is telling you, sir—"

"Oh, in that case you may speak," said the Head. "Go on, and be brief!"

"Miss Primrose is quite mistaken, sir; she—she is under a misapprehension," said Bunter hurriedly. "It was not I, sir."

"What?"

"It wasn't me!" said Bunter, growing more ungrammatical as he grew more frightened. "I really didn't do it, sir. Wharton was with us, and he—he—he—"

"Boy! How dare you laugh here?"

"I—I—I wasn't laughing, sir," said Bunter, who, indeed, felt very little like laughing at that moment. "I was saying he—he—he—he was, really—"

"What do you think Miss Primrose is telling me?" asked the Head sharply.

"About the little game with the parrot, sir—me making him talk, and—"

"Dear me!" said Miss Primrose. "How could you make a parrot talk?"

"My wonderful gift as a ventriloquist, ma'am."

"Goodness gracious!"

"Then you have been playing a trick at Cliff House?" demanded the Head in a voice that made all Bunter's nerves jump.

"I—no—yes—certainly not, sir! I—I came here to tell you that—that it was really somebody else—"

"You came here under a mistake to tell me a falsehood?" said Dr. Locke sternly. "As it happens, Miss Primrose did not come about any such matter. You have betrayed yourself in your attempt to betray another."

Bunter wished that the floor would open and swallow him up. Dr. Locke turned to his desk and wrote a few lines upon a sheet of paper, folded it, and handed it to the fat junior.

"Take that to your Form-master."

"Ye-es, sir."

"Now leave my study instantly."

Billy Bunter went out with his knees knocking together. Dr. Locke apologised to his visitor for the interruption, and the matter they had been discussing was resumed as the door closed. Billy Bunter, with his nerves all quivering, moved like a boy in a dream. He stopped in the passage to look at the note in his hand. He longed to know what was in it, and he feared that it meant something unpleasant for himself. No other boy at Greyfriars would have ventured to read a note placed in his hands by the doctor, even if he had been mean enough to open it. But Bunter's curiosity was his strong point, and he had no scruples of personal honour in such a matter. He withdrew into an alcove, and unfolded the note. It was addressed to Mr. Quelch:

"Please cane bearer for impertinence.—J. LOCKE."

That was all!

Bunter refolded the note, and moved away with a thoughtful expression upon his face. But he did not go in the direction of the Form-master's study.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Information Wanted!

"WHAT'S up?"

That was the question a great many fellows at Greyfriars were asking themselves.

There was certainly something "up."

Miss Primrose had come out of the Head's study, escorted to her carriage by the Head himself, both of them looking very grave. She had thanked him very gratefully as he handed her to the carriage, and the Head had replied, "Not at all—not at all." So much the boys knew.

After that, the Form-masters were called into the Head's study, and they remained there for ten minutes, engaged in discussing—what?

That was the burning question.

What was it? What had Miss Primrose driven over to Greyfriars about, and what was the meeting of masters called in the Head's study for?

Everybody was curious, from the head of the Sixth to the smallest fag in the Third Form.

Harry Wharton and his chums, of course, were concerned. They were on such chummy terms with Cliff House that they felt they had a right to be specially interested in the matter. But all were curious. Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth wanted to know all about it, and thinking that the Remove chums might know, they came along to No. 1 Study with their most agreeable smiles on. No. 1 Study were at tea—and a remarkable circumstance was that Bunter was not there. Bunter was never known to miss a meal. But the Upper Fourth fellows were not interested

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NEXT WEEK: "THE BULLY OF GREYFRIARS."

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in Bunter. They looked in cheerfully, and the chums of the Remove looked up from the tea-table.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry. "Have you come to tell us he's been found drowned?"

"He! Whom? What?" said Temple, in surprise

"Bunter!"

"Bunter! What about Bunter?"

"He's missing tea. Something must have happened. If you've seen a dead porpoise lying about anywhere, that's Bunter."

"Ha, ha ha! Very good!" said Temple, making a sign to his companions that it was a joke, and that they were to laugh. Dabney and Fry burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry looked at them suspiciously.

"Blessed if I know what you want to come here to make that row for?" he said. "Can't you do it in your own studies, or in the passage?"

Temple smiled a sickly smile.

"The fact is, we came to speak to you fellows," he said. "There's something going on. It's something about Cliff House. You fellows ought to know something about it."

"We don't," said Wharton.

"Nothing at all?"

"Nothing."

"Oh, rats!" said Temple. "We're wasting time here, kids."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

And the Upper Fourth-Formers went out and slammed the door. The Removites grinned and went on with their tea. Ten minutes later, as Bob Cherry was extracting a slightly-coloured fluid, known as the last cup of tea, from the teapot, the door opened again. Blundell and Bland, of the Fifth looked in.

"I say, you chaps," said Blundell, with an affability a Fifth-Former never showed to the Lower Fourth unless he had an axe to grind, "hope I'm not interrupting your tea?"

"Not at all," said Nugent; "we're not stopping."

"The not-at-all-fulness is terrific, my esteemed friend."

"Well," said Blundell, "there's something going on, and I thought you'd very likely know something about it, as you're so chummy at Cliff House. What is it? Something gone rocky at the girls' school?"

"Earthquake, I think," said Bob Cherry gravely.

"Eh?"

"Whole school engulfed—Miss Primrose had only just time to order out the carriage and drive off before it disappeared into the earth."

"What!"

"Tidal wave followed, and the whole district, including Greyfriars, is now submerged under twenty feet of water."

Blundell and Bland looked curiously at the facetious Bob.

"If you're looking for a thick ear, Cherry—"

"Thought you wanted information," said Bob Cherry. "I've done my best! However, I'll have another try. It wasn't an earthquake—it was a German invasion. Cliff House has been blown to bits by the bombardment, and fifty thousand Territorials ordered out by the Army Council arrived too late, and had to go home after lunching on a glass of milk and a bun. The destruction—"

Blundell and Bland waited to hear no more. They went out, slamming the door with a slam that made the teacups dance on the table.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"I wonder if we shall have any more inquiring merchants," he remarked. "I don't believe in sending an applicant empty-handed away. If you fellows have finished tea we may as well be moving."

The Famous Four left the study. They were rather curious to know what had become of Bunter. Wingate, of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars, met them on the stairs, and beckoned them to stop.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" murmured Bob Cherry. "More information wanted."

"You youngsters know anything about this Cliff House business?" asked the big Sixth-Former, as they stopped.

"Lots," said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "It's Wright's aeroplane, you know. He came down on Cliff House with an awful biff, smashed the roof in, and reduced everything to ashes. The bodies were—"

Wingate reached out towards Bob's ear, and Bob dodged.

"Wingate!" squeaked a fag. "Wingate! You're wanted in the Head's study."

The Greyfriars captain walked away, and the juniors looked perplexed.

"More giddy mystery," said Bob Cherry. "Wingate's in it now. Shall we lay for him and ask him about it as he comes out?"

Another Complete Tale of Harry Wharton and Co. and the Pupils of Cliff House.

"Yes, if you want a hiding."

"Well, I don't particularly. But this is getting rather thick, you know—mystery on mystery. Pelion piled on Ossa."

"My worthy chum is right," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The honourable Pelion is piled upon the esteemed Ossa, and it is very thickful."

"Here, you fags!" It was the sweet voice of Carberry, the prefect. "What do you know about this affair? What's wrong at Cliff House?"

"Heaps of things," said Bob Cherry. "It's hydrophobia."

"Hydrophobia!"

"That's it. The garden-roller developed sudden symptoms this morning at 11.30, and they had to feed it on patty cakes to keep it quiet. At 2.15 p.m. it became excited, ran amuck among the nasturtiums, and— Don't you want to hear any more, Carberry?"

Apparently Carberry did not want to hear any more, for he scowled and walked away. Bob Cherry's chums looked at him admiringly.

"Blessed if you oughtn't to be a journalist, or a Member of Parliament, or something," said Nugent. "I wonder what is really the matter?"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Bunter!"

"I say, you fellows, will one of you take this note to Mr. Quelch?"

"Not much! What's it about?"

"The head gave it to me to take to him."

"So you've been to see the Head, have you?"

"Yes, rather—it's all right—a mistake," explained Bunter. "I—I owned up, you know, but Miss Primrose hadn't come about that at all. The Head gave me this note for Mr. Quelch."

"Why haven't you taken it to him?"

"Well, you see, there's those lines Quelch gave me. I haven't done them, and if he sees me he'll ask about them—"

"Why, you young fabricator," exclaimed Bob Cherry, "I did those lines for you, and you left them on Quelch's desk."

"Ye-e-es, so I did; now I remember! What I meant to say is, that Quelch has one up against me, and I don't want to see him if I can help it. I'd like one of you chaps to take this note. I'm fearfully hungry, and I feel that if I don't go and get some grub at once, something serious will happen."

"You take that note," said Bob Cherry. "I think I can guess your little game, you young rascal! You just take it."

And the chums walked on, leaving Billy Bunter disconsolate. The fat junior looked at the note, and blinked round dolefully.

"It's got to be taken," he murmured. "The Head may speak to Mr. Quelch about it. So long as it's taken it's all right. He won't guess that I knew what was in it—and, of course, if Quelch canes the wrong chap by mistake, they won't rake it all up again. But who can I get to take the note?"

"What you tinkee?"

Bunter blinked round at Wun Lung, the Chinese junior. Wun Lung looked at him with his usual bland smile.

"You tinkee muchee," he said. "Anyting wlong?"

"Yes, I want somebody to take this note to Quelch," said Bunter. "It's only just a note from the Head—nothing in it—only some piffle that the masters do write to one another, you know." Wun Lung made him a frantic sign to be silent, but Bunter was too short-sighted and too pre-occupied to notice it. "I'd be awfully obliged if you'd take it in to Quelch, Wun Lung. He's rather a beast to me, you know, and I don't want to see him, and—"

"Bunter!"

Bunter jumped clear of the floor at the sound of Mr. Quelch's deep, stern voice. Wun Lung had tried to warn him that the Form-master was coming along, but in vain.

Mr. Quelch looked down at the fat junior with a heavy frown.

"Bunter, give me that note!"

"If you please, sir—"

"Give it me at once."

"If you please, sir, this note was really for Wharton to give you—"

"Silence!"

Mr. Quelch took the note, opened it, and read it. His brow grew darker.

"It is quite clear to me, Bunter, that you have read this, and that you were trying to cheat another boy into taking your punishment. Follow me."

"Oh, really, sir—"

THE MAGNET—No. 68.

NEXT WEEK: "THE BULLY OF GREYFRIARS."

Mr. Quelch strode away, and Bunter had no choice but to follow. He emerged from the Form-master's study a few minutes later, in a most curious attitude. His hands were tucked away under his arm-pits, and he seemed to be trying to fold himself up like a pocket-knife. In this attitude, with a wriggling gait, the fat junior made his way to No. 1 Study, heedless of the inquiries from fellows he passed as to what was the matter. Mr. Quelch had evidently laid it on thick.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Amazing News!

THE mystery was growing deeper.

A dozen pairs of curious eyes watched Wingate come out of the Head's study, and noted the surprised look on his face.

Bob Cherry came very near asking him what was the matter, but on second thoughts decided not to do so. Wingate was seen in talk with some of the prefects, all of whom looked astonished.

After that, Mrs. Kebble, the housekeeper, was called into the Head's study, and she left it looking astonished.

Then it became known that Dr. Locke and Mrs. Locke had held a consultation, both of them looking very grave. Curiosity by this time had reached burning point.

When it became known that certain alterations were being made in the school, the excitement was intense. Gosling, the porter and the maids were set to work clearing the beds out of the Remove dormitory, and putting them in the Upper Fourth sleeping quarters. The Removites looked on in amazement.

"We're going to sleep in the Upper Fourth dorm. to-night," said Bob Cherry, in wonder. "What can it all mean?"

"My hat!" said Temple. "Do you hear that, Dab?"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"These little toads are coming into our dorm. Will one of you cut down to the village and get a tin of disinfectant?"

"Better wire," said Fry, "and tell them to send a hundredweight!"

"There will be rows to-night," said Bob Cherry, affecting not to hear the remarks of Temple, Dabney & Co. "I don't mean to sleep in a dorm. with all the windows closed!"

"Not much!" declared Nugent. "The Upper Fourth will have to have some fresh air for once, if it kills them!"

"You young rotters!" roared Temple. "We always have the window open!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Removites chuckled over having "drawn" Temple. Hurree Singh, in quest of information, poked Gosling, the porter, in the ribs. Gosling looked round with a grunt. He was not a good-tempered man.

"Why are the esteemed beds thus removefully carried out?" asked the Nabob of Bhanipur gently. "Can the worthy Gosling tell me the esteemed reason of this shiftfulness?"

"No, I can't!" said the worthy Gosling. "Wot I says is this 'ere—I don't like this 'ere luggin' beds about! That's what I says!"

The Remove dormitory was cleared right out, everything being transferred to the Upper Fourth quarters. The dormitories at Greyfriars were very spacious and airy, and although the room was, of course, somewhat crowded, it was not uncomfortably so. At all events, it was passable as a makeshift for a few days. But to what use was the Remove dormitory to be put?

And that was not all. In the Remove class-room there were changes, too. The forms were packed closer, and fresh forms brought in. The Remove seats now occupied little more than half of the big class-room, and in the other half were fresh forms—for whom?

"It can't be a whole sudden crop of new boys," said Nugent. "But what on earth can it be?"

"Faith, and it's a mystery," said Micky Desmond. "But by the same token there's a notice on the board from the Head, and—"

There was a rush to the notice-board.

There was certainly a notice from the Head, but it said no more than that Dr. Locke would address the whole school in hall at seven o'clock.

"I suppose he's going to explain," said Harry Wharton.

And the juniors waited anxiously for seven o'clock.

Before that hour arrived, however, there was a shout from the Close that brought out a crowd to see what was the matter.

A huge pantechicon van had rolled up to the House, crammed with furniture. The men in charge proceeded to unload it, and Mr. Quelch came out to tell them where to take the things.

Bedsteads and beds and trunks and boxes, and all sorts

Another Complete Tale of Harry Wharton and Co. and the Pupils of Cliff House.

and conditions of things were conveyed into the House under the astonished gaze of the juniors.

Bob Cherry, in desperation, rushed up to Wingate.

"Wingate, what does it all mean?"

The Greyfriars captain looked at him with a grin. He had not forgotten the information that the facetious Bob had given him.

"Oh, it's the aeroplane, you know!" he said. "The one you have told me about, Cherry. It biffed into Cliff House, you know."

"Oh, don't be funny, Wingate!"

"Which reminds me that I didn't pull your ear——"

Bob Cherry backed away hastily before the Greyfriars captain could finish.

The furniture was all delivered, and the big van rolled away. The quarter to seven chimed out from the tower.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Time to get to the meeting!"

The juniors hurried in. If there was an important announcement to be made, they wanted to get good places.

The hall was soon crowded.

When the Head came in there was a breathless silence, in which the rustle of his gown was distinctly heard.

He looked down the hall, over the crowd of boys standing in order, Form by Form, waiting with eager curiosity to hear what he had to impart.

"Boys, I have some news to tell you that will doubtless surprise you very much."

There was a slight buzz.

It was coming, then!

The Head paused for a moment.

"My word!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Don't keep us on tenterhooks, old chap!"

Bob had not intended those murmured words to be heard by any but his immediate chums; but the horrified look on Nugent's face showed him that something was wrong. He turned his head, and found Mr. Quelch's eyes fastened upon him, and Bob wished that the floor would open and swallow him.

"I have received a visit from Miss Primrose, the principal of Cliff House," went on Dr. Locke. "It appears that owing to the nature of the soil, there is something amiss with the foundations of the school—something that seems to have been overlooked by the architects. Until a thorough survey has been made, Miss Primrose does not think it safe for her pupils to remain in the school, and her architect agrees with her. For some time, therefore, it will be necessary for the pupils of Cliff House to leave the place."

The boys listened with interest.

It was interesting enough, but they did not quite see how it concerned them. The explanation, however, was quickly forthcoming.

"Under the circumstances, as Miss Primrose naturally objects to sending her pupils to their homes, and interrupting their studies, I have decided to accommodate the pupils of Cliff House at Greyfriars for a short time."

There was a buzz.

The boys had expected anything—but that!

The Cliff House girls at Greyfriars!

For some moments they could hardly realise it.

The Head went on quietly:

"Miss Primrose's pupils will be accommodated in the Remove dormitory for the present, the Remove going into the quarters of the Upper Fourth. They will take their lessons in the Remove-room—with the Remove. Mr. Quelch has kindly consented to take the mixed class. I hope I need not impress upon my boys the necessity of greeting the visitors here with the utmost cordiality, and treating them with the most profound courtesy and respect during their stay at Greyfriars."

The Remove gave a cheer, and the Head smiled.

"Very well," he said. "That is all I have to tell you. The pupils of Cliff House will be here this evening. I leave it to you to make their stay at Greyfriars as pleasant as possible."

And the Head retired.

The meeting broke up, the boys eagerly discussing the amazing news.

Girls at Greyfriars!

It was amazing, and no mistake.

Most of the Remove fellows knew some of the Cliff House girls, and got on with them very well, especially Harry Wharton & Co.

But to have the old school invaded by the girls in this manner was, to say the least, startling.

There were a good many who did not quite like the idea. There were others who welcomed it. Most of the juniors kept open minds upon the subject, and wondered how it would turn out.

"I don't want to say anything against the girls," said Bob Cherry. "You know that. But I'm afraid this will mean trouble."

"Why?" asked Harry.

"Well, it's bound to. We shall begin fighting with the Upper Fourth, for one thing, if we share their dormitory."

THE MAGNET—No. 68.

NEXT WEEK: "THE BULLY OF GREYFRIARS."

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

Then there's the mixed class in the Remove-room. I'm blessed if I want to go in to lessons with a lot of girls!"

"Faith, and ye're right!" said Desmond. "Sure, and they'll be talking all the time, and we shall be talking, and Quelch will have fits!"

"Then there's the cricket," remarked Ogilvy. "They think they can play cricket, and they're sure to try."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then where are they to do their prep.?" said Nugent. "They can't share our studies with us—there ain't room, for one thing. We're jolly crowded as it is."

"They learn singing and piano, too, most of 'em," said Bulstrode. "It will be an awful row! Suppose we protest?"

"Suppose we do nothing of the sort!" retorted Harry, looking the bully of the Remove full in the face. "You heard what the Head said—the girls are to be treated with every courtesy."

"Yes; and, of course, we're good little boys, and always do what the Head tells us!" sneered Bulstrode.

"We're going to in this case! If anybody says or does anything rude——"

"Well?"

"Well, there will be trouble; that's all!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Billy! Have you taken that note to Quelch yet?"

"I've had a licking," said Bunter sulkily. "All through Wharton not owning up like a decent chap. I wasn't going to speak about that, though. I was thinking that as the girls are coming over here to-night, it wouldn't be a bad wheeze to get up some sort of a feed to celebrate the occasion. I should stand it myself, but I've been disappointed about a postal-order, and my cheque from the Patriotic Home Work Association won't be here till Saturday!"

"It will be here then, of course?" said Skinner sarcastically.

"Oh, yes! I've been colouring picture-postcards for them, you know, and it's arranged for me to have three pounds a week as soon as the work's up to the mark. The last lot were really ripping! If you could lend me a pound till Saturday, Skinner——"

"Yes," said Skinner. "I can see myself doing it—I don't think!"

"If you could lend me a pound, Wharton——"

"Oh, ring off!"

"Well, perhaps it would be better to do it by subscription, after all. How much can you give me towards it, each of you?"

"I can give you a thick ear!" said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

There was a shout from the passage:

"They're coming!"

And there was a rush to the Close to see the arrival of the Cliff House pupils; and Bunter was overturned in the rush, and left blinking and gasping on the floor, as the juniors crowded out.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

New Quarters.

"HERE they come!"

In the summer dusk a great crowd had gathered in the Close, to watch the arrival of the Cliff House party. Two brakes rolled into sight, and halted before the School House. Bright, laughing faces looked down from the sides, and there were many nods of recognition. Marjorie Hazeldene and Clara and Alice, the special friends of No. 1 Study, were in the first brake, and they smiled down at the Removites. Bob Cherry nudged Harry in the ribs.

"This is where we ought to give a cheer," he murmured.

"Cheer, then, old chap."

"Well, you start, then."

Harry laughed, and shook his head. As the brake stopped, he ran forward to help Marjorie & Co. to alight.

"So jolly glad to see you here!" he said.

"Isn't it curious to be here at all?" said Marjorie. "We shall give you a great deal of trouble."

"Not a bit of it!"

"You'll see," said Miss Clara. "We shall make things—what do you call it?—something that a bee does."

"Hum?" suggested Nugent.

"Yes; we are going to make things hum."

"Oh, Clara!" murmured Marjorie.

"It's awfully good of you to receive us like this, considering," went on Miss Clara, unheeding. "Of course, when you are in Rome you must do as Rome does, and we are going to—to keep our end up with you fellows."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't cackle, you know!" said Miss Clara. But

the Removites only cackled the more. Miss Clara's adoption of boy language was decidedly funny.

Dr. Locke came to the door in great state to greet the new arrivals, who were in charge of the second mistress of Cliff House. This was Miss Locke, the youngest sister of the Head of Greyfriars—a charming young lady, already well known to the boys there. She marshalled her flock into the House, and marched them off to their quarters without the boys having much opportunity of speaking to them.

"Well," said Bob Cherry, when the girls had gone, "this is a go, and no mistake!"

"The gofulness is terrific, my worthy chum."

"There will be fun," said Nugent, "and it will begin to-night, when we take up our quarters with the Upper Fourth."

And Nugent was right.

The girls were seen no more that evening. The Remove went to bed at the same time as the Upper Fourth, and in the same dormitory. Gosling, the porter, came into sight in the upper passages. He was affixing labels in various places on the walls, and judging by the shapes and assorted sizes of the letters thereon, he had written them himself.

"My hat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as he stopped and looked at the label jammed on the wall at the end of the passage in which was the Remove dormitory, now occupied by the Cliff House pupils. "Look at this!"

And he read the notice aloud.

"No boys allowed to pass this way!"

"Rats!" said Bulstrode. "That's good, shutting us out of our own quarters."

"It's necessary, I suppose," said Harry Wharton. "It would be awkward if we were always running into one another. How many of those labels have you got, Gosling?"

"Erbout a doz'n," grunted Gosling. "I've got all this to do, arter finishing my day's work. I don't get nothing extra. Wot I says is this 'ere, a man oughter be allowed to rest arter his day's work."

"I suppose you wouldn't refuse a tip, though?" suggested Skinner.

Gosling brightened up.

"Which it's werry kind of you, sir."

"You wouldn't refuse one, then?"

"Oh, no, sir; not at all, sir."

"Then I hope somebody will offer you one," said Skinner, walking on. And Gosling turned back to his work with an expression on his face that was less amiable than ever.

The juniors went into the dormitory. It was a crowd, the number being more than double that for which the apartment had been originally intended. Wingate, of the Sixth, looked in after them.

"Look here, kids," he exclaimed, "no rows to-night, you know. You've got to think of the impression you'll make on the visitors. Keep quiet for once."

"Oh, come, Wingate," said Bob Cherry, looking hurt, "as if we would make a row, you know! I suppose you're speaking to the Upper Fourth?"

"I'm speaking to all of you," said Wingate. "If there's a row, you'll hear from me."

And he closed the door for the juniors to go to bed.

"Faith," exclaimed Micky Desmond, "you'd better mind your p's and q's, you Upper Fourth spalpeens! Wingate means what he says. If there's a row there will be a row."

"How extraordinary!" said Temple sarcastically. "And if there's a noise, will there be a noise?"

"Faith, and I—"

"You Remove kids have only to behave yourselves, and we sha'n't lick you," said Fry. "It's a bit rough on us having such a crowd of microbes in the dorm., but we can put up with it if you're quiet."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"Now, look here—" began Hazeldene.

"I told you to keep quiet!"

"Keep quiet yourself!"

"Now, then, kid—"

"Rats!"

Temple turned a little pink, and looked at his Form-fellows.

"Perhaps, upon the whole, it would be better to begin by licking these kids," he said, in a tentative sort of way. "It would teach them their place, and keep them in it for the time they're with us here."

"Oh, rather!"

"Jolly good wheeze!" said Bob Cherry heartily. "But there's a bit of a difficulty in the way. You can't do it."

"Exactly!" said the Nabob of Bhanipur, with a beaming smile. "If the esteemed rotters attempt the honourable lickfulness, it will work out reversefully, and the august licking will be a boot on the other foot."

"May as well go for the rotters now, and have done with it," said Nugent. "It will make for peace and quietness if we give them a licking to start with."

THE MAGNET—No. 68.

NEXT
WEEK:

"THE BULLY OF GREYFRIARS."

"Not a bad idea!" Harry Wharton said thoughtfully.

"The word of the esteemed Wharton is legislation for us," said Hurree Singh. "Shall we administer the honourable lickfulness?"

"I'd like to see you begin!" said Temple, growing excited. "Look here, you kids have got to be quiet!"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Another word, and I'll squash you!"

"Rats!"

"Look here—"

"More rats! You've got the other word," said Bob Cherry. "Why don't you squash us?"

It was not like Temple to refuse a direct challenge.

Each party being convinced that peace could be best secured by administering a licking to the other party, affairs were quite ripe for a row. Temple rushed towards Bob Cherry, and Bob put himself into an attitude of defence.

"Come on!" he exclaimed.

Temple came on. Bob met him with a tap on the nose, which Temple replied to with a drive under the chin. Then they clinched, and went reeling and rolling to and fro.

"Go it, Temple!"

"Give him socks, Bob!"

"Stand back there, you Remove kids!"

"Yah! Stand back yourselves!"

"I'll jolly well—"

"Rats!"

There was a scrimmage the next moment. Remove and Upper Fourth were mingled in a wild and whirling crowd of combatants.

The trampling of feet, the shouting and gasping and bumping, made a terrific din, which the juniors were too excited to notice at the time.

The uproar was at its height, when the dormitory door was suddenly flung open.

Wingate, with an angry frown, appeared in the doorway, and with him were several Sixth Form prefects, armed with canes.

The juniors were too hotly engaged to notice them, and the prefects did not waste time in words. They simply waded in with the canes.

The shouting of the combatants changed into wild yells of pain as the canes made rapid play round them.

The prefects laid on in good earnest, and there was a general wild scattering to elude the blows.

Wun Lung, the Chinese junior, thoughtfully turned out the gas in the midst of the confusion, and saved the disturbers of the peace from further punishment.

Wingate and the prefects retreated to the door again, leaving a grunting and gasping crowd of juniors smarting from their injuries.

"There," said Wingate breathlessly, "that's for a start! If there's any more rows, you'll get it really seriously."

"My hat!" groaned Bob Cherry. "If this isn't serious, I don't know what it is. I don't call it funny."

"Light the gas, some of you!"

Nugent lighted it. The prefects looked at the squirming crowd of juniors, and grinned at them. Wingate waved his cane warningly.

"Now get to bed; and no more rows, mind!"

"Faith, and I'll be as peaceful as a lamb, Wingate darling!"

Harry Wharton burst into a laugh.

"We'd better make it pax, I think, Temple," he said.

"Yes, rather!" said Temple, with a rueful grin.

And pax it was.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

No Boys Allowed.

HARRY WHARTON slept lightly that night. Perhaps it was an ache he had in his left eye, the result of an elbow biffing him there in the scuffle, or it might have been the soreness of an ear, which had received a right-hander from somebody. At all events, he woke several times. He was awake when midnight chimed out from the tower, and as the last stroke died away, he detected a sound in the dormitory.

"Hallo, what's that?"

There was no reply. He heard a door faintly close, and sat up in bed.

"Who is that?"

Still no answer.

Wharton, a little alarmed, jumped out of bed and struck a match. The beds were quiet and peaceful, all the juniors slumbering.

The captain of the Remove looked from bed to bed.

He was certain that he had heard someone leave the dormitory, and the thought was in his mind that Bulstrode might have risen to play some trick to frighten the new occupants of the Remove dormitory. It was the kind of

Another Complete Tale of Harry Wharton
and Co. and the Pupils of Cliff House.

trick that Bulstrode would play, if he had thought of it and had dared.

But Bulstrode was in bed, fast asleep.

There was one bed, however, that had no occupant, and by glancing over the rest, Wharton soon discovered who it was that was absent. It was Wun Lung, the Chinese junior.

Wun Lung was the most incorrigible practical joker in the Remove, but Wharton knew that he was incapable of playing such a trick as he would easily have attributed to Bulstrode. But Harry remembered that on a previous occasion an attempt had been made to kidnap the Chinese junior, and he was a little alarmed.

He went quietly to the door and opened it. It was very dusky in the passage and he could see nothing. There was a sound of cautious footsteps.

"Wun Lung!"

"Allee light!" came back the voice of the little Celestial. "Who callee?"

"It's I—Wharton. I thought perhaps—"

"Allee light. Me takee little walkee. Allee light."

"Oh, all right, then! Can't you sleep?"

"No savvy."

"Are you trotting about because you can't go to sleep?"

"No savvy."

Wharton gave it up and went back to bed. He soon fell asleep, and did not know when the Chinese junior returned to the dormitory. But when the rising-bell went, and the morning sunlight streamed in at the high windows, Wun Lung was in bed, fast asleep, and had to be shaken to be awakened.

There were only a certain number of washstands in the room, and so the juniors had to take turns to wash. As the senior Form of the two, and owners of the dormitory, the Upper Fourth had claimed the privilege of washing first—over-night. But when the morning came they weren't anxious to claim that privilege.

Temple looked out of bed and yawned.

"I say, you Remove kids, you can wash first if you like," he said.

"Thank you for nothing," said Skinner; "I'm in no hurry."

"You'd better not be late down."

"You'd better not yourself, if you come to that."

It seemed to be a competition which should wash last, instead of which should wash first. Harry Wharton and his friends, always early risers, were the first, and most of the Remove followed their example. The Upper Fourth had the luxury of staying in bed ten minutes after rising-bell, with an excellent excuse to proffer to any inquiring master or prefect.

The chums of the Remove left the dormitory, with the intention of taking a run in the Close before breakfast, as usual; but the notice on the wall stopped the short-cut through the passage past their old quarters. Bob Cherry was going that way without thinking, when Nugent caught him by the shoulder and pointed to the notice on the wall, in the straggling characters traced by Gosling's hand.

"NO BOYS ALLOWED TO PASS THIS WAY."

"My hat, I forgot that!" said Bob Cherry. "This way, then."

The boys followed the wide passage towards the big staircase. But suddenly Harry Wharton halted.

"Phew! That's stopped too!"

"My only hat!"

There was the notice on the wall:

"NO BOYS ALLOWED TO PASS THIS WAY."

The Famous Four stopped and looked at one another. Wharton was puzzled.

"Blessed if I know how we're to get down, then," he said.

"There's only two ways to the staircase, and both passages are closed."

"Gosling must have bungled it in sticking up the labels."

"The bungleness is terrific."

"I don't know. The Head must have instructed him which passages were to be closed to us."

"That's true enough."

"Anyway, it won't do to disregard the notice."

"I suppose not—but how on earth are we to get down?"

"There's the back stairs."

"Well, that's all right, and no mistake—the back stairs for an important set of persons like ourselves! However, here goes."

The four made their way to the back stairs. But there, at the head of the stairs, was the notice again staring them in the face:

"NO BOYS ALLOWED TO PASS THIS WAY."

"Well, my Aunt Matilda!" exclaimed Nugent, in disgust. "Gosling must have been at the ginger-beer again when he put these notices up!"

"The beerfulness of the honourable Gosling must have been great."

Harry Wharton shook his head.

THE MAGNET—No. 68.

NEXT WEEK: "THE BULLY OF GREYFRIARS."

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

"We saw him doing it, and he was sober enough."

"True, but—"

"Hang it," exclaimed Bob Cherry, "there's no way down! We can't get down at all at this rate, unless we get an aeroplane and start from a window!"

Harry Wharton looked perplexed. The notices were there, plain enough, and he did not feel inclined to disregard them, but how were the juniors to get downstairs?

They returned to the passage outside the dormitory, and found a number of other fellows, all ready to go down and equally puzzled by the forbidding notices.

"Faith, and what are we to do?" exclaimed Micky Desmond. "It's gettin' hungry I am!"

"Breakfast-bell will be going soon!" said Hazeldene.

"Well, there's the notice plain enough!"

"Might as well have stopped in bed!"

"Gosling must have made a mistake!"

"He's always making mistakes!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes Wingate!"

The head of the Sixth was ascending the stairs. He had a cane in his hand which looked businesslike, and a very businesslike expression upon his face. He seemed surprised as he found the juniors gathered in the corridor.

"Hallo, I was coming to wake you up!" he exclaimed. "What do you mean by sticking here instead of coming down?"

"We're not allowed to come down."

"Eh?"

Wharton pointed to the notice on the wall. Wingate looked at it and frowned.

"That duffer Gosling has made a mistake, of course," he said, taking down the notice. "You are allowed to use the staircase. Did you think you were to remain upstairs for the term of your natural lives, you young duffers?"

"Well, as the notice was there—"

"Yes, that's right—you were quite right. Still, you can do as I tell you. Come down—and remember you can use this staircase, anyway."

"Right you are, Wingate."

And the Remove went downstairs. It was almost time for breakfast now, and a few minutes later they gathered at the door of the dining room. The door was open, and the tables were laid, but on the door was a notice:

"NO BOYS ALLOWED TO PASS THIS WAY."

The hungry juniors looked at it in blank dismay.

"Oh, this is too rich!" exclaimed Nugent. "Aren't we to have any giddy breakfast?"

Billy Bunter gave a groan.

"I say, you fellows, I'm famishing!"

"Famish quietly, then, you fat little bounder!"

"Oh, really, Bulstrode—"

"I suppose the girls are going to breakfast in there," said Wharton, looking perplexed. "But they can't want all those tables for twenty or thirty girls, can they? I'm blessed if I understand it!"

"Let's ask Quelch where we are to grub."

"That's a good idea!"

Mr. Quelch could be seen in the great doorway, sniffing the fresh morning air from the Close. Some of the juniors approached him, and he turned towards them with a kindly smile.

"Good-morning, my lads!"

"Good-morning, sir! Will you please tell us where we are to breakfast, sir?"

The Remove-master looked surprised.

"In the dining-room, as usual, of course."

"But there's a notice on the door, sir, that says we're not allowed there."

"H'm! That is very curious." Mr. Quelch walked to the dining-room door and read the notice and frowned. "This is some joke," he said. "The notice has been pinned up here after having being removed from another place. You may go in, of course." And he took the cardboard down.

The Remove gladly enough went in, and Harry Wharton took a strong grip on the ear of the little Chinese, who was grinning cheerfully. The cheerful grin died away from the quaint little face.

"You young rascal!" said Harry. "That was what you were doing out of bed last night, was it?"

"No savvy."

"You were changing those notices from their places."

"No savvy."

Wharton laughed and released him. Wun Lung rubbed his ear and grinned serenely as he went to his place. When Wun Lung didn't want to own up he never did "savvy," as he expressed it, but Wharton was pretty sure that he was right.

Another Complete Tale of Harry Wharton and Co. and the Pupils of Cliff House.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Mixed Class.

WHEN the time came to go in to morning lessons, there was a great deal of suppressed excitement in the Remove. A youthful scout who had looked in stated that the girls were already there, and some of the juniors were blushing as they made their way to the Form-room. To enter the room under the fire of so many pairs of pretty eyes was a new and strange experience for the Removites.

Bob Cherry was blushing rosy red in anticipation long before he reached the door, and many of the juniors looked uneasy. Hazeldene was the coolest of all. As he had a sister among the new pupils, he felt more confident than the rest. He assured Bob Cherry that the girls were not dangerous at close quarters—a comforting assurance that only made the big, shy junior blush the more.

Mr. Quelch was already at his desk. The Remove-master was looking a little perplexed.

Although Miss Locke, during a previous stay at Greyfriars, had once taken the Remove, Mr. Quelch had never had any experience of teaching a feminine class.

Exactly how to deal with a class of girls he did not know.

He certainly couldn't rag them as he sometimes did the boys, and as for caning, that was quite out of the question. And if he sent in any delinquent to the Head, the Head would be as much puzzled as himself what to do with her.

Mr. Quelch thought it over, and was nonplussed, and hoped for the best without being prepared for the worst.

The Remove came in and took their places—some of them smiling at the girls, some looking bashful, and many with their eyes firmly fixed upon the floor.

As is usual in such cases, the girls were much more self-possessed than the boys. They looked cheerfully at the Removites—and there was no doubt that their bright faces and curls and bright dresses gave the room a touch of colour that improved it very much.

First lesson commenced rather constrainedly, and while it was in progress Billy Bunter suddenly burst into a suppressed giggle and nudged Harry Wharton in the ribs. Harry looked down at him.

"What's the matter with you, Billy?"

"I've thought of a jolly good wheeze——"

"Keep it till after school, then."

"You don't catch on," whispered Bunter. "You know that with my wonderful gifts as a ventriloquist, I can imitate any sound——"

"Quelch will be looking this way in a minute."

"Yes; but as I was saying, I can imitate anything——"

"Could you imitate a pocket-knife?"

"Eh? A—a—a pocket-knife?"

"Yes—a thing that shuts up, you know."

Bunter smiled a sickly smile.

"Oh, really, Wharton—— As I was saying, I can imitate any animal, and if I made a mouse squeak among the girls, there would be a stampede——"

"If you play any trick on the girls, I shall jolly well make you squeak after lessons," said Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Who is that talking?" said Mr. Quelch. "This room is not the place for conversations to be held. Who was speaking?"

"If you please, sir, it wasn't me."

"You should say it wasn't I, Bunter."

"Yes, sir. It wasn't you, sir."

"I did not mean that. You should say 'It wasn't I,' meaning yourself."

"Yes, sir. It wasn't I, meaning yourself, sir."

The girls giggled, and so did the boys, and Mr. Quelch looked a little excited. It was always a somewhat exciting task to make Bunter understand anything calling for a lot of mental exertion.

"Bunter, is it possible that you are really so stupid? What I meant was that you should use the nominative case."

"Yes, sir."

"Then repeat the sentence correctly."

Bunter looked nonplussed. Wharton, without moving his head, whispered:

"Say 'It wasn't I,' Billy."

"It wasn't Wharton, sir."

"Oh, you utter young ass!" murmured Harry.

Mr. Quelch frowned.

"Bunter, I did not ask whether it was Wharton talking.

I told you to repeat the sentence correctly. You should say these words: 'It was not I, sir.'"

"Oh, I see, sir! It was not I, sir."

"That is correct. Now, who was talking just now?" said Mr. Quelch. "It was certainly someone on that form. Was it you, Skinner?"

"No, sir."

"Was it you, Stott?"

"No, sir."

"Was it you, Wharton?"

"Yes, sir, I was speaking."

"Then you must have been speaking to Bunter, and the other speaker must have been Bunter. Bunter, you were speaking to Wharton."

"Oh, really, sir——"

"Were you speaking to Wharton?" thundered the Form-master.

"Yes, sir!" gasped Billy, nearly jumping off the form.

"And only a minute ago you told me that you were not speaking!"

"I—I did, sir?"

"Yes. You spoke falsely, Bunter—you uttered a deliberate untruth in saying that it was not you."

"I—I only said what you told me, sir."

"What!"

"You told me to say 'It wasn't I,' sir. I appeal to the class. Everybody heard you say so, sir. Any of the fellows will tell you so."

Mr. Quelch looked hard at Bunter. He sometimes had doubts whether the Owl of the Remove was as stupid as he pretended to be. The class was giggling joyously; there was always fun when Bunter was specially tackled by the Form-master. Bunter's face expressed only virtuous indignation, and Mr. Quelch gave it up.

"Very well," he said. "we will let the matter drop. You are the most stupid boy in the class, Bunter."

"Oh, really, sir, I only said what you told me, sir! I——"

"That will do, Bunter."

Bunter sniffed, and was silent. He felt very much injured, and looked upon Mr. Quelch as an extremely unreasonable person. But Bunter was not the only person to get into hot water. Bulstrode was on the warpath that morning. Although the bully of the Remove had always shown the worst side of his character to the Cliff House girls, that was chiefly because they were the friends of Harry Wharton, his rival in the Remove. As a matter of fact, Bulstrode was more desirous than anybody else in the form of cutting a fine figure in feminine eyes. He had the vanity to wish to attract the attention and admiration of the girls, and he imagined he could effect it by showing an independence in the class-room which would duly impress them. Had he been dealing with little Monsieur Charpentier, he might have succeeded; but Mr. Quelch was a dangerous master to play that game with.

It was Bulstrode's favourite amusement to "rag" the little French master by pretending to be stupid, and making him explain over and over again things which the junior understood perfectly well all the time. Then he would frequently raise a laugh in class by ridiculous answers to questions. But Mr. Quelch had taken Bulstrode's measure pretty accurately, and knew how to deal with him.

Second lesson was English history, a subject with which Bulstrode was as well acquainted as he chose to be. He had been long enough in the Remove to pass up into the Upper Fourth, or the Shell, and it was slacking that kept him back. Mr. Quelch was taking the Norman invasion that morning, a subject about which most of the Remove had more or less hazy notions.

"William the Conqueror landed in England in the year——"

"1890, sir," said Bulstrode.

There was a suppressed chuckle.

Mr. Quelch glared at Bulstrode.

"Did you say 1890, Bulstrode?"

"Sorry, sir! I mean 1588."

"1588 was the year of the Spanish Armada, Bulstrode."

"Yes, sir. Didn't William the Conqueror come over in the Spanish Armada?" asked Bulstrode innocently.

"My word!" whispered Clara, to Marjorie. "What a stupid boy!"

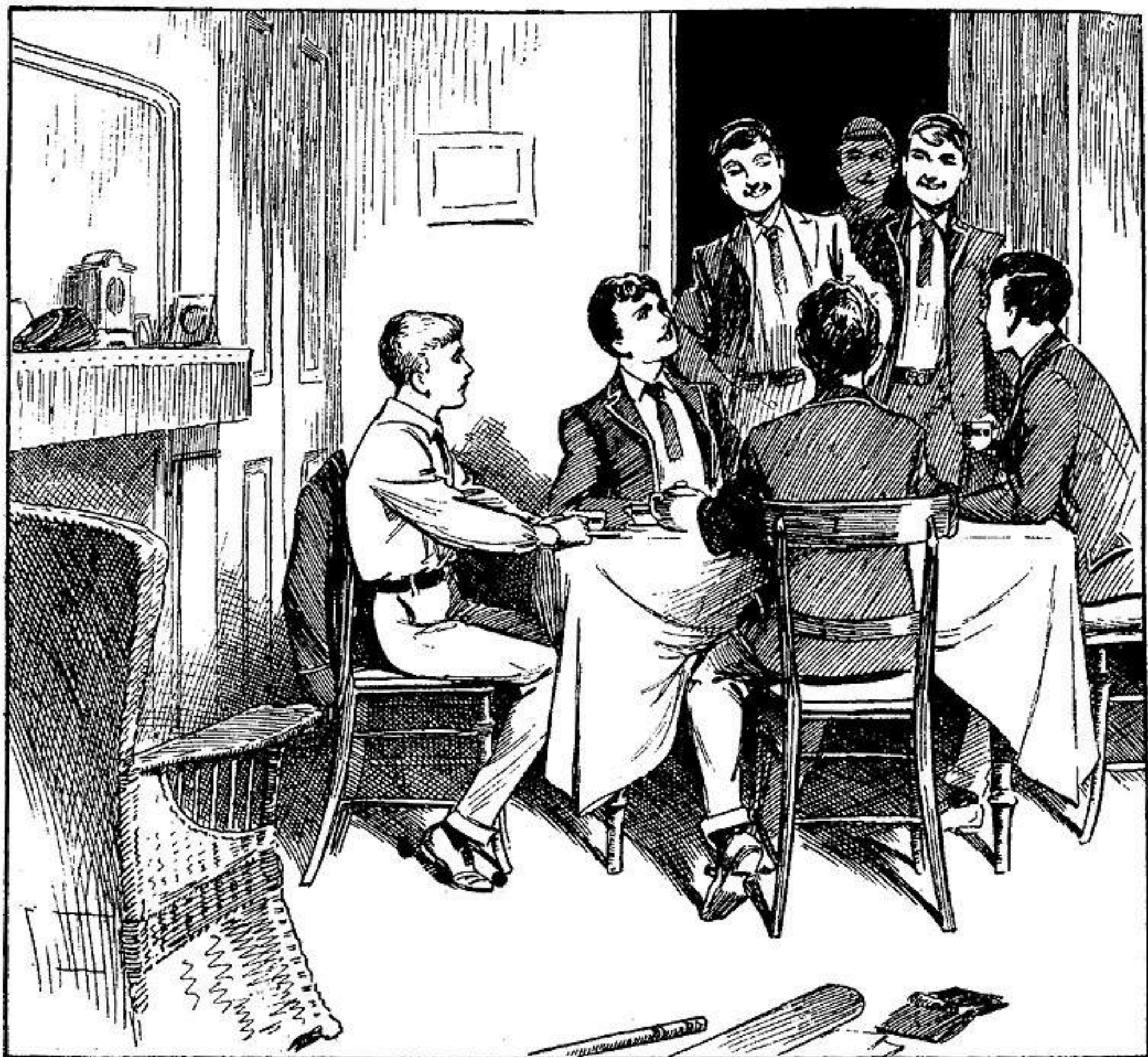
Marjorie shook her head.

"He is only pretending! This is what they call a—a——"

"Jape?" suggested Clara.

AUSTRALIAN READERS

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Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth, looked into Study No. 1 with their most agreeable smiles on. We came to speak to you fellows," said Temple. "There's something going on about Cliff House. You fellows ought to know something about it."

"Yes, a jape."

"Mr. Squelch looks angry."

"Oh, Clara! His name is not Squelch."

"Well, it sounds like Squelch, and that is how he spells it."

"I am sure not. Oh, listen!"

"Bulstrode!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Do you seriously think that William the Conqueror came over in the Spanish-Armada?"

"I haven't thought very much about it, sir."

"My word!" murmured Clara.

"Hush!"

Mr. Quelch's face was a study.

"Bulstrode! This astounding impertinence——"

"Not at all, sir! I assure you I don't mean to be impertinent, sir," said Bulstrode, in the most impertinent tone imaginable.

Mr. Quelch looked fixedly at him.

"Come out here, sir."

"What for, sir?"

"Come here!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

Bulstrode swaggered out before the class. He fully expected to be caned, but he was, to do him justice, no coward, and he could bear pain without flinching. As a matter of fact, he did not object to being caned just then,
THE MAGNET—No. 68

as he meant to strike an attitude of heroic endurance to impress the girls.

But Mr. Quelch was not the man to be taken in by Bulstrode. He did not touch the cane. He looked directly at Bulstrode. The Remove bully met his glance with an insufferable expression of impertinence.

"Bulstrode, take that chair, and place it in the corner, and stand there with your face to the wall."

Bulstrode jumped.

"Eh? What—what did you say, sir?"

"Take that chair, and stand on it in the corner, with your face to the wall. Delay one moment longer, and I will take you into the Head's study, sir!"

Bulstrode's face was like a beetroot.

There was a grin on every face in the class, and the girls, before whom he had hoped to look so heroic, were all laughing.

Slowly, reluctantly, he took the chair, carried it to the corner, and set it spitefully down there. Then he glanced round at Mr. Quelch—it was a glance of appeal. Keenly enough Bulstrode felt the utter ridicule he had exposed himself to. But there was no relenting in the Form-master's face. He knew Bulstrode better than Bulstrode knew himself, and he knew the most efficacious way to deal with him. The Remove bully slowly mounted the chair, and turned his crimson face to the wall. There was a ripple of tittering through the room.

"Silence!" said Mr. Quelch.

The lesson was resumed, but it was some time before the juniors could quite recover their gravity. And while the morning's work went on, Bulstrode stood on the chair in the corner, his face turned to the wall, raging inwardly with shame and mortification, but not daring to leave his place of punishment. During the next half-hour he had plenty of time to repent his attempt at heroics.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER. Mr. Quelch Has to Give In.

MR. QUELCH looked a little disturbed as he resumed with the class. He had put Bulstrode in his place, and crushed any desire on the part of the Removites to "show off" before the girls. But his temper was a little tart from the experience, and he was very sharp with some of the juniors. Naturally enough, in a mixed class, he did not carefully distinguish between one pupil and another, and some of the girls received sharp remarks, too. Miss Clara was one of them, and she pursed up her pretty lips when Mr. Quelch rapped out sharp words. The Removites were accustomed to sharp words enough; but the girls weren't. Manners and customs were different in a girls' school. After the placid calm of Miss Locke, and the endless patience of Miss Penelope Primrose, Mr. Quelch's tartness came as a shock. It had a different effect upon different girls. It made Marjorie more quiet and sedate and anxious to please the irritated master. It made Miss Clara rebellious, and determined to "keep her end up," as she expressed it.

Mr. Quelch was taking the juniors upon a personally-conducted tour over the battlefield of Hastings, and he asked Clara what became of Harold.

"If you please, Mr. Squelch, he was killed."

Mr. Quelch turned pink.

"My name is Quelch, not Squelch," he said tartly.

"Oh, I am so sorry, sir! As it was spelt Squelch, I thought it must be pronounced Squelch, sir," said Clara innocently.

"It is not spelt Squelch."

"But—but I saw a notice on the board, sir, signed S Q U E L C H!" exclaimed Miss Clara eagerly.

The Remove grinned, and Mr. Quelch turned redder.

"The first letter was the initial of my Christian name," he said—"S. Quelch. Do you understand now?"

"Oh, yes, Mr. Squelch—I mean Quelch."

"But it is not necessary to use my name here. You may call me, 'sir.'"

"Oh, sir, we always called Miss Locke, 'Miss Locke,' sir! And we always called Miss Primrose, 'Miss Primrose,' sir."

"You may call me 'sir.'"

"Yes, Mr. Squelch—Quelch—I mean sir, sir."

"Ahem! What is your name?"

"Clara, sir."

"Ye-es; but I cannot call you Clara. What did Miss Primrose call you?"

"She called me Clara, sir."

"Yes, but she called you something else, I suppose?" said the Form-master tartly.

"Yes, sir. She sometimes called me dear," said Miss Clara demurely.

Bob Cherry nearly went off in an explosion. Mr. Quelch's face was growing as red as Bulstrode's. He did not answer for a moment.

"I should not mind if you called me 'dear,' sir," said Miss Clara, still more demurely. "You are such a nice old gentleman, sir!"

"Oh, Clara!" whispered Marjorie.

"Ahem!" said Mr. Quelch. He coughed violently, and let the matter drop. He turned from Miss Clara to Bunter, who was chuckling. Bunter was too short-sighted to see that the Form-master was looking at him, and he went on chuckling gleefully while Mr. Quelch's glance was fixed upon him in a frozen glare.

"Bunter!"

The Owl of the Remove jumped.

"Yes, sir!"

"Are you ill?"

"Ill, sir? No, sir!"

"Then what are you making that absurd noise for?"

"Absurd noise, sir?"

"Yes!" roared Mr. Quelch. "Go and stand in the corner with Bulstrode, Bunter!"

"I'm sincerely sorry, sir—" began Bunter. Mr. Quelch picked up the pointer, and Billy made a short cut to Bulstrode's corner.

Mr. Quelch, with a very flushed face, went on with the lesson. He picked on Stott for some information respecting Norman William's claims to the English throne, and

THE MAGNET—No. 68.

NEXT WEEK: "THE BULLY OF GREYFRIARS."

as Stott was unable to satisfy him, he proceeded to scarify Stott. He dragged Stott up and down the eleventh century in the most unrelenting manner, till Stott wished devoutly that Norman William had gone to the bottom of the sea with his followers, and that Mr. Quelch would join him there.

"This class," said Mr. Quelch heatedly—"this class never displays any extraordinary intelligence. But I have never known it quite so stupid as to-day. There seem to be more dunces in this class than I have ever experienced before."

There was a general sniff of indignation from the girls.

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed Miss Clara. "We are so sorry to be dunces!"

And the juniors chuckled.

Mr. Quelch rubbed his perspiring brow.

He had not meant to say that, but his remark had certainly sounded like a reflection upon the latest additions to the class, and Miss Clara had chosen to take it like that.

"I did not mean—" he began.

"Oh, Mr. Squelch—Quelch—sir! Miss Primrose never called us dunces."

"I did not call you dunces!" almost shouted Mr. Quelch.

"Miss Primrose never raised her voice in speaking to us, sir."

"I—I—I—"

"We are trying to understand, sir," said Miss Clara sweetly. "I think we should understand better if you spoke in a lower tone of voice, sir. Miss Primrose always spoke in a calm tone."

Marjorie looked at her friend aghast. Alice Lake and Milly Brown twitched her sash, but Clara would not take any notice. Mr. Quelch had unintentionally got the young lady's back up, as she would have expressed it, and she meant to teach him manners.

"Boy—I mean girl—child," spluttered Mr. Quelch, "that is not the way to speak to me!"

"No, sir! Do you wish me to raise my voice, too, sir?"

"Oh, Clara!"

"I did not mean to imply that you were dunces, my dear girls," said Mr. Quelch, calming himself with an effort. "I was alluding to the boys in this class. The boys seem to be purposely exasperating me by their stupidity this morning. Stott, you will write out the whole chapter from your book dealing with William the Conqueror."

"Oh, sir!" stammered the unfortunate Stott, who saw his evenings for a week suddenly filled up for him.

"Not a word, sir! If you will not learn, sir, you must be made to learn!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, who was perilously near losing his temper now. "Who is that talking?" he suddenly rapped out, turning away from Stott. "The class-room is not the place for idle chatter, as I have said before. Who was speaking?"

Mr. Quelch looked so angry that the delinquent did not venture to own up.

His eye roved over the class.

"Who was speaking?"

Dead silence.

"Very well," said Mr. Quelch, greatly incensed. "I will let you all discover that I am not, as you seem to suppose, to be trifled with. I give the person who was speaking one minute in which to confess."

And Mr. Quelch took out his watch.

The silence in the room was so complete that the ticking of the watch could be heard by most of the juniors.

The seconds ticked away.

Still no one rose to his feet, and no one owned up. The juniors waited in painful suspense. Mr. Quelch was deeply angry now, and fairly on the warpath, and evidently determined to pick upon the least fault for a severe punishment.

When he was in that mood those who knew him best were least inclined to cross him or argue with him.

Mr. Quelch suddenly thrust his watch back into his pocket with a dramatic movement.

"The minute has elapsed!"

Silence!

"Who was speaking just now?"

Silence!

"Very well. I will ascertain who was speaking, and inflict the most exemplary punishment on the culprit. Under the circumstances, I shall inflict six strokes on each hand. I will— What is that?"

"That" was a sob from Milly Brown.

Mr. Quelch's anger, like most men's anger, faded away in the presence of tears, and a great uneasiness took its place.

"My dear child—"

Sob!

"Don't cry! I—you—we—that is, you shall not see the boy punished, my dear girl," said Mr. Quelch, much distressed.

Sob!

Another Complete Tale of Harry Wharton and Co. and the Pupils of Cliff House.

"You—I—why— Dear me!" Mr. Quelch mopped his damp forehead. "What are you crying about, child?"
 "I—I—I—" sobbed Milly. "I—I—I—" "Yes; what is it?"
 "I—I—I was talking!"
 "Oh!"
 "I—I—I don't want to be caned!" sobbed Milly. "I—I—I don't want to have six strokes on each hand! Oh, oh, oh!"
 "My dear child—" "Oh, oh, oh!"
 "I—I did not know it was a girl speaking," said poor Mr. Quelch. "I—I should certainly not punish a girl for speaking as if she were a boy. Pray do not cry, my lad—I mean my girl—that is to say, my dear child! I shall certainly not cane you."
 "Oh, oh, oh!"
 "Really, you distress me very much. I shall not punish you at all, my dear. I assure you that you shall not be punished."

"Oh, oh, oh!"
 Mr. Quelch smote his forehead in despair. It was useless to assure Milly that she should not be punished; the tears had started flowing, and were not to be restrained. And several of the other girls, in sympathy, were getting out their handkerchiefs.

The unfortunate Form-master was at his wit's end. He was threatened with a general bombardment of tears, and the prospect almost made his head swim with dismay. How to deal with such a class he hadn't the faintest idea. "Please—please do not cry!" he said weakly. "I—I shall not punish any of you, whatever you may do. I assure you that it is my intention only to be kind. Pray calm yourselves."

Milly's sobs ceased at last. The threatening handkerchiefs disappeared, and the girls began to smile again. Mr. Quelch heaved a great sigh of relief. The tempest of tears had blown over, and he registered a mental vow not to risk provoking another.

The girls had an easy time for the rest of that morning. If Mr. Quelch showed the least sign of impatience, a handkerchief came into view, and the mere sight of it was enough to make the Form-master yield on the spot.

Mr. Quelch fanned himself with a book when the class was dismissed, and he was left alone in the Form-room.

"Dear me!" he said. "Bless my soul! I believe Miss Locke had a difficult task at the time she took the Remove, but—but I would rather take twenty Removes than one class of girls! Upon my word!"

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Miss Clara Is Pugnacious.

THE Removites were laughing as they swarmed out into the sunny Close—with the exceptions of Bulstrode and Bunter. Bulstrode was in a vile temper, and his anger was more directed against the girls than against the Form-master. He had been made to look ridiculous, in their eyes, when he had meant to show off; and that was quite enough to rouse all the venom in his nature.

"We're jolly glad to have you in the Form-room, you know," Harry Wharton was saying to Marjorie & Co. as the Remove bully came out. "It's ripping. It hasn't been a bit monotonous this morning."

"Rats!" said Bulstrode rudely. Wharton turned on him with a blaze in his eyes. "You got what you deserved," he said. "If you can't behave yourself, you'll get some more, too, and jolly soon!"

"Bosh! You can butter up the girls if you like, but you know jolly well that they make old Quelch more vile-tempered than ever, and we don't want—"

"If you're looking for a thick ear—"

"Bah! I tell you we don't want—"

Wharton's left lashed out. He had had quite enough of Bulstrode and his ways. Marjorie was looking hurt, while Miss Clara was decidedly angry. Bulstrode backed away quickly from Wharton's blow, guarding himself. Harry would have followed it up the next moment, but Clara stepped in the way.

"Hold on!" said that lively girl. "This is my affair!"

"Oh, Clara!"

"Stuff!" said Miss Clara. "Bulstrode is a cad—"

"Oh, am I!" exclaimed Bulstrode, livid with anger.

"Yes. You were rude to Miss Primrose once, and you have often acted like a cad. What you want is a jolly good licking," said Miss Clara.

Bulstrode growled, and the juniors, who were gathering round in a crowd, laughed. Miss Clara's curious phrases struck them as funny. But Miss Clara was in deadly earnest.

"You have been rude to us on several occasions," she went on. "Now you have got to ring off!"

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

"To—to what?" gasped Bulstrode.

"To ring off," said Miss Clara. "Will you have the gloves on—or off?"

"Eh?"

"Will you have the gloves on—or off? I'm going to lick you!"

"Wh-w-what!"

"Growing deaf?" asked Miss Clara pleasantly. "When you insult a boy you expect to have to fight him, don't you? Well, I'm going to take my own part just the same. I'm going to lick you, or else you're going to lick me. Catch on?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here—" began Bulstrode blusteringly.

"That's the coward's blow!" said Miss Clara, giving Bulstrode a tap that would not have hurt a fly. "Now then!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You utter idiot!" growled Bulstrode.

"Stop that!" said Wharton angrily.

"Will you have the gloves on?" exclaimed Miss Clara again.

"Of course I won't! I—"

"Then you're a coward!"

Bulstrode gritted his teeth. He was greatly inclined to accept Miss Clara's challenge, and treat her as if she were a boy. But bully as Bulstrode was, and brute, too, on occasion, he was not quite brute enough to strike a girl. Besides, he knew that if he had done so, the other fellows would have collared him and ragged him till he was more dead than alive.

He was in a rather difficult position; but it was his own fault. He had caused the trouble, and he had only himself to thank.

"Go it, Bulstrode!" said several mocking voices. "You can't fight Linley or Wharton—a girl's about your mark! Go for her!"

"Bulstrode always thought himself a lady-killer!" grinned Ogilvy. "Now's your chance, Bulstrode! Go for her!"

"We'll jolly well smash you if you touch her!" growled Bob Cherry.

"Yes, rather!" said Nugent, with emphasis; and the Nabob of Bhanipur remarked that the ratherfulness was terrific.

"Look here," said Bulstrode, "I don't want a row with you girls—"

"Then you'll have to apologise," said Miss Clara. "I'm willing to let you off if you apologise."

"Rats! Bosh!"

"Then put up your fists!"

And Miss Clara assumed a scientific attitude of defence that almost made the juniors shriek; and Bulstrode receded a little. There was a howl of derision.

"He's running away!"

"He's funking!"

"Ha, ha! Afraid of a girl!"

"You idiots!" roared Bulstrode. "You know I can't fight a girl!"

"Ha, ha! You shouldn't have started it, then!"

"Apologise!"

"I am waiting," said Miss Clara, with a great deal of dignity.

"Look here, I'm not going to—"

"Come on, then!" said Miss Clara, advancing upon Bulstrode, and making certain mysterious passes in the air, which seemed to suggest a professor of hypnotism, but which were intended for scientific boxing. "I'm ready!"

Bulstrode scowled round at the grinning faces. The juniors had packed themselves in a close circle, so that he could not escape.

He glared at them, and he glared at Miss Clara; then he took the only course possible under the circumstances.

"I—I—I apologise!" he stammered.

Miss Clara lowered her fists.

"Then I will let you off this time," she said magnanimously. "But you must not be a naughty boy again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bulstrode thrust his hands deep into his pockets, and strode savagely away. The crowd dispersed, grinning over the affair, and Miss Clara was heartily congratulated by her friends.

"But what would you have done if he had fought you?" asked Milly.

Miss Clara reflected for a moment. She had apparently not thought of that.

"I—I—I should have cried," she said at last.

And Marjorie laughed.

The girls had their meals in the Head's house, under the charge of Mrs. Locke, and so the juniors did not see them at dinner.

After dinner, Marjorie & Co. came out, and went into the Head's garden. The garden was bright with flowers, and any boy who picked a flower in that garden was certain of deadly trouble to come. But the girls, of course, did not know that the Head's garden was sacrosanct. They began to pick the flowers cheerfully.

It was the custom of the Cliff House pupils to take in a bunch of flowers for Miss Primrose, and lay it on her desk; and Miss Primrose would sniff it, and thank her dear pupils, and they would all feel very pleased with themselves and one another.

Marjorie & Co. hadn't been to a boys' school before, and they naturally intended to treat Mr. Quelch as they treated their mistress. They carefully selected some very nice flowers, as they were allowed to do in Miss Primrose's garden, and formed a really very beautiful bouquet.

"How sweet!" said Clara. "What lovely flowers these are! Mr. Quelch will be very pleased, though he does not deserve it, after his conduct this morning."

"I think he did his best, dear," said Marjorie gently.

"Then he didn't manage it very well. He made Milly cry."

"But Milly was talking in class."

"I was only saying to Alice that her hair-ribbon was undone," said Milly. "Mr. Quelch couldn't want Alice to have her hair-ribbon undone in class."

"Well, we will take him a bouquet, and show him that there is no ill-feeling," said the magnanimous Clara. "It will show him that we are willing to be friends if he is, and if he is reasonable."

And the girls went towards the Remove class-room with the bouquet when the bell rang for afternoon lessons.

Wun Lung, the little Chinese, looked at the bouquet curiously as he passed the girls in the Close, and stopped to speak, with his engaging and innocent smile.

"Nicee flowels—velly nicee!" he murmured. "Chinee likee sniffec."

Marjorie held out the bouquet.

"Smell them, by all means!" she said.

Wun Lung sniffed the flowers.

"Nicee, nicee! You give flowels to somebody?"

"They're for Mr. Quelch," Marjorie explained.

A glimmer came into the almond eyes of the little Celestial.

"Me cally them fol you to loom?" he said.

Marjorie did not need assistance to carry the bouquet, but she did not like to refuse the polite offer of the little Oriental. She allowed Wun Lung to carry the flowers; and he marched off before the girls with the bouquet in his hand.

Unseen by the girls, the little Celestial extracted a small packet from one of his numerous pockets, and shook a grey powder over the flowers. Wun Lung was always prepared for a practical joke, and he never could resist the temptation to play one, even on people he liked. No one at Greyfriars, save Harry Wharton, was safe from him.

They entered the class-room, and not till they were passing the master's desk did Wun Lung hand the bouquet back to Marjorie.

Little suspecting that the flowers were now impregnated with pepper, the girl laid the bouquet on the desk, and then went to her place.

The Removites streamed in; but Mr. Quelch had not yet made his appearance. They sat down, and by the time the last was in his place, Mr. Quelch came in.

The Form-master was looking very good-tempered and genial after a good lunch, and he was prepared to be kindness itself to his mixed class.

He caught sight of the flowers as he came up to his desk, and stared at them in astonishment.

"Who placed these flowers here?" he asked, turning round to look at the class.

Marjorie Hazeldene rose to her feet.

"I did, sir, if you please," she said.

"And why?"

"We always took in flowers for Miss Primrose, sir."

"Oh, I see!" Mr. Quelch looked pleased. "It is very kind and thoughtful of you, and I shall accept your little gift with great pleasure."

And Mr. Quelch took up the flowers and lifted them to his nose.

He took a deep sniff of the scent, but it was hardly the scent he expected, for the next moment he dropped the bouquet to the floor with a thud, and sprang into the air.

"Ooooooh! Ow—atchoo—choo—choo! Atchoo!"

THE MAGNET.—No. 68.

NEXT WEEK: "THE BULLY OF GREYFRIARS."

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

More Trouble.

MARJORIE gazed at Mr. Quelch in astonishment. For a moment she thought the Remove-master must have taken leave of his senses.

Mr. Quelch was claspng both hands to his nose, and dancing like one possessed, trampling the pretty flowers all to shreds under his feet.

All the time he was giving vent to volcanic sneezes.

"My gracious!" murmured Clara. "What is the matter with him?"

"He must be—be ill!" said Marjorie.

"Off his—his rocker, perhaps," said Clara.

"Atchoo—choo—atchoo—choo—chooooo!"

Mr. Quelch sneezed away as if for a wager; and it was a full minute before he could control his sneezing.

"Boys—atchoo—if you laugh again, I shall—atchoo—choo—I shall punish you all most severely! I have never—atchoo—atchoo—experienced such a trick as—a—atchoo—choo! Miss Hazeldene, you will—atchoo—atchoo—"

"He wants you to sneeze, too, Marjorie!" whispered Miss Clara to her amazed and bewildered friend.

"Miss Hazeldene, you will—atchoo—choo—step out here, please!"

"Certainly, sir!"

Marjorie Hazeldene stepped out before the class.

The Form-master fixed a stern glance upon the bewildered girl.

"Miss Hazeldene, I am surprised—atchoo—and pained! I should never have dreamed that a girl could play a trick like this—"

"A—a trick, sir?" stammered Marjorie.

"Yes! The flowers were impregnated with pepper, and I—atchoo—choo—choo—"

Marjorie looked utterly dismayed.

"Oh, sir! I—I did not know—I really did not, sir!"

Mr. Quelch looked at her closely. It was impossible to look into those clear, frank, brown eyes and suspect Marjorie of telling an untruth.

"Indeed, I cannot but believe you!" said the Form-master. "Where did you obtain those flowers, please?"

"In the garden, sir."

"Ahem! It is forbidden to pick flowers in the garden. However, let that pass now. Someone had placed pepper in that bouquet. Did it leave your hands at all?"

"Only for a few minutes, sir."

"Ah! And who—?"

"The Chinese boy carried it a little way for me, sir; but I am sure he did not—"

"But someone did!" said Mr. Quelch grimly. "You may go back to your place. Wun Lung!"

The little Celestial rose.

"Did you put pepper in those flowers, Wun Lung?"

The Chinese looked stolid.

"No savvy, sil!"

"Did you put pepper upon this bouquet when Miss Hazeldene trusted it into your hands?" repeated Mr. Quelch, in a louder tone.

"No savvy!"

"Did you allow any other person to touch it?"

"Me touchee flowels, sil!"

"Yes, I know that! But did any other person touch it?"

"No savvy, sil!"

"Answer my question, Wun Lung! Did you, or did you not, put pepper upon those flowers?" shouted the exasperated Remove-master.

"Me no speakee English velly vell, sil!"

"Answer my question!"

"Me no savvy!"

Mr. Quelch blew his nose violently. He was pretty certain of the Celestial's guilt, and yet the bland and innocent smile of Wun Lung was very disarming. He was greatly inclined to punish the Chinese, anyway; but he thought better of it.

"You may sit down, Wun Lung."

"Me tankee you, sil!"

And Wun Lung sat down with a bland and contented smile.

Mr. Quelch looked round the class in search of someone laughing; but the faces of the Removites became preternaturally grave at once.

The Form-master blew his nose again, and sneezed, and re-blew his nose, and breathed hard. His nose was of a brilliant crimson hue by this time, and it imparted a far from grave aspect to his usually very serious face. But the Removites suppressed their grins. Mr. Quelch was not in a humour now to be grinned at. He would have been very pleased at that moment to find a victim.

He dragged the easel from the wall with a jerk, and sneezed again. Billy Bunter chuckled softly.

"My word! Isn't he in a wax!"

Another Complete Tale of Harry Wharton and Co. and the Pupils of Cliff House.

Mr. Quelch swung round as if moved on a pivot.

"Bunter, take fifty lines!"

"Oh, really, sir—"

"Take a hundred lines, Bunter!"

"I'm sincerely sorry—"

"Take two hundred lines!"

Bunter relapsed into silence. His little round eyes were gleaming behind his spectacles. Two hundred lines meant serious trouble for Bunter. He would have to do some of them himself, and spend a lot of time badgering his friends to do the rest. Billy was in a vengeful mood, and when he felt vengeful, he always remembered his gifts as a ventriloquist.

"Please, sir—"

It was a voice from the girls' forms, so soft and exactly like Milly Brown's that it was impossible to imagine that it proceeded from the fat junior.

Bob Cherry, who saw Bunter's lips move, guessed what it was, and made him a sign to be quiet. But Bunter did not see, or at all events did not heed, the sign.

Mr. Quelch looked round irritably.

"What is it?"

There was no reply.

"Someone spoke," said Mr. Quelch. "Does anyone wish to ask me anything?"

The girls were all silent.

The master turned away again angrily, and the moment he had done so the soft voice from the class went on:

"If you please, sir—"

"Oh, dear me!" said Mr. Quelch. "Yes, what is it? What do you want to say? Did you speak, Brown—I mean Miss Brown?"

"No, sir," said Milly.

"It seemed to me that it was your voice. However, if it was not you, who was it?"

Mr. Quelch shrugged his shoulders irritably, and turned to the blackboard.

"Oh, goodness gracious! What an ill-tempered old gentleman!"

It was the feminine voice again. Mr. Quelch turned crimson.

"This—this is unendurable!" he exclaimed. "My dear girls, you must surely know better than to trouble your master like this. Miss Primrose must have been very lax with you. I insist upon your being silent."

The girls were looking amazed. The voice might have proceeded from any of the number, between twenty and thirty, and no one could trace it to its source.

Bunter was grinning behind his hand. He was "getting his own back" on Mr. Quelch now; and the fat junior was not finished yet.

"Oh, dear! What an ill-tempered old—Ow!"

The last monosyllable was in Bunter's natural voice.

For Harry Wharton, who was near him, had suddenly detected what he was doing, and he had pinched the fat arm of the junior hard.

"Ow! Wow! Groo! Yaw!"

"Bunter, what are you making that noise for?"

"Ow! Wow! I'm hurt!"

"What do you mean? How are you hurt?"

"I—I—I've been pinched!"

"Who pinched you?" roared the Form-master angrily.

"What do you mean?"

"Wharton, sir—ow!"

"Did you pinch Bunter, Wharton?"

"Ye-e-es, sir."

"And why did you do such a ridiculous thing?"

Wharton did not reply. If he had given away the ventriloquist, Bunter would have suffered a punishment so severe that he would not have forgotten it for weeks. Mr. Quelch glared at the head of the Form.

"Wharton, I am surprised at this! Why did you pinch Bunter?"

"To keep him quiet, sir."

"Was Bunter talking?"

"Well, not exactly talking, sir."

"If you were trying to keep order, I excuse you," said Mr. Quelch. "Kindly find some other way than by pinching Bunter, however, and making him yelp like a dog."

"Oh, really, sir—"

"Silence, Bunter!"

"But I'm hurt! I—"

"I shall cane you if you speak another word!"

Bunter blinked indignantly. He looked round for sympathy, but the fellows were only grinning at him. He looked at the girls, and they were smiling, too. Everybody seemed to regard the pinch as funny, though Bunter hadn't the faintest idea where the fun came in.

Mr. Quelch was busy with the blackboard for a few minutes. But that lesson was not destined to pass off peacefully. In the midst of the nervous silence of the class-room a faint but very distinct sound came from the girls' forms.

THE MAGNET.—No. 68.

NEXT WEEK: "THE BULLY OF GREYFRIARS."

Squeak! It was the squeak of a mouse.

There was a restless movement among the girls, and a nervous peering down among the desks to the floor.

"Oh, my goodness!" murmured Clara. "It's a mouse!"

"Oh, dear!"

"Where is it?"

"There it is again!"

Squeak!

Mr. Quelch looked angrily at his feminine class.

"Cannot you keep quiet?" he rapped out. "Really, this is too bad! Is this the kind of discipline you kept at Cliff House?"

"There's a mouse, sir," stammered Marjorie.

"Nonsense! There are no mice in the class-room."

"But there is one here, sir."

"Nonsense!"

Squeak!

"There it is again, sir!" exclaimed a score of frightened voices in chorus. "Oh, sir! There is a mouse, sir!"

"I—I am so frightened, Mr. Quelch!" gasped Clara.

"Oh, dear—oh, dear—oh, dear!"

Mr. Quelch could not deny that there had been a squeak that time. He was looking very worried, and he picked up his pointer. Some of the girls were already standing on the forms, looking with nervous terror at the floor.

"Come, come," said Mr. Quelch. "There is nothing to be afraid of. A mouse is a quite harmless and even amusing creature, and—"

Squeak!

"Oh, dear—oh, dear! Where is it?"

"My goodness! Oh!"

Squeak!

The girls were all on the forms now, palpitating with terror. The boys were laughing. Mr. Quelch was at his wits' end.

"Pray reassure yourselves, my dear children—pray do not be alarmed—there is nothing whatever to be afraid of. A mouse cannot possibly cause you any injury—"

Squeak!

There was a rush away from the forms. The girls ran out into the centre of the room, and ran right into the excited and worried Form-master. Mr. Quelch, in the midst of a sea of tossing curls and frightened eyes, looked utterly bewildered and at a loss. Two or three of the girls were clinging to him for protection. He tried to reassure them, but the squeaking of the mouse had more effect than his words. The squeak was following the girls, and it sounded near the Form-master's feet. There was a scattering of the Cliff House pupils again. Mr. Quelch mopped his heated brow.

"My dear girls—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Boys, how dare you laugh! This is a serious matter. If you—"

Squeak!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Take fifty lines each!" shouted Mr. Quelch. "Take a hundred lines each!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, dear! Whatever shall we do? Where is it, Clara?"

"Just near your feet, I think, my dear."

"Oh, oh, oh!"

Bob Cherry, unnoticed in the general confusion, took a tight grip on the back of Billy Bunter's neck. The fat junior squeaked in earnest this time.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"If that mouse squeaks again, it will be the last squeak for you, you—you oyster," muttered Bob Cherry in his ear.

And the mouse did not squeak again.

Mr. Quelch, perspiring and excited, and worried almost to the limit of endurance, succeeded in restoring something like order at last.

The mouse having been apparently frightened away, the girls were prevailed upon to resume their seats. But they went back to their places in fear and trembling. And all through the afternoon's lessons there were continual false alarms, and the work was interrupted by little shrieks and exclamations of dismay, which drove Mr. Quelch almost distracted.

That afternoon seemed endless to Mr. Quelch, and when it at last came to a close, he heaved a sigh of relief.

He watched the boys and the girls file out of the class-room, and wiped his brow.

"Bless my soul!" he gasped. "How—how shall I stand this to-morrow—and the next day—and the next? It—it will turn my hair grey! Dear me! Ah, is that you, Miss Locke!"

Miss Locke was looking in at the door, with a smile upon her face as she noted the expression of the Form-master.

"I thought I would look in, and see how you had managed with my class to-day," she said pleasantly.

"Oh, famously!" said Mr. Quelch. "I—I have managed very well—considering, of course, a feminine class requires—er—experience. I have no doubt I shall grow more accustomed to it in—in time. Meanwhile—"

Miss Locke laughed.

"Perhaps I could relieve you of part of the trouble," she suggested. "Dr. Locke has suggested that I should take my own class here; this room is large enough for two classes to be held in it without interfering with one another, I think."

Mr. Quelch brightened up.

"Well, really, Miss Locke, that seems to be an excellent

idea!" he exclaimed. "Of course, I have no complaint to make of the—the dear girls, but—but I am just a little unaccustomed to them. I think the arrangement you propose will be—will be simply excellent."

And so it was arranged.

But when the Removites heard of the new arrangement there were grins and chuckles galore.

"It may work all right," said Bob Cherry. "I say it may—but I have my doubts. In my opinion, there will be more fun!"

And there was—but that is another story.

THE END.

(Another splendid tale of the boys of Greyfriars and the pupils of Cliff House next Tuesday, entitled "The Bully of Greyfriars." Order your copy of The "Magnet" Library in advance. Price One Halfpenny.)

The Opening Chapters of a Grand Story.



A Splendid Tale of Life in the British Army.

A BRIEF RESUME OF THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

Ronald Chenys, a cadet in his last term at Sandhurst, is falsely accused of cheating in an exam., so one night, packing up a few necessaries, he leaves Sandhurst with his dog Rough. He walks to London, where he falls in with Colour-Sergeant Duffy, of the Royal North Wessex Regiment, who conducts him to St. George's Barracks for enlistment. While he is waiting there with a number of other recruits, he takes the part of a youngster nick-named "Waterworks" against two bullies. "Waterworks" is knocked down, but Ronald is laying about him vigorously, when the door opens and a tall soldierly gentleman in mufti enters the room, accompanied by a sergeant, and stands surveying the scene with angry amazement.

(Now go on with the story.)

A Soldier of the King—The New Draft—A Break for Liberty.

Waterworks had risen, still dazed with the effects of the cruel and treacherous blow, and was clinging idiotically to the back of a chair. George was picking himself up out of the fender, equally bewildered at the electrical swiftness with which retribution had overtaken him. While his friend Alf nursed a damaged nose with lamentations and oaths.

"Tchun!" roared the sergeant, so flabbergasted that he forgot that nobody would be expected yet to know the magic meaning of that command.

Ronald alone seemed to keep his wits about him, though this sudden interruption brought about a greater surprise to him than to anybody else in the room. For this tall, soldierly gentleman was none other than the chief recruiting staff-officer, and one of his father's oldest friends; though, fortunately for Ronald, they had not met for years.

"What is the meaning of this outrageous disturbance?" demanded the colonel.

All the rookies in the room had slouched to their feet, and now stood eyeing the stranger shamefacedly. There was a look of command in those stern, flashing eyes which made them cower like guilty dogs.

"You," said the colonel, indicating Ronald—"you seem to be responsible in some measure for this row! Explain what it all means!"

"I was set on by these two men, sir, and I struck out in self-defence," answered Ronald briefly.

"Oh!" echoed the colonel tartly. And noting that, while

he stood clothed in his jacket, George and Alf were in their shirtsleeves, he seemed inclined to believe him.

"What's your name?" he asked sharply and suddenly, as his eyes returned to Ronald's face.

There was a note of surprise in his tone which set the lad on his guard.

"Chester, sir," replied he.

"Chester! H'm!" The colonel glared at him for a space. "Who taught you to stand like that?"

Ronald started. He had allowed himself to be caught napping. While the others were slouching with stooping shoulders, he unconsciously had sprung to "Attention!" and was standing with heels together, legs braced back, and chin held high, in true military style.

Now his statement that he had had no previous military training would be doubted, and he might be set back for inquiries. If they traced him back to Sandhurst, the charge of cheating would almost certainly mean that he would be rejected from the ranks. They have no room for convicted criminals in the British Army.

Ronald kept silence. He must either prevaricate or speak out, and he preferred to do neither.

"H'm!" snorted the colonel, perceiving his silence. "Well, you are all making a bad beginning in your new career, anyway," he continued at last. "Later on you'll discover that a disgraceful scene like this will land you in a prison-cell. I will take no further notice of it, though I am tempted to make a sharp example of you three men, and turn you out neck-and-crop as a disgrace already to the Service you are entering. By the way, sergeant-major," he added, as an after-thought. "Are all these men enlisted yet?"

"Not Chester, sir. He'll be sworn in for the Wessex Regiment with the next batch."

Ronald trembled. Was his ambition to serve his King and Country to be shattered after all?

"All right, then," said the colonel, after a painful pause, "let him go through. I'll give him the same chance as the rest. Only remember"—to Ronald—"you have started badly—jolly badly!" And he went out muttering to himself, "I wonder where the dickens I have seen that youngster's face before? A gentleman undoubtedly, and, by Jove, a handy chap with his fists! Chester—eh? But, of course, that's not his right name. Joining my old regiment,

NEXT
WEEK:

"THE BULLY OF GREYFRIARS."

Another Complete Tale of Harry Wharton
and Co. and the Pupils of Cliff House.

too. Well, he's the right stamp, and worth keeping an eye upon. A good chap, or I'm a Dutchman!"

George and Alf made no signs of rejecting the colonel's good advice. Like wily tacticians, they realised that Ronald was too doughty an opponent to be assailed by frontal attack, and they meant to bide their time.

In any case, a sergeant came almost immediately to collect the unenlisted recruits, and Ronald was marched away to take the oath which was to bind him for the term of at least twelve years.

It was a simple ceremony, and scarcely a solemn one, he thought, as he heard the gabbled words of the men before him. Then his own turn came.

"I, Ronald Chester, do take oath that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to his Majesty King Edward the Seventh, his heirs and successors, and that I will, as in duty bound, honestly and faithfully defend his Majesty, his heirs and successors, in person, crown, and dignity, against all enemies, and will observe and obey all orders of his Majesty, his heirs and successors, and of the generals and officers set over me. So help me God."

Ronald kissed the book, and was a soldier.

He went out, wondering how many of his ancestors had taken a similar oath to serve their King and country.

"Well, you've done it now, then!" said a voice. And he turned to find the recruiting sergeant awaiting him.

"Yes, I've done it," said Ronald, with a contented laugh. "And, though one never knows, of course, I don't think I shall ever live to regret it. Rough! Rough! Here, old boy!"

Ronald had just caught sight of the terrier's shaggy head peeping through the gate.

"I had forgotten him," said Duffy doubtfully, as Rough ran the gauntlet of the gate corporal, on the one hand, and the sentry on the other, and came frisking round their heels. "They don't allow dogs on the strength in the Army, you know."

"Neither do they at Sandhurst," answered Ronald, with a laugh, "and yet old Rough survived. No, colour-sergeant, it'll take even more than King's regulations to part me from my tyke. He'll smuggle himself into barracks somehow, never fear. You can't show him any ropes he doesn't know. He'd nose out a general, even if he disguised himself as an ice-cream man, and be out of his sight quicker than winking—wouldn't you, Rough?"

The terrier gave a contemptuous snort, which turned to a low growl as Messrs. George and Alf appeared upon the steps of the recreation-room, both looking peevish and sore.

"E don't seem to like the look of them two beauties any better than me," said Duffy. "I've got half an idea that they're regretting taking the King's shilling already, and that the corporal on conducting duty is going to have some sport with them before he gets to the station."

"Well, they're a tough handful, certainly," said Ronald, returning the scowl of the two hooligans with a steady stare. "I've had one rough-and-tumble with them already, and so I can speak from experience."

Ronald's modest version of their brutal attack on Waterworks, and his own sharp and short victory, brought an admiring smile to Duffy's grim mouth.

"Well, they've got a nut to crack in Corporal Kedge, of 'ours' if they try any of them games on with 'im; but I'll give him the tip, all the same, in case they try and give him the guy. They may be bad eggs, and the Service might be the better for being without 'em; but now they're in, they've got to stick it until they're kicked out."

"Young Waterworks, as you call him, is a good plucked 'un to stand up to 'em at all," he continued. "I've just let him outside to argue his old mother into going 'ome and leaving well alone. She seems to have took to you, so you'd better lend him a hand. Don't forget you start at three, though."

Nothing loth to spend the intervening hour and a half in so good a cause, Ronald and Rough presented themselves to the sorrowing old dame, and led her and her boy away to a neighbouring coffee-shop, where, coaxing and persuading, the two recruits soon restored her to a more resigned frame of mind.

Not wishing to intrude upon the tearful farewell between mother and son, Ronald withdrew, and waited for his new chum on the pavement outside. It now wanted only a quarter of an hour to the time of departure.

At last Waterworks emerged, red-eyed but tight-lipped.

"I'm much obliged for that, sir," he said, as Ronald met him. "You've done me two good turns to-day, and I sha'n't forget them in a hurry. I feel as if a load as big as a haystack had been lifted off my chest. I could have stood getting punched into a jelly easily enough, but this other business was beginning to take the heart out of me till you arrived. But for you I don't believe I'd have kept the old lady from following me to Dunchester itself. I don't know your name, sir," he added.

"Chester—Ronald Chester," answered Ronald. "And look here, old chap, for goodness' sake don't call me 'sir.' That's a title you must keep for officers and sergeant-majors."

THE MAGNET.—No. 68.

NEXT
WEEK:

"THE BULLY OF GREYFRIARS."

EVERY
TUESDAY, The "Magnet" ONE
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and such bigwigs. You and I are going to be comrades, and what is more, I hope, friends. You're——"

"Anthony Truscott—commonly called Tony," answered the recruit. But there was no time to say more, for already Colour-Sergeant Duffy was peering anxiously out of the barrack-gate in search of them.

"Now then, fall in, you two! They're parading your draft now."

"All right, colour-sergeant!" answered Ronald. "Good-bye, and many thanks for all you've done for me!"

"And good luck to you, and quick promotion!" called Duffy after him, and opened his hand to find two half-crowns pressed snugly into the palm. "That's the sort of chap we want in the Army," he said, with a chuckle. "By gosh, I wish I could enlist a hundred like him every day!"

There were eight recruits for the Wessex regiment, and they formed in two ranks, with their bundles, if they possessed them, tucked under their arms.

Ronald fell in last, and Corporal Kedge, whose duty it was to shepherd the motley mob into Dunchester Barracks, surveyed him with an approving eye.

"What's your name?" he asked promptly.

"Chester."

"Well, fall-in, Chester, on the left of our friend with the ear what's been bitten by mosquitoes," commanded Corporal Kedge, with a grim smile, pointing to George.

This put Ronald between his two antagonists of that morning, and the solemn wink which the corporal directed at him showed that he had excellent reasons for the manoeuvre.

The faces of George and his pal Alf were not so complacent. They scowled with a ferociousness quite out of proportion to the inconvenience of the change.

"Right turn!" snapped out Kedge sharply. "Now, then, I want you to keep in that order all the way to Euston Station. Do you hear? And if anyone breaks ranks, or tries to come any 'anky-panky' of that sort"—here he looked hard at the two hooligans—"let him remember that Corporal Kedge is after him. Quick march!"

The squad stepped out at the word, and filed through the gate, with Corporal Kedge stalking in the rear, close on Alf's heels. Ronald followed George, much to that gentleman's annoyance, as could easily be seen by the savage glances he kept flinging backwards over his shoulder.

Duffy was right. George and Alf had been less than twenty-four hours soldiers of the King, and already they regretted their new choice.

They had carefully plotted a sudden dash for liberty, and now, by some means or another, they had been betrayed.

George thought it was the big, square-shouldered, soft-tongued "toff" behind him, who, by some means or another, had become acquainted with their plans, and had given them away, and he meant to "mark" him, even if it jeopardised his own chance of liberty.

Along Charing Cross Road and through Bloomsbury they tramped, the object of much curiosity and not a little chaff from passing 'bus-drivers and street loafers.

Ronald would have felt his position more keenly, perhaps, but that every sense was on the alert for some swift surprise.

They had just turned out of Gower Street into the Euston Road, when, as if by a preconcerted signal, George turned in a flash, and aimed a vicious blow at Ronald's head.

He ducked in time, but at the same instant was butted forward from behind, and sent floundering on his face on the pavement.

In a second the orderly squad of recruits was scattered, bewildered and amazed.

George was launching deadly kicks at his fallen foe, while Alf was grappling like a tiger with Corporal Kedge, who had pounced upon him before he could take to his heels.

A Merry Party—Augustus Smythe, Gentleman Ranker.

In that mad rough-and-tumble at the corner of Endsleigh Gardens there were only two who really kept their wits.

The rest of the squad of recruits were so bewildered by the sudden onslaught of the hooligans on Ronald, that they could only scatter into the road, and gaze in helpless amazement.

Kedge downed his opponent, Alf, with the skill of one used to handle vicious brutes, suddenly and effectually, and Rough, having to give away several stone to George, contented himself with a comfortable grip on his enemy's calf—a grip which soon diverted the cockney's blind fury from the almost senseless victim lying in the road.

After that, it was only the matter of a few seconds before both the young ruffians were overpowered.

Recovering from his first surprise, Tony Truscott set about George in a way which astonished himself much more than it did the onlookers, and by the time a couple of

Another Complete Tale of Harry Wharton
and Co. and the Pupils of Cliff House.

Redcaps, or military foot police, who happened by good luck to be within call, had arrived, both the hooligans had had enough—at any rate, for the moment.

Ronald was now on his feet, dazed, and a little gone about the knees, otherwise showing no signs of serious hurt. There was a smear of crimson on his close-cropped head, where George's boot had got home; but the wound was only a slight one.

A crowd of fully five hundred people had gathered by this time, and as civilian sympathies are apt to incline against the redcoat in such little matters, Corporal Kedge lost no time in re-forming his squad, and giving the word to march.

Dragging in the rear, in the grip of the stalwart Redcaps, came George and Alf, an impossible handful but for Rough's assistance. The terrier's teeth continually threatening their heels, made their progress comparatively lamb-like, and a few minutes later the squad marched into Euston Station. Here the corporal departed to present his warrant, and procure the tickets, and returned armed, besides, with a coil of rope, which he managed to borrow.

The Dunchester train being already drawn up in the platform, the two hooligans were now bundled unceremoniously into an empty third, with Kedge and the two Redcaps close behind them.

There was a last fierce struggle, a chorus of vicious oaths and grunts, and then the soldiers emerged, hot, perspiring, but satisfied.

When the rest of the squad obeyed the order to enter, they found no trace of the hooligans at first, though the scuffling and squirming under either seat soon revealed where they had been stowed.

With practised skill they had been bound hand and foot, and placed where they would be the least nuisance to their fellow-passengers.

"Now, there's no call for the rest of you chaps to get nervous," said the corporal consolingly. "We treat men as men in the Army, as you'll find out for yourselves; but when we get hold of dangerous brutes and foul-mouthed blackguards, we know how to deal with them."

A blast of vitriolic abuse rumbled up from under the seats at this, and George and Alf spent the next five minutes in devising methods—each more bloodcurdling than the last—for the extermination of the British Army in general, and Ronald, Tony Truscott, and Corporal Kedge in particular.

Tony was inclined to look uncomfortable at these attentions; but the corporal only grinned.

"Hark at 'em!" he said to Ronald. "A nice brace of beauties to be foisted on to a smart regiment like the Wessex. However, it's a five-and-a-half hours' run to Dunchester, and it'll be interesting to see how much old buck they've got left at the end of it. A smart dog, that of yours," nodding at Rough, who crouched in Ronald's lap.

Rough's private wish was to be down on the floor to find out what his enemies were up to, but his master's grip on his collar restrained him.

"Seems to be a good one for rats, too, by what I have seen," continued Kedge drily. "I don't know what they'll say to him in barracks, though."

"I want you to help me there, too, if you will, corporal," said Ronald. "I know that Army regulations don't allow Tommy Atkins to keep pets—worse luck!—but old Rough is more than a pet; he's my chum, and about all I've got left in the world. Give him the chance to sleep in a coal-hole or a dust-bin, and he'll be as happy as a king. But if they chuck him out, I'm hanged if I don't desert!"

"Shouldn't advise you to try it," said Kedge grimly. "Still, I'll see what I can do. I had a dawg myself once. Got him at Slima Creek, off a blessed Maltee. The brute had soaked him in paraffin, and was just a-goin' to set light

to 'im, when I introduced my right fist to his left eye, with most startlin' effect.

"Stinker we called that dawg, and he never quit sight of the regiment from that day until six weeks ago, when he mistook the colonel's motor-car for a novel species of animal he had never seen before.

"Poor old Stinker!" sighed Kedge. "He was a scientific sort of tyke. There wasn't anything new came in his way but he must have a sniff at it, and the motor was just one too much for him. He hitched his teeth in the off-hind tyre when the wheels were making thirteen thousand revolutions to the minute, and before you could say knife, he was over the barrack wall and flying through a greenhouse two streets away. Poor old Stinker! He never smiled again!" concluded Kedge dolefully.

"And has his billet been filled?" asked Ronald, unable to suppress a laugh.

"No, not yet," answered the corporal. "Stinker used to mess with the cooks, when he hadn't no engagements elsewhere. Perhaps they'll promote your tyke into the vacancy."

"It would suit him down to the ground—wouldn't it, Rough, old chap?"

The terrier replied with a gruff bark, and seizing the opportunity to break free, was down on the floor like a flash, and worrying a fresh piece of cloth out of George's pants, before Ronald could recapture him.

This put everybody in excellent humour, except George, and the ice being broken, a brace of mouth-organs were brought out, and the squad settled itself to while away the tedious hours with song and dance.

Tony Truscott's spirits, now that London was left well behind, had rebounded to their usual high level.

He flung himself heart and soul into the rough and ready fun, and no tongue was wittier or quicker in the cross-fire of chaff, than his.

Ronald would gladly have taken his turn in keeping the "army goin'"; but his head still buzzed with the kick from George's boot. Indeed, when the hobnails battered loudest, and the choruses were in full blast, he heartily wished his comrades in Jericho. There was nothing for it, however, but to set his teeth, and bear the racket.

Nor did they urge him to take a hand. Instinct told the others that this broad-shouldered chap with the clean-cut features, and the grave, kindly eyes, came of a better strain than they; and, if breed alone was not enough to command their respect, they paid ready homage to his undoubted bravery.

Where a dozen of them had allowed two London roughs to ride roughshod over them, this "toff" had challenged and thrashed the pair single-handed.

If Ronald had been more alert, these little glances of respect which came his way, would have only nettled him. It was far from his wish to pose as a gentleman ranker.

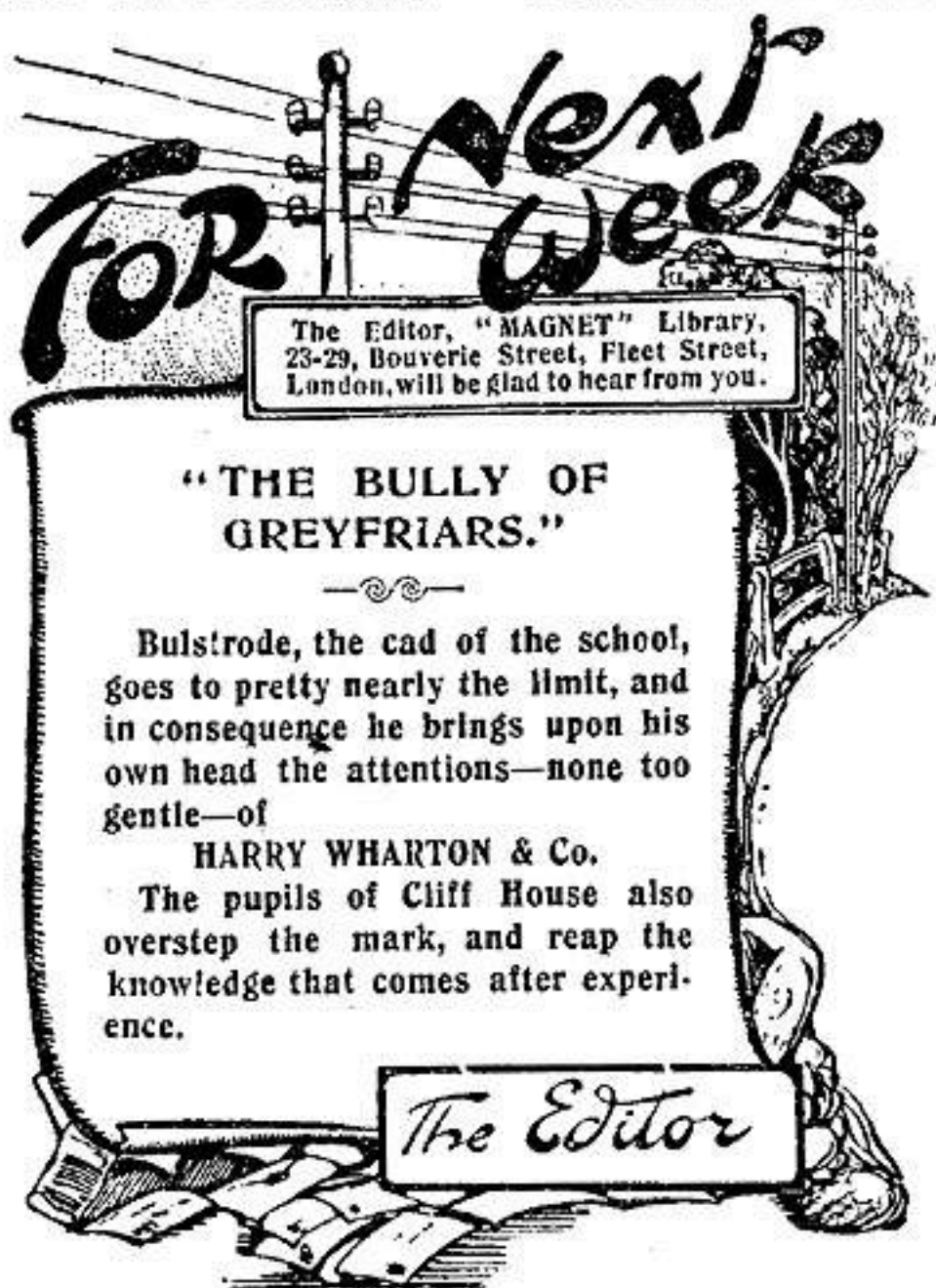
There was one youth in the batch, however who obviously had aspirations in this direction.

He was a thin, weedy creature, with a pasty, blotchy face, which looked superciliously from over the edge of a very high collar—the latter grubby and frayed, like the reversible cuffs which he was never tired of "shooting."

His nails were rimmed with dirt, and his fingers stained yellow with the fumes of cheap cigarettes.

Augustus Smythe, as this young exquisite was named, had been a shop-assistant, but not finding sufficient scope for his lordly ambitions behind the counter—or, incidentally, a master who would put up with his nonsense—had decided to join the Army.

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