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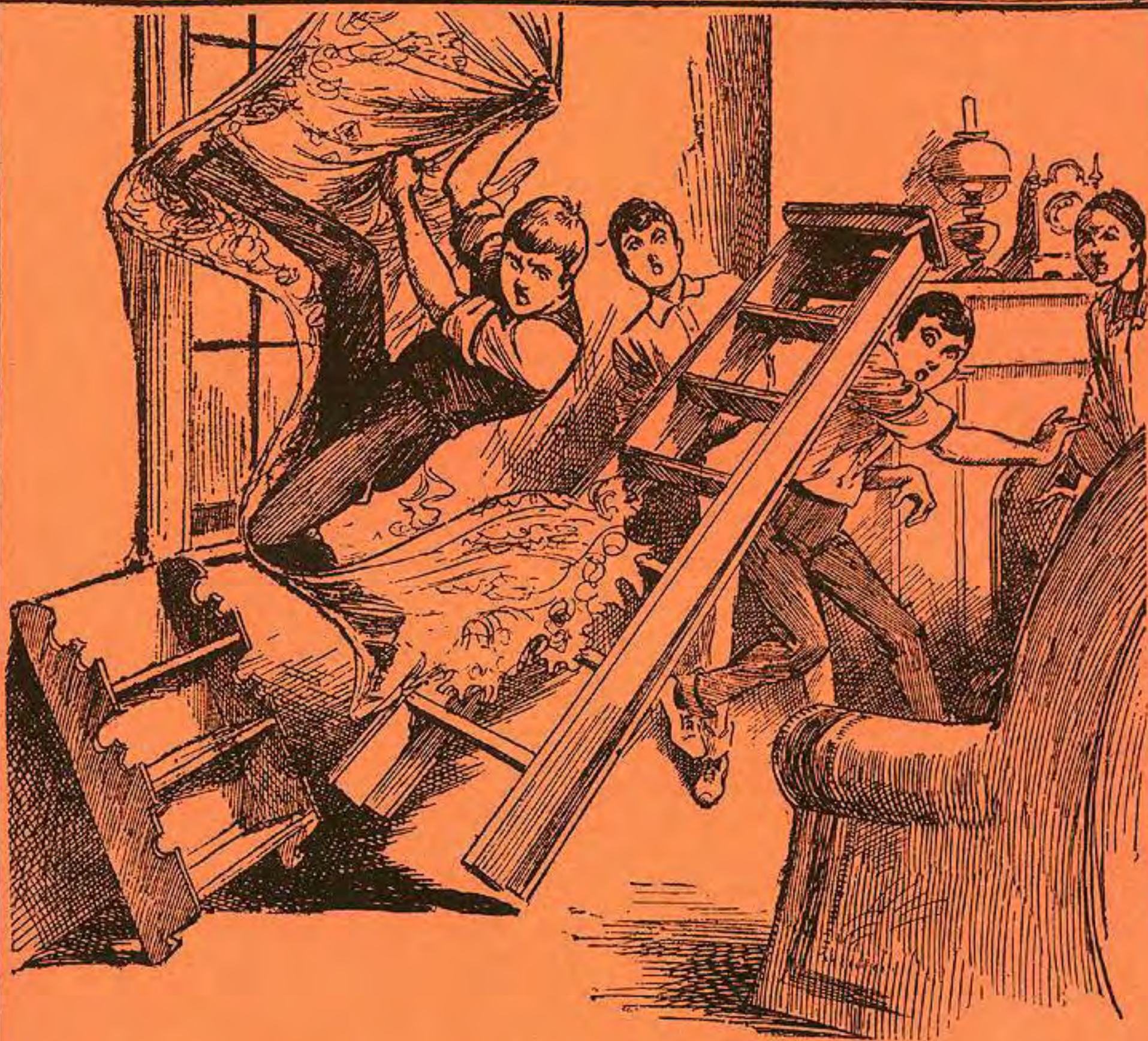
THE
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NUMBER 75.

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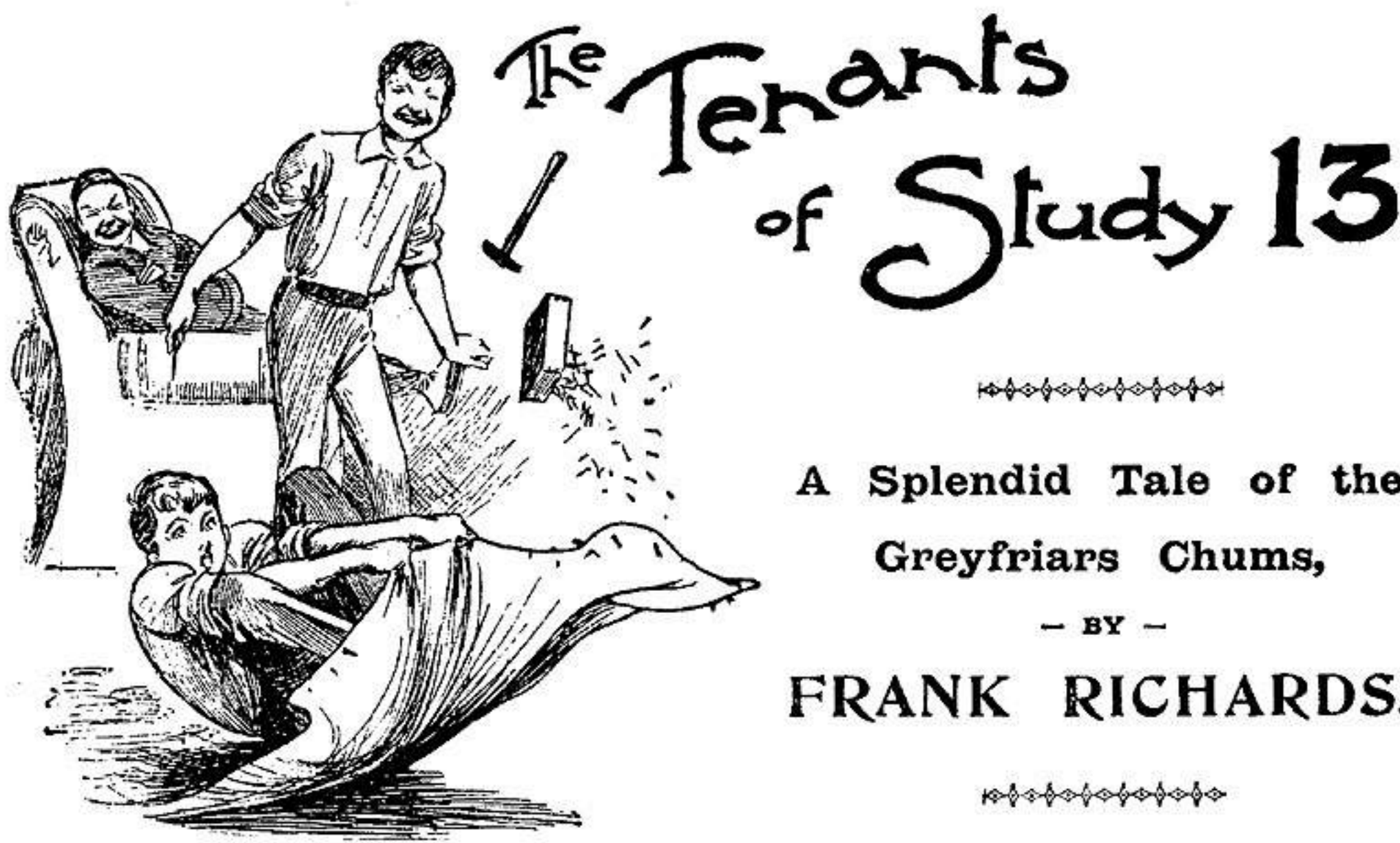
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THE FIRST CHAPTER.
Turned Out.

BANG!

Crash!

Bump!

Harry Wharton looked amazed as he hurried along the Remove passage at Greyfriars. He had heard the terrific din as he came upstairs, and wondered what it was, and whence it came; but as he came along the passage he discovered that it proceeded from his own study.

Bang!

Crash!

"My only hat! What on earth are they up to?" muttered Harry, as he ran along to the door of No. 1, and turned the handle.

But the door was not opened. It was locked on the inside. Harry Wharton shook the handle and thumped on the panels.

But the noise he made was effectually drowned by that in the study.

Bang! Bang!

Crash!

Thump!

It was the banging of a pair of tongs upon an iron fender—the crashing of a cricket-stump on a wooden table-top. In the midst of the fearful din the voice of Bob Cherry could be heard.

"Keep it up!"

Harry kicked and rattled.

"Open the door!"

"Rats!" came back Bob Cherry's voice. "Can't stop! Sheer off!"

"It's I—Wharton!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Is that you, Harry?" Bob flung open the door. "Come in! Lock the door after you, or we shall have a lot more asses coming in—ahem!—I mean a lot of asses coming in! Go it, Inky!"

"What on earth—"

"Keep it up!"

Bang! Bang!

Crash!

Harry Wharton stopped his ears, and gazed at the scene blankly. The chums of the Remove seemed to be enjoying themselves. Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur, was dancing—apparently some sort of a native Hindu dance, and Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent were beating time—the first with the tongs on the fender, and the second with the cricket-stump on the table.

Billy Bunter was seated in the armchair, wheeled back into the corner out of the way, and by way of adding to the din, he was clashing cymbals constructed of the lid of a tin saucepan and a trowel.

Bang! Bang!

Crash!

"Go it, Inky! Keep it up!"

The nabob, whose feet were going like lightning, grinned gleefully.

"The keep-it-upfulness is terrific!" he exclaimed. "If my worthy chums could beat time a little more timefully, the advantage would be great!"

"You're out with that cricket-stump, Nugent."

"Rats! You're out with those tongs!"

"I say, you fellows, you're both out," said Bunter, blinking at the Removites through his big glasses. "Better leave it to me."

"Better chuck it!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, laughing. "What do you think the chap in the study underneath thinks about it?"

"Oh, that's all right! He's gone out!"

"Quelch will be up here if you don't shut up. You know he's been down on us before for making a row, and threatened to turn us out of the study."

"That's all right, too! Quelch's gone out!"

"Oh, I see!"

"While the cat's away," explained Bob Cherry, hanging away cheerfully, "the mice will play! Go it, Inky!"

"The gofulness is great!"

Thump, thump, thump! went the nabob's boots on the carpet—bang, bang, bang! the tongs on the fender—crash, crash, crash! the stump on the table—clatter, clatter, clatter! Billy Bunter's home-made cymbals.

Noise is not, as a rule, displeasing to boys, and to make a real, thundering, unearthly "row" is often a pleasure. The chums of No. 1 Study were fairly letting themselves go.

Hurree Singh danced away firelessly, and his comrades beat time, and the noise of it penetrated far beyond the Remove passage.

There was a furious kicking at the locked door.

"Stop that row!" roared the voice of Bulstrode, the bully of the Remove.

Bang! Bang! Crash! Crash!

Bulstrode went angrily on his way. Then there was a fresh rattle at the door, and Mark Linley's voice called out:

"You fellows gone off your rockers?"

"No!" yelled Bob. "That's all right! It's only a little celebration!"

"Then put the soft pedal on, for goodness' sake!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Go it, Inky! Keep time!"

"The timefulness is terrific!"

Thump! Thump! Bang! Crash!

The door rattled again.

"Go away!" roared Bob Cherry. "You're interrupting the music!"

"The music!" gasped Harry. "My hat!"

But the applicant for admission kicked and rattled again, and the soft voice of Wun Lung, the Chinese junior, was heard through the keyhole:

"Me comee tellee you—"

"Get away!"

"Me speakee that—"

"Ring off!"

"But me tellee you—"

"Buzz away! Buzz off! Go and eat coke!"

And Bob Cherry banged the louder.

There was a sharp knock on the door a few seconds later, and Bob Cherry, exasperated, ceased banging for a moment to give the knocker a piece of his mind.

"Will you go away?" he roared. "I know who you are, and I'll simply wipe up the linoleum with you if I come out! You utter ass, what do you want to come bothering for? Sheer off, fathead!"

"Open this door!"

Bob Cherry jumped clear of the floor.

For the voice was not the voice of a junior of the Remove, and Bob's blood almost ran cold as he recognised the metallic tones of Mr. Quelch—the master of the Remove—his own Form-master!

The din died away suddenly, and a ghastly silence ensued.

"M-m-m-my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "I—I—I said that to Quelch! Oh, the fat's in the fire now?"

Mr. Quelch knocked at the door angrily.

"Open this door!"

Harry Wharton opened it. The Form-master strode in, his brows contracted in a dark and heavy frown.

The juniors stood dumbfounded. Mr. Quelch had certainly been out when Bob Cherry commenced his little celebration, but Bob hadn't noticed how the time had passed. The Form-master had returned, and had probably heard the noise as he came in, and probably the complaints, too, of fellows who were disturbed by it. He looked very angry indeed.

His keen glance roved over the culprits—fairly caught in the act. Bob Cherry still had the tongs in his hand, and Nugent the stump. Billy Bunter had quickly slid the saucepan lid and trowel behind him, and had closed his eyes, with an elaborate pretence of being asleep in the armchair. How he could expect Mr. Quelch to believe that he had been asleep through such a din was a mystery, but Bunter seldom thought very far.

"Well?" said Mr. Quelch.

"Well, sir," said Bob Cherry feebly, "I—I—I didn't know THE MAGNET.—No. 75.

NEXT
WEEK:

"BILLY BUNTER, EDITOR."

it was you, sir! I thought it was one of those Upper Fourth cads, sir!"

"I presume you would not have spoken as you did if you had known that it was I," said Mr. Quelch grimly. "I shall not allude to that. You were making a deafening noise in this study?"

"Only—only—a—a—a—a little celebration, sir!"

"Just a little fun, sir!" said Nugent.

"The funfulness was great!" murmured the nabob.

"And we didn't know you had come in, sir!" ventured Bob.

Mr. Quelch smiled grimly.

"I can quite believe that, Cherry. But I cannot have you disturbing the whole school in this way. I warned you on a previous occasion that if better order was not kept in this study, you would be separated!"

"Oh, sir!"

"I am sorry, Cherry; but you had a plain warning, and you have chosen to disregard it. You will leave this study to-morrow!"

"Oh!"

"As a matter of fact, five boys is a larger number for one junior study than is advisable," said Mr. Quelch. "Doubtless so many find it difficult to keep quiet. A new study has been papered out up the passage, and it was intended to relieve some of the crowded studies by transferring boys there. You will take your books into No. 13 to-morrow, Cherry, when it will be ready for occupation."

"Oh!"

"That is all. Now, not another sound to-night!"

And Mr. Quelch grimly quitted the study, leaving the silence of dismay behind him.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The New Study.

FOR some moments there was a grim silence in No. 1 Study.

For some time the juniors had shared that study together, and though it certainly was close quarters for five, they had contemplated never separating.

Wharton, Nugent, Cherry, and Hurree Singh had been inseparable, and they would even have missed Billy Bunter if he had been turned out.

But for Bob Cherry to go!

That was rotten—beastly—impossible!

But the fiat had gone forth, and the juniors knew only too well how useless it was to argue with Mr. Quelch.

And truth to tell, they could not say that they had not had warning. But youth is thoughtless. Warnings received one day are frequently forgotten the next; and Bob Cherry never was much given to reflection.

It was done now.

"My Aunt Matilda!" said Nugent at last. "Quelch has got his little back up! The fat's in the fire now!"

Bob Cherry grunted.

"I'm done!"

"You'll have to go, Bob," said Harry, with a shade on his face. "It's rotten, but it can't be helped. But it won't make any difference to our chumming. You'll only be at the end of the passage."

"Right at the other end!" growled Bob Cherry.

"It's rotten!"

"The rottenfulness is terrific!"

"I say, you fellows!" It was a voice from the armchair. "We needn't desert Cherry, you know. He'll have to keep clear of this study for a bit, but we can visit him in No. 13. I'll go in there to tea every evening if he likes, for the sake of auld lang syne."

Bob Cherry did not show as much gratitude as might have been expected for this really generous offer.

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A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
and the Pupils of Cliff House.

"Oh, will you?" he remarked.
 "Certainly, Cherry! Nobody can ever say that I wouldn't stick to an old friend," said Bunter.
 "So long as he had any grub to give away!" remarked Nugent.
 "Oh, really, Nugent—"
 "Well, I suppose it can't be helped," said Bob. "We may be able to get round Quelch later, and I may be shifted back again. He's a beast, but he's a just beast! It can't be helped!"

There was philosophy, but there was little consolation, in that reflection. It couldn't be helped, and it was useless to bother about it; but the juniors bothered, all the same.

The news that the Famous Four had been split up was not long in spreading through the Greyfriars Remove. When the chums came downstairs, looking naturally glum, they found the common-room buzzing with it.

Most of the fellows were sympathetic, though there were some few, like Bulstrode and Snoop, who seemed to be amused.

"Perhaps there'll be a little more peace in the Remove passage now," Bulstrode remarked. "I have the next study to Wharton's, and I can tell you it's pretty rotten in there when Bob Cherry's singing."

Bob Cherry was disconsolate. He heard Bulstrode's remark, but did not take any notice of it. There was no comfort for him in the common-room, and he went out again. Mark Linley tapped him on the arm, and Bob Cherry looked at him lugubriously.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"
 "I'm sorry to hear the news," said Linley. "It's rotten, I know."

"Absolutely rotten!"
 "Have you looked at the new study yet?"
 "No; it's only a rotten extra room they've turned into a study," said Bob Cherry discontentedly. "There are really only twelve studies."

"It's a pretty decent room, though, and nicely papered," said Linley. "I've been looking at it. You can be comfy there—if you like your new study-mates."

Bob gave a start.
 "By George! I never thought of that; of course, I shan't be alone in the study. I wonder what beastly rotters will be shoved in along with me."

The Lancashire lad laughed.
 "Myself for one," he replied.
 "What! You?"

"Yes, I have just heard it from Mr. Quelch. You remember that when I came to Greyfriars I was put into Lacy's study temporarily. I've been there ever since, with little Wun Lung, though the room's the smallest in the passage, and there certainly wasn't room. That was really why the new study was got ready. And your coming into it is a stroke of luck for us."

"Well, it's good of you to put it that way."
 "I shall be glad to have you there," said Linley frankly. "Wun Lung will be there, too—there will be three of us. That will leave four in No. 1 Study; quite as big a crowd as it can hold comfortably."

Bob Cherry looked thoughtful.
 He liked Mark Linley very much, and he knew that the Lancashire lad was a fellow he could chum with. From the first, when the "scholarship boy" had come to Greyfriars, Bob Cherry had stood by him. The fact that Mark Linley was the son of a working-man made a great difference to such haughty aristocrats as Bulstrode and Snoop, but it did not worry Harry Wharton & Co. They did not care whether a fellow's father was a duke or a dustman, so long as the fellow was all right. That was the point.

"Well, I'm jolly glad to hear this, Linley," said Bob, after a pause. "Outside No. 1, you're the chap I'd prefer to be with, in all the Remove."

"We shall get on all right, then," said Linley, with a very bright look. "Come and have a look at the study."

And the two juniors went upstairs, and along the Remove passage to the new study, the last before the box-room stairs.

Bob Cherry had not seen the interior of it before, and he was agreeably surprised when he did so.

The room was as large as the largest study in the passage, it had a good window and a fire-grate, and it was handsomely papered in a pale green paper which had the effect of making its dimensions seem greater.

Bob Cherry felt comforted as he looked round.
 "By George, this is all right!" he said.
 "Good! Isn't it?"

"Yes, rather! No furniture in here yet."
 "They're going to put in a table, a fender, and three chairs," said Mark Linley. "That's all the college provides. We have to buy the rest ourselves. We don't need much, and as a matter of fact"—he coloured a little—"I haven't very much tin to spend."

"Same here," grinned Bob Cherry. "We could get some sticks same as Hazeldene did, on the thirty-five years' system—but we won't. After all, a table and chairs are the

**NEXT
WEEK:**

"BILLY BUNTER, EDITOR."

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chief things, and we can put up a shelf for the books. We—
 "Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's the heathen!"

Wun Lung came gliding into the study in his noiseless way. The little Chinese was looking extremely pleased.

"You knowee?" he asked. "You comee in this studee with me. What you tinkee? Me makee studee lipping."
 "What are you going to do?" asked Bob curiously.

The little Chinese grinned.
 "Me fulnish studee," he said. "Me do evelytthing."
 "Oh, rats! We shall stand our whack, of course."

Wun Lung shook his head.
 "You standee nothing. What you tinkee? Me givee oldels already."

"You've given the orders—for what?"
 "Fulnitule," said Wun Lung. "all oldeled. Evelytthing comee to-morrow. What you tinkee?"

Bob Cherry and Mark Linley stared at him, and then looked at one another and laughed.

"The thing seems to have been taken out of our hands," remarked Bob. "But we can't allow this, you know."

"Certainly not."
 "Lot," said Wun Lung cheerfully. "Lats!"
 His curious Oriental trick of changing the "r" into an "l" made those familiar words sound peculiar, but there was no mistaking his meaning.

"Look here, young 'un," said Bob Cherry. "We can't allow you to furnish the study. We know you're rolling in giddy wealth, but we've got to stand our whack."

"No savvy."
 "We're going to pay our share."
 "No savvy."

"We've got to stand as much of the expense as you do!" bawled Bob Cherry.
 "No savvy!"

Mark Linley laughed. Wun Lung never savvied when he did not choose to do so. Bob Cherry was growing a little excited.

"Look here, you young heathen—"
 "Allee light. Fulnitule comee down to-morrow—been oldeled several days," said Wun Lung, with a beaming smile. "Suppose you not got cashee, no leason why me not comfee. What you tinkee?"

"Well, yes, but—"
 "Fulnitule costee muchee money—heap plenty. You no got cashee—comee to twenty poundee."

"What!" roared Bob Cherry. "You've spent twenty pounds on furniture!"
 Wun Lung nodded.

The two English lads stared at him aghast. If Wun Lung was spending sums like this, it was certainly out of the question for them to "stand their whack." Their pocket-money was counted in shillings, not in pounds.

"Well, my hat!" said Bob Cherry at last. "Blessed if I know what to make of it. It's not good for a kid to have so much money, and if I were your guardian I'd allowance you a little more strictly. However, if you've ordered the stuff, there's an end."

"Stuff comee down to-morrow."
 "Well, my five bob wouldn't make much difference to twenty quid, I suppose," said Bob Cherry ruefully. "I suppose I shall have to let you have your way. But where did you get twenty quid from?"

"No got—sendee bills to gualdian in London," explained Wun Lung. "P'laps comee to mole than twenty poundee—p'laps fiftee. Me no savvy. Allee light—gualdian payee. Me savvy. What you tinkee?"

"I think you're an extravagant young heathen," said Bob Cherry. "That's what I think. I think we shall have the giddiest study in the Remove, too. We must save up our threepenny-bits, and give a bit of a feed to No. 1 Study for a start."

THE THIRD CHAPTER. The Furniture Arrives.

BOB CHERRY was not satisfied; but he was beginning to view his exile from No. 1 Study with more equanimity. After all, he would be only half a dozen doors away, and he was "digging" with two fellows he liked. Invitations would always be going to and fro between No. 1 and No. 13, and in all outdoor occupations the chums would go on the same as before.

So Bob Cherry planned and thought; and so indeed Harry Wharton and the rest thought. But in the dormitory that night a question came up which indicated that there might be a rift in the lute.

"You chaps will come to a feed when we get the place furnished," Bob Cherry remarked, looking up from unlacing his boots, as he sat on his bed. "I'll see that Wun Lung doesn't cook any of his ghastly Chinese dishes."

"We'll come, rather," said Harry Wharton. "This

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. and the Pupils of Cliff House.

division needn't make any difference. To all intents and purposes we can still be one study."

"Two studies with but a single thought, two rooms that beat as one," said Nugent, with a grin. "But it's a good idea."

"Yes, rather!" agreed Bob Cherry.

"The goodfulness is terrific. Although our worthy chum is separately divided from us into anotherful apartment, the distance lends enchantment to the esteemed view," said Hurree Singh; "and in spite of the separateness we are still No. 1 Study."

"That's it," said Nugent. "We're still No. 1 Study."

"Oh, I don't know about that exactly," said Bob Cherry. "Perhaps it would be better to say that we are No. 13 Study."

"Stuff!" said Nugent. "Why, No. 1 has always been top study in the Remove."

"The topfulness is terrific."

"Yes, but—"

"It's all right, Bob. You still belong to us. No. 13 Study is nothing—nowhere—only a number," said Nugent. "No. 1 is still top study."

"Oh, I don't know—"

"Well, I do—take my word for it."

"That's all very well—"

"Of course it is. Hallo! Here's Wingate to see lights out."

"Into bed, you youngsters."

"Yes. Will you come and unlace my boots?" asked Nugent.

The captain of Greyfriars only laughed, and the juniors tumbled into bed. After the lights were out and Wingate gone, Bob Cherry remained in silence for some moments, thinking. He had certainly intended that his being shifted along the passage should make no difference to his chumming with Harry Wharton & Co. But the idea of the identity of his study being wiped out of existence was not exactly gratifying to him. He was somewhat in the position of a Colonist—with a new patriotism growing within him for his new country.

"I say, chaps," said Bob Cherry at last. "Of course, that's all rot about No. 1 being top study, you know."

"Stuff!" said Nugent.

"Let it alone," said Wharton. "What does it matter? Blow the studies! We're going to be the same chums as ever, and that's the chief thing."

"Hear, hear!" said Nugent heartily.

"Good!" said Bob Cherry.

And the juniors went to sleep.

The next morning, the new tenants of No. 13 were curious to see the arrival of the furniture ordered in London by Wun Lung; but they were gone into morning lessons, before it made its appearance. Wun Lung had explained that it would be sent down to Friardale on the railway, probably packed in the van which was to bring it to the school. The juniors expected a big pantehnicoon, and they were eager to help carry in the things—some of them with the intention of roughly handling the new "props." But they were busy at morning lessons when a huge van rolled up to the gates of Greyfriars.

Gosling, the porter, stared at it in amazement.

The van rolled in, and turned round to the side entrance. The juniors in the class-room heard the rumble of the wheels and their eyes anxiously sought the clock over the book-case.

It wanted only five minutes to the time of dismissal.

Those minutes seemed very long to the Removites. They wanted to get out upon the scene of action. Bob Cherry and Mark Linley were both very curious. It was a half that afternoon, and if the furniture had come, there would be time to fit up the study. Mr. Quelch glanced at his class in some surprise. Their unquietness was evident to his eyes, and he did not understand it. The Remove certainly were always willing to anticipate the hour of dismissal; but their keenness to get off now made them give random answers.

"Come, come; this will not do!" exclaimed the Form-master. "I should be sorry to detain you till dinner-time, but really I may be compelled to. Skinner, if you look at the clock again I shall give you fifty lines."

"Ye-es, sir."

"What is the matter with you?"

"Well, sir; the fact is, sir, we—we—"

"Well, what?"

"There's some furniture just come for Cherry's new study, sir," said Skinner, "and we want to help him get it in, sir. You can't trust these carmen with furniture—we want to get it into the study for Cherry without being damaged."

"Indeed! In that case," said Mr. Quelch, with a glance at the clock. "I will now dismiss the class."

"Oh, thank you, sir!"

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NEXT
WEEK;

"BILLY BUNTER, EDITOR."

And the Remove hurried out. In the passage Skinner indulged in a chuckle, and Bulstrode chuckled, too.

"Fancy Quelch swallowing that!" he remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rotter!" said Bob Cherry, as he passed Skinner. "If you come any of your hanky-panky with my props, you'll get a thick ear."

"Oh, we're all coming to lend a hand!" said Bulstrode.

"You'd better stay where you are!"

"Rats!"

And nearly the whole of the Remove crowded round the house to see the van unloaded. The carman was busy; and the trim maid at the door was looking astonished. The Removites looked astonished, too. They knew Wun Lung, and his wealth and extravagance. But they had never expected anything like this.

The little Chinese had apparently ordered everything that caught his fancy, without taking into due consideration the question whether the things could possibly be accommodated in a junior study.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Bulstrode. "What's that—a roll-top desk!"

"And a cheval glass."

"And a bookcase!"

"Faith, and a Japanese screen."

"And a brass fender."

"And two armchairs!"

"Phew!"

The juniors passed remarks and chuckled as the articles were taken out and stacked in the passage. But these were not all. Great bundles were rolled out of the van, and the juniors discovered that they contained carpets and curtains. Then there was a crate packed with crockery, and several packing-cases.

"Great Scott!" said Harry Wharton. "Wun Lung will want all the Remove studies, and the passage as well, to accommodate that lot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's all, sir," said the carman, touching his cap to Wun Lung, who was superintending the unloading. "Sign, sir."

Wun Lung signed for the goods, and gave the man a half-crown, and the van rolled away. Bulstrode winked at his friends.

"Now we'll help carry them up," he remarked.

"Tankee you!" said Wun Lung. "You cally this."

He tapped a heavy armchair. But the practical jokers of the Remove did not intend to work. They were out for fun. Bulstrode laid his hands upon the cheval glass.

"Lend a hand, Snoopey!"

"Right you are!"

"You'd better let that alone," said Wharton.

"Mind your own business! Don't you want us to help you, Wun Lung?"

The little Celestial hesitated. While he hesitated, Bulstrode and Snoop wheeled the cheval glass along the passage and began to mount the back stairs with it.

"Look out!" roared Bulstrode suddenly, letting go when the big glass was half up the stairs.

Snoop let go and sprang out of the way.

Down went the glass, rolling and tumbling with crash on crash—and the mirror was in a thousand fragments when, with a final crash, it reached the bottom.

"My hat!" said Bulstrode. "It's broken."

There was a sudden murmur from the juniors in the passage.

"Look out! Cave! Here's Quelch!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

All Hands to Work!

MR. QUELCH came upon the scene with a frowning brow. The crashing of the cheval glass down the stairs had rung through the whole house. The juniors ceased giggling as the Form-master appeared.

Mr. Quelch looked at the smashed glass at the foot of the stairs, and then at the huge array of furniture along the wall.

"What is all this? What does it mean?"

"It's the furniture for the new study, sir," said Bob Cherry.

"What!"

"My new fulnitule, sir," said Wun Lung, with a smiling bow. "Nicee—nicee, sir. The glass is bloken; allee lest allee light."

"But—but—but—"

"I'm sorry," said Bulstrode. "Quite an accident."

"Liar!" murmured Bob Cherry, under his breath.

"That is a valuable glass," said Mr. Quelch. "You should not have attempted to carry it upstairs, Bulstrode. Gosling could have done that."

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"Yes, sir! I wanted to make myself useful, sir."
"I hope you are telling me the truth, Bulstrode, and that you did not do this damage wantonly," said Mr. Quelch, sternly.

"Oh, sir! I—"
"Enough! Wun Lung, does all this furniture belong to you?"

"Yes, sir. New furniture for new study, sir."
"But—but where can you intend to put it?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Surely you must be aware that there is no room in your study for a quarter of all this."

Wun Lung's face fell a little.
"Me no tink of that, sir."

The Form-master smiled.
"It is a pity you did not think of it, my boy. It would have saved a great waste of money. You had better carefully calculate how much the study will hold, before you have anything carried upstairs, and the rest can be sent away."

"Ye-es, sir."
"As for you, Bulstrode, and Snoop, you can leave at once. If there are any more accidents, I shall have something to say about the matter."

And Mr. Quelch walked away, and Bulstrode and Snoop sulkily took themselves off. Bob Cherry chuckled a little.

"My dear ass," he remarked to Wun Lung; "I suppose you'll get about a tenth part of all that into the study."

"No tink of that."
"Then you'd better start 'tinking' before you get the things carried up. That crate will be a tidy weight. Here comes Gosling. Hallo, hallo, hallo, Gossy, my son! Did you scent work from afar, like a giddy war-horse snuffing the battle?"

"Gossy," snorted, and the juniors laughed. Gosling, the porter, was about the last man in the world to go about looking for work.

"Which, Mr. Quelch says, there's some things 'ere for me to carry hupstairs," he said. "Wot I says is this 'ere, why can't the young humps carry them hupstairs, hey?"

"Did you say that to Quelch?" asked Bob Cherry, with a chuckle.

"Yes—I can hear him doing it," remarked Nugent.

Gosling snorted again, and stared at the things he was to carry up.

"Look 'ere, all these things ain't goin' up," he said aggressively. "You ain't going to furnish the 'ole blessed 'ouse, I suppose?"

"Only one study, Gossy."

"How can you get all that lot inter one study, Master Wharton?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"That's a work for your mighty brain, Gosling," he said.

"You can work it out by algebra, you know."

"Begin with the crate," said Bob Cherry. "We're certain to want the crockery. Can you manage it alone, Gossy?"

"Wot I says is this 'ere," he remarked. "I can't carry crate."

"I'll lend you a hand," said Skinner.

"No, you won't," said Bob, pushing the obliging Skinner back. "You can go and eat coke. I'll help you, Gossy."

And he lent a hand. The crockery was safely conveyed upstairs, after several narrow escapes at the turnings, and Gosling appeared exhausted when he came down again. He sat on a trunk and gasped for breath.

"Wot I says is this 'ere," he remarked. "I can't carry any more up now. That's what I says."

"All right, Gossy; I'll ask Mr. Quelch what's to be done."

"Don't you do nothin' of the sort!" exclaimed Gosling, jumping up. "I dare say I can manage all right, though I'm cruel tired."

And he did.

One by one the articles of furniture were carried up, till the new study and a great deal of the passage outside it overflowed.

Then the remainder was left—rather regrettably. Wun Lung still cherished a hope of getting it into the study, when he had arranged the present contents in order.

The arranging had to be left till after dinner, but as it was a half, the new study-mates had plenty of time for the work.

After dinner, Harry Wharton, Nugent, and Hurree Singh took out their bats, and Harry called to Bob Cherry.

"You're coming out to cricket, Bob?"

Bob Cherry shook his head.

"Can't—I've got my new study to arrange."

"Oh, blow the study; come and have some cricket!"

"My dear chap; I can't leave it all to Wun Lung and Linley to do. That wouldn't be cricket!"

"H'm! I suppose not. Leave it till after tea, and we'll all lend a hand."

"Never put off till after tea what you can do in the afternoon," said Bob Cherry, revising an old proverb. "I think I'd better stick to the furnishing."

"Oh, rats!"

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NEXT WEEK:

"BILLY BUNTER, EDITOR."

"The ratfulness is terrific."

But Bob was adamant. The three juniors went out, and Bob Cherry joined Linley, who was talking to the Chinese junior. Linley looked uncertain. He had extra Greek to do that afternoon, and Wingate, of the Sixth, had promised to lend him a hand if he needed it; and the furnishing of the study threatened to interrupt him. Mark Linley had imposed Greek upon himself as an "extra," and he studied it out of school hours, which accounted for a great deal of his leisure time. But, of course, he was called upon to help in furnishing his own study.

"Come on," said Bob Cherry, digging him in the ribs. "We've got to rig up No. 13 this afternoon, you know."

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Allee light," said Wun Lung. "Comee with me—me gottee hammel and tacks, and we puttee down culpet, allee light."

"Right you are."

"Like me to come and help?" asked Skinner.

"No, tankee."

"I'll put up the bookcase for you, or fasten the looking-glass—"

"No, you won't," said Bob Cherry. "Come on, you kids! Hallo, hallo, hallo! Ain't you chaps going to play cricket?"

Wharton, Nugent, and Hurree Janset Ram Singh had come in again. Harry shook his head in reply to Bob's question.

"No, we're going to cut it as you're cutting it, and lend you a hand."

"That's the wheeze," said Nugent.

"The wheezy idea is terrific."

"Well, that's chummy," said Bob Cherry. "Of course, you chaps are going to be as much at home in No. 13 as I am. We'll make No. 13 known as the top study in the Remove—"

"Eh! Will we?"

"Yes, rather!"

"More rats!"

"Look here, Nugent—"

"Look here, Bob Cherry—"

"Oh, don't jaw!" said Harry, laughing. "Let's go and wire in!"

"My worthy chum is correctful. The jawfulness is terrific."

"It's a case of all hands on deck," said Harry Wharton.

"We're going to get the study in order. Come on."

And the party of juniors were soon at work in the new study.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Bob Cherry Lays the Carpet.

BANG!

"Hallo! What on earth—"
"It's all right—only knocking a nail down," said Bob Cherry, who, hammer in hand, was scanning the bare floor of No. 13 Study, and had just delivered a terrific blow on the ringing boards. "Can't lay carpet over loose nails, you know. Might tear! Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's another!"

Bang!

"Sure you've knocked it down?" asked Nugent sarcastically.

"Oh, yes, it's quite in, I think—might give it another tap to make sure."

Bang!

"You'll have the floor through if you keep that up," said Harry laughing. "Let's get the carpet unrolled."

"My hat, there's enough of it!"

There certainly was. Wun Lung had ordered Brussels carpet by the yard, instead of the cheap "square" the juniors usually put in their studies. It was a good carpet, and would certainly look very nice.

It would have to be cut to fit the study, but as there was plenty of it, that did not matter. Bob Cherry unrolled it quickly, sending the roll bumping against Nugent's legs and nearly knocking him down.

The rest slipped out of the way, and the carpet was unrolled. Bob Cherry opened his pocket-knife.

"Lemme see," he remarked. "It's just wide enough for the study—that's a bit of luck. I shall only have to cut it off at the end, and then fit it into the fireplace and the window."

"The fitfulness will be terrific," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur, as Bob Cherry began to gash the carpet with his knife.

"This knife's jolly blunt!" said Bob. "Anybody got a sharper one?"

No one had. Bob Cherry sat on the carpet and cogitated.

Harry Wharton mildly suggested taking his time about it, but Bob shook his head. That was not his way.

"One of you chaps run down to Quelch's room, and borrow his razor," he said. "That would cut it a treat!"

"Ha, ha, ha! I think Quelch would cut us a treat, too, if we borrowed his razor to cut carpet with!"

"Well, the stuff has got to be cut!"

"Me cuttee," said Wun Lung, who had watched Bob Cherry's operations on the carpet with some uneasiness. "Me cuttee allee light."

"Oh, you can't do it, you know!"

"Me tly."

"Oh, just as you like—but you won't be able to do it." And Bob Cherry handed the knife to the little Celestial.

Wun Lung set to work, and, in spite of Bob's doubts upon the subject, he soon had the carpet cut to measure. There was a great deal left over, which Nugent said would do for No. 1 Study. Bob Cherry generously made him a present of it—very generously, considering that it belonged to Wun Lung.

"Well, that looks all right," said Bob Cherry. "You chaps might stand on the carpet while I hammer the nails in, in case it should get pulled out of the way. Here, you stand on the edge here, Nugent—ow—wow! You ass! I didn't say stand on my fingers!"

"Sorry!"

"B-r-r-r! Now, then, here goes!"

The hammer came down.

Nugent gave a fiendish yell, and jumped clear of the floor.

"Ow-wow!" he roared. "Yow! You ass! Dummy—duffer—fathead!"

"What on earth's the matter?"

"Oh! Yow! You've nearly busted my toe!"

"Sorry!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ow! Wow! Yow!"

"Look here, I'd rather you didn't dance like that on our new carpet, Nugent," said Bob Cherry anxiously.

"Why, you—you—you—"

"Couldn't you do it in the passage?"

Nugent sputtered with wrath.

"I'm not going to stay near you while you've got a hammer in your silly hand!" he roared. "Yab! Ass! Dummy! Fathead! G-r-r-r!" And Nugent departed.

Bob Cherry looked after him with an expression of surprise that made the others shriek.

"Lot of fuss some chaps make over a little tap on the toe!" Bob remarked. "Come and keep this down with your foot, will you, Wharton, while I hammer it?"

"No, thanks!" said Harry promptly.

"By George, are you afraid of a little tap? I sha'n't hit you—besides, lightning never strikes twice in the same place, you know."

"Lightning may not, but I expect you would," said Wharton. "Hold the edge down with your hand."

"I might give my fingers a knock."

"Ha, ha! Better your fingers than my toe."

"Oh, rats! Blow your toes!"

And Bob Cherry began to hammer. Bob always regarded himself as a thorough workman, and anything he made was, as he boasted, solidly made. He knew how to put in carpet so that it wasn't in danger of rucking up, and he was using two-inch wire nails for the purpose.

"Hand us some more nails, Linley. You might put your foot here to keep the edge down while I'm hammering."

Linley handed him the nails, but did not put his foot there. Bob Cherry hammered away cheerfully.

"Wouldn't tacks be better?" the Lancashire lad suggested.

"Tacks? Oh, no! Most people use tacks—it's just slovenliness," said Bob. "You see, a thing ought to be done thoroughly."

"Well, you are doing that thoroughly!" said Harry, laughing. "I say, do you think that board will hold any more nails? You're pretty well filling it up!"

Bob Cherry sniffed.

"Just look at that, and see if it isn't safe," he said, giving the carpet a tug to show how safe it was. He put his strength into that tug—and when the carpet parted from the floor, he went rolling backwards.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry sat up, half-rolled in the carpet, in amazement.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! It's come up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"H'm! I suppose it wanted a few more nails."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, stop that sniggering! Perhaps you'd better hand me over some of the four-inch, Linley."

The juniors shrieked again.

"Oh, do try tacks!" said Wharton. "Can't you see the carpet came over the heads of the nails? You've cut it to rags, putting in so many and hammering so hard!"

"If you know more about laying carpets than I do, Wharton—"

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"BILLY BUNTER, EDITOR."

"Well, I couldn't know much less, I think."

"I'll have some of the four-inch, Linley."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hand 'em over, and stop cackling!"

"Me tinkee p'l'aps—"

"Oh, that's all right, Wun Lung! You leave it to me!"

"Yes, but p'l'aps—"

"Leave it to me, old chap."

And Bob Cherry set to work with the hammer and the four-inch nails.

Bang, bang, bang!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

And Puts Up the Looking-Glass.

BANG! CRASH!

Bob Cherry was making active play with the hammer. It missed the nails as often as it hit them, and crashed on the floor with a terrific din.

There was a sudden pattering of footsteps in the passage, and the door was thrust violently open. It caught on the new carpet and stopped—and nearly flattened the nose of the individual who was rushing in.

It was Monsieur Charpentier, the French master.

He had the room underneath the new study, and that afternoon he was writing home letters to his friends in France, and the banging overhead had gradually roused him to a pitch of frenzy. At last he popped out of his study like a cork out of a champagne-bottle, and bolted up the stairs. After a narrow escape of braining himself on the jamming door, he put his head and shoulders through the aperture, and glared into the study.

"Garçons! Boys! Wretches! Vat is all zat noise viz you?"

Bob Cherry looked up from his hammering.

"Is anything the matter, sir?"

"Mattair!" almost raved Mossos. "Mattair! You ask me, is anyzing ze mattair! Helas! I am shock—I am deafen!"

"Can you hear this downstairs, sir?" asked Bob innocently.

The Frenchman almost exploded.

"Hear it! Listen to ze garcon! Ze noise make himself heard all ovair ze house! I try to write, and I cannot write. My head have ze ache. I zink zat if zis noise not stop I cane you, garcon. I cane you on ze hand six times."

"Oh, sir—"

"Any more of zat noise, and I brings up ze cane," said Monsieur Charpentier; and he stamped away down the passage.

Bob Cherry looked a little sheepishly at the grinning juniors.

"Awfully nervous old bounder!" he remarked. "Fancy making a fuss about a bit of a noise like that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Perhaps you'd better use tacks, after all."

"Allee lightee; me puttee in tacks."

"Good!" said Bob Cherry. "Tack it down at present, and I'll take an opportunity when mossos's out some evening to nail it down more thoroughly."

The tacking did not take long, most of the juniors lending a hand with it. They took different sides of the carpet, and soon tacked it down. It did not make much noise, either.

The carpet once fitted and fastened down, it was possible to begin arranging the furniture. The table and chairs were brought in, and then the bookcase, and the study assumed a more homelike and comfortable appearance.

"Now, about the looking-glass," said Bob Cherry, cocking his eye thoughtfully at the space over the chimney. "That glass is just about the size. That's lucky!"

"Me takee measule."

"Oh, that accounts for it, then!" said Bob, as his comrades giggled. "Blessed if I ever saw such a sniggering set of toads! I shall want a pair of steps to fix up that glass."

Mark Linley went in search of a pair of steps, and Bob Cherry and Harry Wharton lifted the glass, meanwhile, upon the mantelpiece.

It was a very handsome glass, with a gilt frame, and certainly was expensive. Harry Wharton had his doubts about its safety if Bob Cherry fastened it up, but he felt diffident about saying so. He had come there to help, not to take the management out of the hands of the owners of the study. Little Wun Lung shared Wharton's doubts, but his politeness was great.

The glass, which was large and heavy, was lifted up on the mantelpiece, and backed against the wall, and Bob and Harry held it there while Linley sought for the steps. In a few minutes Mark re-entered the study, carrying them on his shoulder.

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"Good!" said Bob. "Hold this, Inky, while I get on the steps."

"With pleasuredness, my worthy chum."

Hurree Singh and Wharton held the glass, and Bob Cherry mounted upon the steps in front of it. The steps rocked and swayed, but Linley held them in time, and the cords tautened and held fast. Wun Lung held the steps on the other side. He cocked his eye at the glass.

"Little more to the left, kids."

"Right-ho!"

"H'm! Now a little more to the right."

"Good!"

"H'm, h'm! Perhaps it was better before. Put it back to the left again."

"Right-ho! Don't mind us," said Harry. "This is a healthy exercise, at all events, and every bit as good as Indian clubs."

"The healthfulness of the esteemed exercise is terrific."

"That's about right. Don't jaw; you take my attention off my work. Give me up the hammer, Wun Lung."

"Hammel hele," said Wun Lung, reaching it up.

Bob Cherry stooped to take it, and carelessly missed it, and the hammer dropped as Wun Lung let go.

There was a yell from the little Chinese:

"Ow! Yow!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What are you roaring about, kid?"

"Ow! My foot!" wailed Wun Lung. "Ow! Yow!"

"Well, what did you let the hammer drop for? Can't you give it up to me, and do that yelling afterwards?"

Wun Lung handed up the hammer, and skipped out of the study. He sat on a chair in the passage and nursed his foot. Bob Cherry produced huge nails from his pocket, and began to nail up the looking-glass.

The nails were brass-headed, and six inches long. He passed them through the eyeholes at the side of the looking-glass, and if they had been well-driven into the wall the glass would certainly have been secure.

But that was not so easily done.

The first nail had not gone an inch into the wall when it jarred upon a brick, and refused to go in further. Bob Cherry hammered away valiantly, but the nail bent instead of going in.

"Beast!" he murmured. "Just my luck that a rotten brick should get into the way."

"If the brick is rottenful, my worthy chum, the nail should be drivenfully shoved into it," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Ass! The rotten thing isn't rotten!" said Bob. "When I say rotten, I don't mean rotten."

"Oh!"

Crack, crack, crack! went the hammer. The nail bent till it could not be hammered again, and most of Bob's doughty blows took effect on the gilt frame—with grievous results to the gilding. The glass had two or three very narrow shaves.

"I'll put the other one in first," said Bob. "There's two holes in this tinplate thing fastened on the glass. One nail ought really to keep the thing up."

Crack, crack!

"By Jove! That one only needed a couple of whacks to send it right in!"

"I expect it's gone into the plaster," said Mark Linley.

"Well, I dare say it has. So long as it's gone in, that's all right."

"But the plaster may not hold it safely."

"Oh, if you know more about nailing up looking-glasses than I do, Linley, perhaps you'll put up the next one," said Bob Cherry.

"Well, you'll jolly soon want a next one if you leave this to Bob," said Harry.

"The soonfulness will be terrific."

"You chaps hold that glass, and don't jaw, while I nail the other side," said Bob, shifting the steps along the fireplace. "Now then, give a hand to these steps, Linley. Don't look on while I do all the work."

Mark smiled, and held the steps safe, and Bob Cherry mounted. He drove in two nails, and both of them went in with suspicious ease. But Bob Cherry was quite satisfied.

"That's jolly soon done!" he remarked. "It takes a certain amount of knack to do these things. I was always a handy chap about the house. I offered the mater to mend the things at home in the holidays, if she'd leave them for me, and save a lot of money that way. But she never would see it. Women never understand how to save money in small things. You can let that glass alone now; it's all right."

And Bob Cherry descended from the steps. Harry Wharton looked at the glass a little doubtfully.

"Quite sure?" he asked.

"Look here, old chap, you can hold a glass all right, but you don't know anything about fixing it up," said Bob Cherry. "That glass is all right. You let go and see."

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NEXT
WEEK;

"BILLY BUNTER, EDITOR."

EVERY
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LIBRARY. HALFPENNY.

I've given it a rather artistic tilt forward at the top. You'll see that it will hold all right."

"Oh, all right. If you think——"

"Of course I do. Let it alone."

Wharton and Hurree Singh let go the glass, and stepped well out of the way of it in case it should fall.

Bob Cherry surveyed it with great admiration.

"You don't often see a glass put up as quickly and neatly as that," he remarked. "I—— Oh! Hallo, hallo!"

He jumped back just in time.

The looking-glass flashed as it fell, the nails pulling out of the soft plaster under the weight of it, and there was no chance to save it. Right on the steps it crashed, and there was a terrific smash. The top of the steps came through the backboard of the looking-glass, while the glass itself lay scattered over the carpet in a thousand fragments.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

And the Curtains!

"M-M-MY hat!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fancy that! The nails seem to have come out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothing to cackle at that I can see. Wun Lung, old chap, these asses have managed to smash the glass among them."

"Eh—what? We?"

"Me savvy," said the little Chinese. "Me gettee nothel glass nothel time, but Bob Chelly not puteo it up."

"Well, you'll want it put up safe, and——"

"Yes; that justee what me wantee."

"This was an accident, of course. I suppose they weren't holding the glass tight against the wall when I put the nails in. I can't do everything without assistance, can I? There's a limit to what one chap can do."

"Not when it comes to smashing things," said Wharton. "You could do the window and the bookcase as easily as you have done the looking-glass."

"The easefulness would be terrific."

"Oh, rats! We shall have to clear all this up from the carpet somehow. You fellows might do that while I put up the curtains."

"P'laps me bettel puteo up cultains——"

"Not a bit of it! I don't mind taking the trouble, and we want the job done thoroughly. You chaps pick up the glass."

The "chaps" did not look happy. But they had come there to help, so they picked up the glass. Linley carried the frame of the looking-glass away, to be sent off to Friar-dale to be re-glazed. It was a long task picking up the fragments, but Harry and the nabob stuck to it. Nugent was wisely giving No. 13 Study a wide berth. Perhaps the industrious helpers thought of the sunny cricket-field with regret. But they wired in.

Bob Cherry unrolled the curtains, and certainly they were very handsome for a junior study. There was a painted pole—white—which looked very natty against the green paper when it was up. Bob Cherry fixed the pole and the cornices without any accident, and then mounted the steps with the curtains in his arms.

Wun Lung watched him rather anxiously. Wharton, having finished picking up all the glass he could find, came to help.

"Why not slide the rings on the pole down here, and then put the pole up on the brackets?" he inquired, naturally enough.

Bob Cherry pursed his lips for a moment.

"Well, this is my way," he remarked.

"Yes, but——"

"You see, I've nailed the pole first, and the rings are on it——"

"You've nailed the pole?"

"Yes; must have these things safe, you know. I don't like leaving anything to chance."

"But the pole is supposed to——"

"Never mind what the pole's supposed to do. I'm dealing in facts, not in suppositions," said Bob Cherry loftily. "A few four-inch nails make anything safer. Now all I've got to do is to hook the curtains on to the rings."

"That's more easily done on the floor, my son."

"Rats! I'm a handy chap at this sort of thing."

And Bob Cherry set to work.

The juniors watched him curiously.

The steps Bob was standing on were none too high for the purpose, and he had to stand on the extreme top, and hold the curtains above his head with both hands to fasten the pins on the curtain-rings.

Naturally enough, the weight of the curtains told upon

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him, and the attitude he was obliged to stand in, with his head well thrown back, soon gave him an ache in the neck.

But he stuck to it manfully.

After about twenty minutes of labour, in which his neck and his arms ached as if he were on the rack, he succeeded in fastening up the curtains. Then, with a gasp, he looked down at his friends.

He did not see any reason why they should be grinning. But grinning they undoubtedly were.

"Ain't that all right?" demanded Bob.

"Ripping!" said Wharton. "You've fastened most of the hooks on the wrong rings, and got them mixed up a little, but I suppose that's merely a handy way of doing it."

"My hat!"

"The hatfulness is terrific!"

"Me tinkee——"

"I'll soon set that right," said Bob Cherry. "Things are bound to go a little wrong when one chap does all the work and the rest look on. Here goes!"

He turned to the curtains again. The steps rocked with the sudden movement, and Wun Lung, clutching at them to save them, inadvertently gave them a push instead.

"Oh!" roared Bob Cherry.

He had said "Here goes!" and now he certainly was going!

He made a desperate clutch at the curtains to save himself, and succeeded in bringing them down with him.

The next moment he was rolling on the carpet, wrapped up in the torn curtains, and fragments of the lace hung to the curtain-pole above.

"M-m-m-my hat!"

"Hurt, old chap?" asked Wharton, springing to him at once.

Bob Cherry jumped up with an activity which showed that he was not seriously hurt.

"No," roared Bob, "I'm not hurt! I enjoy this sort of thing. Br-r-r!"

"Glad you haven't broken your neck," said Linley. "You've busted the curtains."

"Me gottee nothel pail."

"Good, kid! I'll put them up in a jiffy. Wait a minute till I've recovered my breath. Must have a bit of a rest."

"Lats!"

"What!"

"Me say lats," said the little Celestial firmly. "Malk Linley puttee up next cultains. Only one mole pail, and if you teal them, no cultains for studee."

"Look here, if you think Linley can put up curtains better than I can——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cackling asses!" said Bob Cherry. "Of course, I've no objection to Linley trying his hand; but I'm a handy chap at this sort of thing, and it's safer to leave it to me. Still, go ahead, Marky, and I'll hold the steps."

"I'd rather Wharton held the steps, if you don't mind," said Mark, smiling.

"Look here——"

"You see, if I got shoved through the window, it would mean breaking my neck on the ground outside."

And Harry Wharton held the steps while Linley mounted. He soon had the curtain-pole down, and the new curtains were placed upon it before it was put up again. To put it up then, and secure it, occupied the junior but a couple of minutes.

"Jolly good!" said Wharton.

"Not so bad," said Bob Cherry, looking critically at the curtains. "Not quite so graceful perhaps as I should have made them look, but they'll pass. You haven't put any nails into the curtain-pole, Linley."

"It doesn't need any."

"Hardly safe, old chap. What do you think, Wun Lung?"

"Allee light."

"Well, they're your curtains," said Bob. "I should take more care of them if they were mine. Let's get the crockery unpacked."

"You puttee books in bookcase. We unpack clockely."

"Right you are!" said Bob Cherry unsuspiciously.

The crockery was unpacked, and the cutlery and the tin ware. Wun Lung had laid in a supply of every utensil likely to be wanted in the study, if they stood a six or seven course dinner and cooked it there.

The cupboard, capacious as it was, was taxed to the fullest limit. The bright new copper kettle was placed on the hob. The brass fender and fireirons made the grate look very cheerful. The Japanese screen was placed before the cupboard, and the armchairs on either side of the grate. Other articles were brought in, and soon it became necessary to tack and wear in getting about the study among the furniture, as small craft do among the big shipping in a crowded port.

An art jar full of flowers was placed upon the mantelpiece, to occupy the space till another glass could be obtained; and the furnishing was complete.

"I think we've done pretty well," Bob Cherry remarked, looking round.

"Yes, rather! You haven't broken the bookcase or the window——"

"Look here——"

"Or put the hammer through the screen or the clock——"

"Oh, rats! We've done jolly well, and I feel jolly dusty. I'm going to get a wash, and then we'll have tea. You fellows come?"

"Right-ho!"

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Crowded House-Warming.

BOB CHERRY re-entered the study ten minutes later, looking all the better for his wash. He glanced round No. 13 with an eye of pride.

There were, perhaps, too many things in the room, for its size, but otherwise it was decidedly comfortable. Such a carpet was unknown in the junior studies; such curtains were quite as good as those in Mrs. Locke's drawing-room; the screen was a work of art, and the clock a handsome marble one with a musical chime. The bookcase was a specimen of Spanish mahogany, and the armchairs were handsome leather ones. Wun Lung had certainly not considered expense in ordering the furniture for the study, and Bob Cherry thought that his guardian would open his eyes when the bills came in.

Several fellows had come along the passage to peep into the new study. It impressed them all wonderfully. Even Bulstrode, who was rich and who spent a great deal of money on his study, was impressed. He could never get near anything like this, he knew.

Bob Cherry gave a grunt of satisfaction as he looked round. He was beginning to be reconciled to his change of quarters. He wasn't very far from his old friends; he certainly had more room to himself, and he was away from Billy Bunter—a great advantage in some respects.

The fire was laid in the grate, and Bob Cherry put a match to it. Then he filled the copper kettle at the tap at the end of the passage, and jammed it down on the fire.

"I say, Cherry——"

He looked round. Billy Bunter was blinking in at the door through his big spectacles.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"I thought you might like me to lend you a hand with the feed," said Bunter, coming into the study. "I'm willing to do anything I can, you know. Can I cook anything for you?"

"You can help me," said Bob. "I've got a lot of cooking to do, and I've asked the fellows for six o'clock."

"You wouldn't mind me having a little snack to go on with——"

"I'll give you a thick ear to go on with if you come any rot!" said Bob Cherry. "Rub out that frying-pan."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"If you don't want to work, clear!" said Bob Cherry tersely. "No room for idlers in Study No. 13."

Bunter blinked indignantly; but he was not likely to depart while there was food about, so he set to work. He rubbed out the frying-pan with an old newspaper, and then greased it with butter. His eyes glistened behind his spectacles as he watched Bob unpack sausages galore.

"My word!" murmured Bunter. "They make me feel awfully hungry! I suppose I can have a go at the sardines, just to——"

"Leave 'em alone, porpoise. You're here to work."

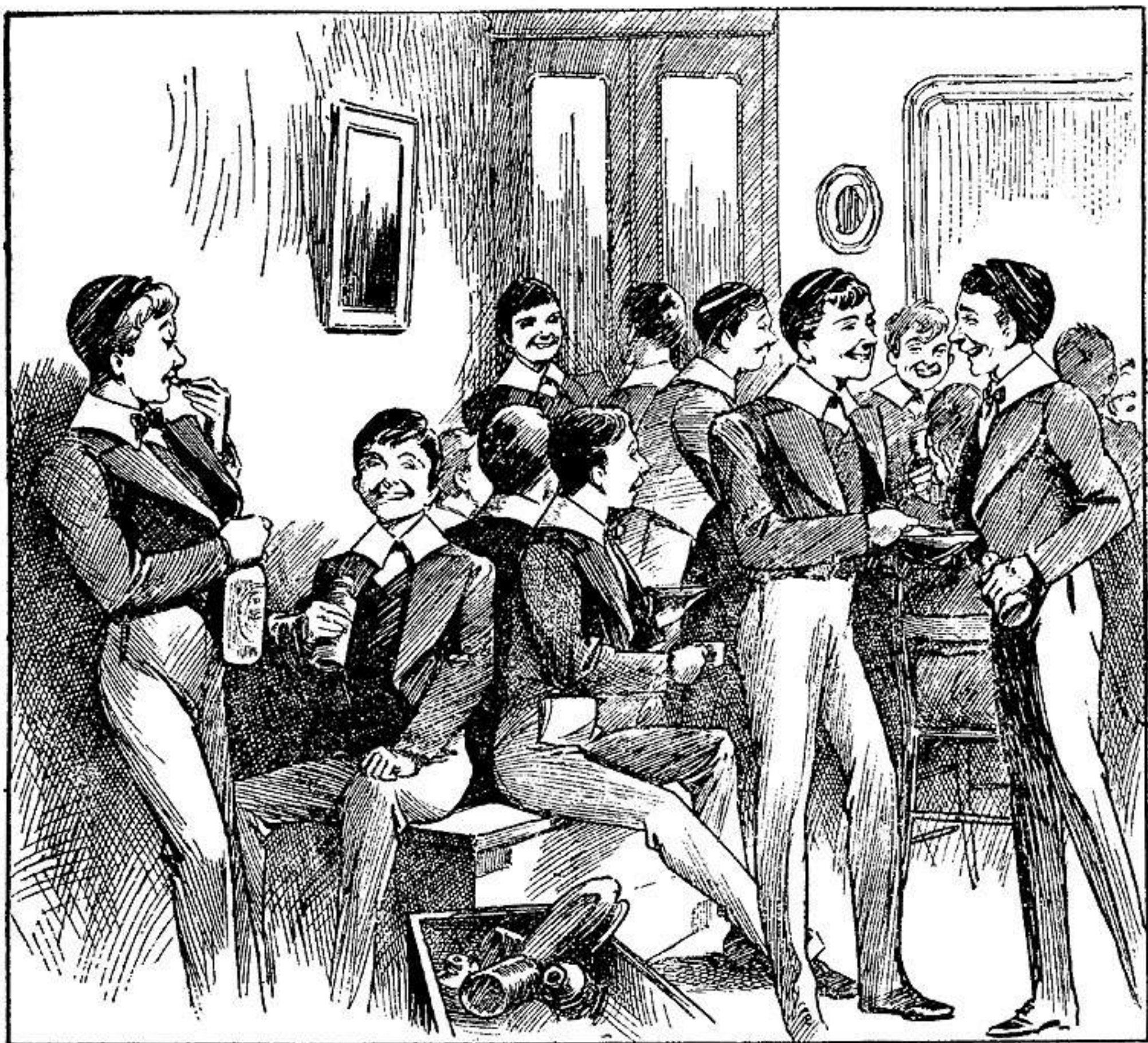
"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Shut up! Hold that frying-pan here."

Bunter obeyed. Bob Cherry tossed the sausages into the pan, and two or three of them went over the side upon

HECTOR DRAKE

In The
PLUCK Library.



Bob Cherry grunted. The new study was most uncomfortably crammed now, and he had a suspicion that it was a "rag." But the juniors made themselves at home. They sat on the window-ledge, on the armchairs, on the coal-locker, on the fender, or the floor. They weren't particular, so long as they sat somewhere, and joined in the feed.

the rug. There was an exclamation of dismay from Wun Lung, who had just entered the study.

"It's all right," said Bob, picking up the sausages. "I can wipe them; they're not hurt."

"Me no tinkee of sausages."

"Eh? What are you worrying about, then?"

"Me tinkee of lug."

"Lug! What on earth does he mean by lug?"

"Lug—nicce healthlug," explained Wun Lung. "Health-lug costee thlee guineas; no spoilee healthlug."

"Oh, the rug! Blow the rug!"

"Costee thlee guineas—"

"You should have got a cheaper one, then. I suppose we're going to do cooking in this study?"

"Cooke on spilit stove in box-loom," said Wun Lung anxiously.

Bob-Cherry laid down his fork, and looked fixedly at the Chinese junior.

"Do you think I'm going to cook on a spirit stove in the box-room, you benighted heathen? I'm going to cook here!"

"Spoilee fulnitule."

"Blow the furniture!" roared Bob. "Do you think I'm going to let the furniture make my life a burden? Blessed if I wouldn't rather camp out in the tool-shed. Give the fire a poke, Bunter."

"No makee smoke—spoilee cultains."

"Hang the curtains!"

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"They are hung," said Bunter, squinting through his glasses. "The curtains are hung, Cherry."

"Ass! Shove that frying-pan on the fire."

"Makee snell. No cookee helc. Spoilee study."

"More rats!"

"Buntel spillee glease on lug," said Wun Lung.

"Spill some more, Bunter!"

"Certainly!"

"Me tinkee that—"

"Never mind what you tinkee. Hand out the eggs."

Wun Lung yielded the point. With Bob Cherry cooking in the study, there was no chance of keeping it in a state of pristine elegance. Bob Cherry didn't care much for elegance. But he was getting hungry, and he cared very much indeed for his tea—and a solid one.

As Bob and Mark had not had to subscribe towards the furnishing, they had pooled their funds for the feed, and the tea was to be a more than usually gorgeous one.

There were various good things—hot and cold—and cakes and tarts unlimited. There was a smell of cooking that could almost have been cut with a knife, but that was not disagreeable to hungry juniors. Billy Bunter and Bob were busy, very warm and very red, when the door opened to admit Frank Nugent.

Nugent gave an appreciative sniff.

"Jolly good," he said. "I see I'm early. Can I lend a hand?"

"Help Wun Lung lay the table."

"Good!"

Hurree Singh and Harry Wharton came in a few moments later. Mark Linley was still absent, and he did not turn up till the party were sitting down to tea. He had a lexicon under his arm, and Bob Cherry snorted as he saw it.

"Doing that rotten Greek again?" he asked. "Blessed if I can see what you see to be so fond of in the giddy stuff! How many parasangs have the giddy Ten Thousand retreated this afternoon?"

Mark Linley laughed as he laid down his Xenophon and the lexicon and a sheaf of papers. Wingate had been helping him with his work, and he was feeling cheerful—the cheerfulness that comes of an advance made in a difficult study.

"Glad I'm not late," he said. "I know you didn't want my help in getting tea. Bunter is worth ten of me at such a time."

Billy Bunter blinked at him over a plateful of sausages.

"I'm sincerely glad to see that you—"

"Hungry?" asked Bob Cherry, helping Linley liberally. "This is a ripping spread, though I say it. I did most of the cooking. Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Skinner looked in at the door.

"Room for one more?" he asked. "I've heard you're giving a house-warming. You know how fond of you I always was, Cherry."

"Yes; I don't think. But come in."

"Thanks awfully!"

Skinner joined the feasters. A minute or so later two more juniors looked in—Micky Desmond and Morgan.

"Faith, and they never told us it was ready!" exclaimed Micky, in a tone of wonder. "Sure, and ye're getting forgetful in ye're old age, Bobby darling!"

"We're in time, though, look you," said Morgan. "I don't mind sitting on the fender."

"Faith, I'd sit anywhere—on the coal-locker, or on Billy Bunter's head, rather than stay away from me friend Cherry's house-warming!" said Micky genially.

"Come in!" said Wun Lung hospitably. "Nottee much loom."

"The roomfulness is limited, but the hospitality is terrific!" said the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"My hat!" exclaimed Stott, looking in a few minutes later, with Ogilvy and Lacy looking over his shoulders.

"This is a Form feed, I suppose?"

"Fancy forgetting to let us know the time, though!" said Ogilvy. "I'm shocked at you, Cherry—I am, really! Luckily we thought of giving you a look-in."

"I'll begin with ham," said Lacy. "Don't trouble to cook any more sausages, specially for me. I'm not particular."

Bob Cherry grunted. The study was most uncomfortably crammed now, and he had a suspicion that it was a "rag." But the juniors made themselves at home. They sat on the window-ledge, on the armchairs, on the coal-locker, on the fender, or the floor. They weren't particular, so long as they sat somewhere, and joined in the feed.

But the end was not yet. Bulstrode and Russell and Trevor came along a few minutes later, and looked in on the crowded juniors in the study.

"Good!" said Bulstrode. "I thought it was a Form feed. Come in, you chaps, and make yourselves at home!"

"Here, draw it mild!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "This isn't a monkey's cage!"

"Then what are you doing in it?" demanded Bulstrode.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Clear out, Bulstrode!" exclaimed Skinner. "You can't shove yourself in anywhere without an invitation. It's bad form. Buzz off!"

"Beastly bad form!" said Ogilvy. "I'm surprised at you, Bulstrode!"

Bulstrode grinned, and forced his way in. He trod on Stott, and nearly pushed over Lacy. The study was full to suffocation.

But the new-comers found room. The chums did not feel inclined to "fire" them out on the occasion of a house-warming, and a scuffle would have been a difficult business in the crowded room. So they took it good-humouredly.

"Fall to," said Bob Cherry. "So long as there's anything left, wire in."

"Certainly. Rely on us, old chap."

"We'll stand by you," said Skinner cordially, "right to the last cup of tea and the last sardine!"

"I say, you fellows, there won't be enough to go round."

"Better leave off in time, then," said Skinner. "If you eat only half as much as usual, that will leave enough for a dozen fellows."

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"Hallo!" exclaimed a voice at the door; and Bennett and Lyle looked in. "Quite a crowd. Sorry we couldn't come earlier, Cherry."

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"BILLY BUNTER, EDITOR."

"Don't mention it," said Bob Cherry politely. "The later you come the better I like it."

"Ha, ha, ha! Very good! Pass me the ham," said Skinner.

There was a crowd in the passage by this time. All the Remove had scent of the house-warming, and they seemed to be all turning up. Fellows came into the study till it was impossible for more to come in, and nearly impossible for those inside to move or breathe. The doorway was crammed, and the passage outside was crowded.

The new tenants of No. 13 took it good-temperedly.

It was a "rag," but they didn't mind. With so many guests at the board, the feast naturally vanished in record time; but the chums had started first, and they had enough—excepting Bunter, who never had enough. There were loud demands from the passage for helpings, but helpings soon ran short.

Skinner squeezed up from a sitting posture with some difficulty.

"All over!" he exclaimed. "Jolly good feed! Nothing left for you chaps, so you can bunk!"

There was a howl of indignation from the passage.

"Nothing left except a bottle of ginger-beer," said Bob Cherry.

"Hand it over, then!" exclaimed Lyle.

"Right you are!"

Bob Cherry drew the cork, holding the neck of the bottle towards the crowd in the doorway. There was a spurt of froth, and a yelling and a scattering from the uninvited guests.

"Yah! Ow, ow! Beast! Gr-r-r!"

"Ha, ha, ha! I've got a syphon of soda-water here," said Bob. "You can have that next, as the ginger-beer's all gone."

The way the doorway and the passage cleared at that offer was marvellous. Bob Cherry laughed heartily as the Removites scattered.

"Well, it's been a jolly feed," said Harry Wharton—"jolly good; and it upholds the reputation of No. 1 Study."

"Eh? No. 13 Study, you mean."

"My dear chap, we're not going to desert you," said Nugent. "You're still one of us. This study is a colony from No. 1—hands across the sea, you know."

"That's all very well, but it would really be more appropriate for No. 13 to take the lead, and No. 1 to back it up."

"What fearful rot!"

"Yes; I must say that's rot," agreed Harry Wharton. "Bob will admit that himself when he thinks it over."

"No fear!"

"But, my dear chap—"

"The rotfulness is terrific!"

"I don't see it. You see—"

"Rats! What I say is—"

"I'm jolly well not going to—to—"

"Order!" exclaimed Mark Linley, laughing. "Don't let the house-warming finish in a row, chaps."

"Who's rowing?" asked Bob Cherry heatedly.

"Well, you certainly sound as if you are."

"Bosh! I'm trying to point out reason to these owls!"

"Never mind," said Wharton. "Let's get to the cricket-field."

And this suggestion was too good not to be followed.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

An Offer of Support.

THAT evening the new tenants of No. 13 met in the new study to do their preparation for the morrow morning. It felt a little strange to Bob Cherry to be preparing without Wharton, Nugent, and Hurree Singh round him, and without Billy Bunter constantly interrupting; but there was no doubt that his new quarters were comfortable.

The foot sank silently in the thick, deep carpet—very different from the cheap square which half covered the floor in No. 1, with patchy oilcloth tacked round it to conceal the rest of the boards. The soft, almost inaudible tick of the marble clock was more soothing to the nerves than the irritating clicking of the cheap German horror that kept time in No. 1. There was more elbow-room, too, with three in a study instead of five. All the same, Bob Cherry rather missed his friends.

Mark Linley and Wun Lung were more satisfied. They

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had been together before, and had got used to one another—in Russell and Lacy's study. Mark had been on pretty good terms with Russell and Lacy, but he had not chummed with them. He had always been, to a certain extent, an outsider in his own study. It was different in No. 13.

Bob Cherry was as chummy as he could wish; and Bob, with his volatile nature and endless high spirits, was just the chum that the grave, quiet Lancashire lad needed. The change was very much for the better for Mark.

"Well, we're pretty comfy here?" said Bob Cherry, looking up from his work at last, and glancing round the quiet study.

"Very," said Mark.

"Lipping!" said Wun Lung cheerily.

"I miss Harry, though—and the others. Blessed if I can make this out," said Bob ruefully, jabbing a pen into his *Æneid*. "I shall have to get into the habit of trotting down the passage to No. 1 when I come to a difficult passage."

Mark Linley smiled.

"Perhaps I can help you," he remarked.

"My hat! I didn't think of that! If you can tackle Greek, you ought to be able to stroll through Latin," agreed Bob. "I'll promote you to assistant-in-chief, vice Wharton. Look at this. Does it mean that he was in a temper at having to tell the story?"

Linley laughed.

"No. Let's go over it together."

And they went through the narrative of *Æneas* to Dido with an ease and facility that surprised Bob Cherry.

"My hat! You handle this quite as easily as Harry does. You can help me every time!" exclaimed Bob enthusiastically. "And the way you put it makes it worth reading, too."

"It is worth reading," said Mark, with a smile. "If you dug into it a little deeper, you'd find it better reading than a good many books you read now."

"Blessed if I don't have a try some time," said Bob, with a yawn. "I can fancy myself walking out of an afternoon to have a quiet read, with Virgil or Homer under my arm—I don't think! I think I'm done now, thank goodness—though it's jolly good, you know. Still, one doesn't want to feed on it, though it's good. Hallo, hallo, hallo! Who's there?"

The study door opened, and Bob Cherry looked round in expectation of seeing one of his old chums, but it was Skinner who entered.

"Not busy?" asked Skinner. "I want to speak to you chaps."

"Finished," said Bob, getting up from the table. "I've made the discovery that Virgil wasn't such an ass as you would suppose from the school-books. Shall I read you some of the *Æneid*?"

"N—no, thanks," said Skinner, hastily. "I get enough of that in class. If I had been Nero, I'd have had Virgil hanged, drawn, and quartered—what are you grinning at, Linley?"

"Nero would have had to do it before he was born, that's all."

"Oh! Didn't he live in the time of Nero?" asked Skinner, yawning. "Well, I suppose he lived in the reign of somebody or other, and if that somebody had known how he was going to be inflicted on innocent and harmless school-boys, he ought to have had him chopped up. But I didn't come here to jaw about Virgil, goodness knows. We've been talking things over in my study—Stott, and Ogilvy, and me."

"What things?"

"You see, there's been a feeling in the Remove for a long time that No. 1 Study was having things a lot too much its own way," explained Skinner. "That's really why some of us backed up Bulstrode, though he's rather an overbearing sort of beast—we thought there ought to be a—a—a—what do you call it?"

"A row?"

"No, ass, a—a balance of power," said Skinner. "That's it—a balance of power. We don't think that one study ought to give law to the Form. Wharton's all right, but you'll admit that he's a little bit cocky."

"I don't admit anything of the sort, and I'll jolly well wipe up the floor with you, if you run down Wharton to me," said Bob, wrathfully.

"I—I didn't mean exactly that," said Skinner. "What I mean is, that the Remove isn't a one-man show, and I don't see why there should be a cock of the walk at all—only there never has been anybody in the Form who could keep his end up against No. 1 Study. Bulstrode tried, but he's failed. He isn't precisely the sort of chap the fellows like for a leader. Now, we've been thinking—"

"Good—take it gently at first, but keep it up."

"Oh, don't be funny. We've been thinking that it's time this end of the passage had a show," explained Skinner. "We're in No. 12, next to you. We're willing to back you up."

"Back me up!" repeated Bob Cherry, puzzled.

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"Yes, that's it. We think you ought to keep our end up, you see, and we'll back you up against No. 1 Study."

"What! Do you think I'm going to row with Wharton?"

"Not exactly row—but keep our end up. I don't see why that end of the passage should lay down the law. They speak of No. 1 Study as if it were the Remove. It's time there was a change."

Bob Cherry shook his head.

"I see the idea, Skinny, and I'm much flattered—but it won't work. I'm not going to enter on the war-path against my old study."

"But you don't belong to it now."

"N—no, but we're still chums, all the same."

"Well, I think you're an ass," said Skinner, going to the door. "We're willing to back you up—nearly half the Form, and perhaps more, if Bulstrode comes into line. You might be captain of the Remove if you liked."

Bob Cherry started.

Captain of the Remove!

And if he liked!

There was no doubt that he would like—there was not a fellow in the Remove who would not have given a great deal to be Form-captain.

"But Wharton's captain," said Bob, slowly.

"Yes, but if the Form called for a new election, it would have to be tried over again, and I tell you you've got a good chance of getting in. I've nothing against Wharton, but a lot of us feel that it's time there was a change."

Bob shook his head decidedly.

"I wouldn't dream of ousting Wharton, Skinner, if I could—and I don't believe I could. Besides he's a better Form-captain than I should make."

"Rot!" said Skinner.

"Well, that's how it stands: I'm not up against No. 1 Study—I back them up all along the line."

Skinner grunted in a dissatisfied way.

"Well, there will be an opposition all the same, I expect," he said. "The only difference is that we shall most likely make Bulstrode leader."

And he quitted the study. Bob Cherry wrinkled his brows thoughtfully. Mark Linley and Wun Lung had been silent; but there was a grin on the quaint little face of the Chinese.

"Jollie good idea," he remarked, in his soft voice. Bob Cherry started, and looked at him.

"What's that, Wun Lung?"

"Jolly goodee idea. Velly goodee. Plenty goodee. No 13 top studee, allee samee. Allee light. What you tinkee?"

"Well, yes, but—"

"Goodee idea," persisted the little Celestial. "We keepee endee up, what you tinkee. Me savvy."

Bob Cherry shook his head, and left the study with a thoughtful expression on his face. Mark Linley opened his books, and went on with his Greek. He worked steadily for an hour, and then, taking up the lexicon, he went down to Wingate's study. The big Liddell and Scott belonged to the captain of Greyfriars, the purchase of such a volume being far beyond the means of the scholarship boy.

The Greyfriars captain nodded pleasantly to Linley as he came in to return the borrowed volume.

"You're sticking it, Linley," he remarked.

"Yes—and I am getting on at last, I think. It's very kind of you to help me as you do, Wingate," said Mark gratefully.

"Bosh!" said Wingate cheerily. "Don't go for a minute—I want to speak to you! I like to see you sticking to the work like this, Linley—but you mustn't over-do it. I don't want to see you become a swot, you know. Are you keeping up cricket and swimming?"

"Yes—I'm getting quite as much as any other chap in the Form of either," said Mark. "I always try to keep fit."

"That's right—it's quite as important to train the body as the brain—in fact, more important. A chap can do with a little knowledge, if he can't get more—but nobody can be happy with an unhealthy carcass to drag about. But there's another point, Linley, besides the indoor work and the outdoor games," went on the big Sixth-Former, in his kindly way. "I think it would be better for you to join in the fun of the juniors a little more than you do. You are rather inclined to be solemn beyond your age—mind, I don't say you oughtn't to be thoughtful and studious, because you ought—but at the same time, a little high spirits, even a 'jape' or two, wouldn't do you any harm."

Mark smiled.

"I'll bear that in mind, Wingate," he said. "It's kind of you to speak about it. I know some of the fellows have it up against me that I don't take to their fun as they expect me to."

And Linley looked thoughtful as he left the study. Wingate's words ran in his mind—and they were to have their effect.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter and the Blacking.

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry uttered that greeting at the top of his voice, as he put his head into his old study.

"Hallo," said Harry Wharton, closing his book with a snap. "Come in, old chap! Finished your prep?"

"Yes, rather!" Bob Cherry sat down on the corner of the table with a bump, and Nugent, who was writing, jumped as the blots scattered from his pen in a spattering array over his exercise.

"You ass!" he roared. "Look at what you've done!"

Bob Cherry looked at it.

"By Jove, that looks rotten," he said.

"How can I show this to Quelch?"

"Hold it up for him to look at, or lay it on his desk," said Bob, with provoking coolness, "or you could send it to him by post."

"You utter ass!"

"H'm! Is that how you always talk to visitors?"

"Oh!" said Nugent.

He had forgotten for the moment that Bob was a visitor now.

"Never mind," said Bob Cherry, with a wave of the hand. "I excuse you. You can write that exercise over again, and I'll sit in the armchair." He sat down, and there was a gasping yell from Billy Bunter, who was already seated there. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's somebody in this chair!"

"Ow! wow! Gr-r-r! Gerrup!"

"I'm all right, thanks."

"Ow! I'm underneath you——"

"It's all right—I don't mind."

"Gerrup!" roared Bunter. "Ow—gerrup! Gerroff!"

"Well, if you make a point of it, I will," said Bob, rising from the chair, and allowing the nearly suffocated junior to squirm away. "What are you gasping about?"

"Ow! I'm winded—I'm nearly suff-suff-suffocated."

"Never mind——!"

"But I do mind," yelled Bunter. "You utter ass! You might have broken my glasses, and if they'd got broken, you'd have had to pay for them. You've given me a shock to my system, and that always makes me feel faint. Can you lend me——"

"Would you like to go along to No. 13——"

"No, I wouldn't——"

"There's something in the cupboard——"

"Eh?"

"And you can have it if you like."

Billy Bunter did not stop to reply. In a moment he was scuttling along to No. 13 Study. Bob Cherry grinned and settled himself comfortably in the arm-chair.

Nugent threw his exercise into the grate, but did not begin another. He felt that it would be wiser to do it when Bob Cherry wasn't there.

"I heard some jaw in the common-room, Bob," he remarked. "Some of the fellows are going to start a new Co. in the Remove, and make No. 13 top study."

"I've received offers of backing on the subject," said Bob, laughing. "Skinner says the fellows think it's time there was a change. Of course, I shouldn't think of it. It's we against the world."

"Of course," agreed Nugent. "They ought to know that the idea of making No. 13 the top study is simply bosh."

"The boshfulness is terrific."

"Oh, I don't know about that," said Bob Cherry, sitting upright. "I suppose we could make No. 13 top study if we liked to try."

"I suppose you couldn't."

"The supposefulness——"

"Look here," said Bob. "I think——"

"Well, don't then," said Nugent obstinately. "No. 1 is top study, and always has been top study, and always will be top study. That settles it."

"Rats to that!"

"You can begin a rival Co. if you like," said Nugent, with a grin. "I assure you we shall sit on it so hard that it will be quashed at birth. Then we'll take you back into the fold."

"Oh, will you?"

"Yes, certainly. In fact, it wouldn't be a bad idea to start that rival Co., come to think of it, just to show the fellows that No. 1 Study is cock of the walk."

Bob Cherry looked a little nettled.

"It seems to me as if you want trouble," he exclaimed.

"Of course, I could knock this study into a cocked hat if I tried."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I've a jolly good mind to do it."

"Go ahead, then."

"Oh, hold on," said Harry Wharton. "We don't want a split. We ought to stand together—friends though divided."

"Oh, we shall always be friends," said Bob Cherry. "Nothing will alter that. But apart from friendship, a chap has to be patriotic. I am bound to back up my own study against any other in the Form."

"You should regard No. 13 as a colony——"

"Oh, no. Allies, if you like—but equal terms. As a matter of fact, we ought to be top study, and you fellows ought to back us up."

"Now, you must admit that that's rot!"

"I don't admit anything of the sort."

"The rotfulness is terrific."

"I'm blessed if I don't think over Skinner's suggestion, then," exclaimed Bob Cherry, excitedly. "I'll start a rival Co.—and I'll put you fellows in the shade. Blessed if I don't make this study sing small."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Keep your wool on, old chap," said Harry, laughing. "Nugent's only rotting. We—— Hallo, what's the matter with you, Bunter?"

Billy Bunter burst into the study, with a bottle of liquid blacking in his hands. He held it up indignantly to view.

"Look at that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry.

"That's all there was in the cupboard, except crockery," said Billy Bunter, indignantly. "Look here, Cherry——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've had to go all up and down the passage, and I'm already faint from want of nourishment," said Bunter. "You can lend me a couple of shillings, Cherry——"

"Haven't any, kid. All my tin went on the feed."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"You can imbibe that blacking. It will do you as much good as the tarts and buns you're always cramming in."

"Look here, Cherry, if you call this a jape——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "If you don't want the blacking, my son, take it back to the study. But you can have it if you like."

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Billy Bunter blinked at him, and then marched out of the study with the bottle of sable liquid under his arm. There was a vengeful gleam behind his spectacles. He returned to No. 1 in a few minutes, and Bob noticed that there was a smear of blacking on his hands, and a few spots on his fat face.

"Have you been feeding on it, Billy?"

Bunter grunted.

"You'll see!"

At that moment a shout from the end of the passage rang in through the open door. Bob Cherry hurried along to No. 13.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Rather a Row.

WUN LUNG, the Chinese, was standing at the door of No. 13, in blank dismay. Mark Linley was beside him, looking amazed. They were staring into No. 13 Study, and their expressions made Bob Cherry hurry along to them.

"What's the matter?" he demanded.

"Look!" gasped Mark.

"Look!" groaned Wun Lung. "Nicee studee—nicee cultain—blackee—all spoilee! Lotten japee, me tinkee."

Bob Cherry looked into the study.

An exclamation of wrath rose to his lips at what he saw.

Billy Bunter had avenged himself with the liquid blacking.

There was a wash of it over the curtain, a splash on the wall-paper, a smear on the carpet, a pool on the table.

Bob Cherry gazed at the black smears and stains, and said things.

"What rotter has done all that?" exclaimed Linley.

"Bunter!"

"Velly lotten japee," said Wun Lung. "Velly plenty lotten. We makee Buntel clean it up. What you tinkee?"

"We'll roll him in it!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "We'll mop it up with his top-knot. Come on!"

"Light-ho!"

And the three dashed away down the Remove passage.

Several fellows looked out of their studies.

"What's the row?" demanded Skinner.

But no one replied. They rushed on towards No. 1. Skinner chuckled.

"My word! A row already! Come on, you chaps!"

Mark Linley smiled a little grimly as he hurried on after Bob and the Chinese. He remembered Wingate's words—they were fresh in his mind. It seemed that his chumming with Bob Cherry in No. 13 Study was likely to bring about what Wingate advised. Certainly he was beginning already to have a more lively time. If a rivalry commenced between the two studies—as most of the Remove desired and as now looked very probable—times would be lively enough. The Remove had never been a quiet Form, even with one acknowledged leader. With two claiming the leadership, there would certainly be trouble.

The door of No. 1 Study was shut. Bob Cherry opened it by jamming his boot against it with very nearly the force of a battering-ram.

The door flew open, and there was a startled exclamation from the occupants of the study.

Harry Wharton jumped up, and so did Nugent, and Hurree Singh followed suit more slowly. They stared in surprise at Bob as he bounded in.

"Where's that porpoise?" roared Bob.

There was the sound of a terrified gasp behind the armchair.

Billy Bunter had squirmed there out of sight as soon as he heard the hurried footsteps of the avengers in the passage.

"Hold on! What's the matter?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Matter!" roared Bob Cherry. "That young oyster has been spattering blacking all over my study!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you cackling asses! It's nothing to laugh at! He's messed up the whole place! I'm going to rub the blacking up with his mop! Where is the young walrus? Where are you, you horrid grampus?"

"Hold on, Bob—"

"Rats! Where's that young Falstaff?"

"The hold-onfulness is great, and—"

"Where is he?"

"We lickee him velly muchee. What you tinkee? He messee up studee!" exclaimed Wun Lung excitedly. "We messee him up! What you tinkee?"

"That's only fair," said Mark. "Where is the young duffer?"

"Hold on—"

"Where is he?" roared Bob Cherry.

"Look here—"

"Produce him!"

"Yes; but—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! I can hear him grunting!"

Bob Cherry made a rush for the armchair, and dragged it

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NEXT WEEK: "BILLY BUNTER, EDITOR."

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away with a swing that sent it crashing against the table. Billy Bunter was revealed; but for a moment the juniors did not look at Bunter. For the crash of the armchair had sent the table reeling, and it went over bodily, and books and papers, and ink and pens were scattered on the floor.

"You ass!" roared Harry. "There's my exercise—"

"And my impot—"

"They're spoiled—"

"The spoiffulness is terrific."

"You utter lunatic!"

"Never mind that! I've got him!"

"Look here—"

"Now, you young oyster—"

Billy Bunter squirmed behind Harry Wharton. Exactly what Bob Cherry meant to do to him he didn't know; but Bob's looks were ferocious enough to scare a braver youth than William George Bunter.

"Hold on, Bob," said Harry, pushing the excited Bob Cherry back. "Hold on!"

"I won't! Let me get at him!"

"You can't hit a fat little duffer like that!"

"Who's going to hit him?"

"Well, you—"

"I'm going to mop his head in the blacking, that's all. I'm not going to hurt him. I'm just going to use him to mop up the blacking with."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Skinner, from the passage. "Go it, No. 13!"

And there was a shout from half a dozen excited juniors.

"Go it, Cherry!"

"Buck up, No. 13!"

"Hurrah!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Come out, you worm!"

"I—I—I'm sincerely sorry, Cherry, but—"

"Chuck him over to me, Wharton!" roared Bob.

"Now, look here, Bob—"

"Then I'll jolly well take him!"

"Hold on! Stop, or—"

"Rats!"

Bob Cherry rushed right on. Wharton did not get aside, and the next moment they were locked in a close grapple.

They hardly knew how it came about; both were excited—neither meant to quarrel, but they were grappling hard, and struggling fiercely for the mastery.

Billy Bunter squirmed into a corner, and Wun Lung made a rush for him, only to be whirled back with Frank Nugent's grip on his pigtail. Bunter wasn't popular in No. 1 Study, but it was a point of honour to stand by him now, and the chums of No. 1 stood by him.

"Ow!" gasped Wun Lung. "Lettee go—lettee go!"

"Then clear out!"

"No goee without Buntel."

"Then I'll hang on," grinned Nugent.

But he left off grinning the next moment, as Wun Lung curled round him like a cat, and he went heavily to the floor with the little Chinese on top. But he clung desperately to the Celestial, and held him down, too, and they rolled on the carpet in combat. Small as the Chinese was, he was wonderfully wiry and active, and at close quarters he was a full match for a fellow much bigger than himself.

Mark Linley had hesitated for a moment. But he felt that hesitation was out of place, and that he was called upon to back up Bob Cherry. Bob had decreed that Bunter should be yanked back to No. 13, and used to wipe up the blacking with, and Bob was head of the study. But as Linley made a motion towards the fat junior, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh stepped in the way with a polite bow.

"The keep-off-fulness is great," he purred, "or else the chuckfulness out will be terrific."

"Collar that fat oyster, Linley!" shouted Bob Cherry, as he wrestled with his old leader. "Have him out of the study."

"Right you are!"

The next moment Linley was struggling with the Nabob of Bhanipur. Billy Bunter wiped his spectacles, and blinked at the combatants.

"M-m-my word!" he gasped. "What a row! I'd better clear out of this!"

And he promptly cleared out.

The bone of contention was gone, but the combatants in No. 1 Study were too excited by the combat to even notice it. It was three against three, all excited and all plucky, and the combat raged without a pause.

The crowd in the passage, thickening every moment, cheered them on. The shouts rang through the Remove passage, and through most of the school, too.

"Go it, Cherry!"

"Buck up, Wharton!"

"Give him another one, Inky!"

"Sit on his head, heathen!"

"Hurray!"

In the uproar and confusion, no one heard Mr. Quelch coming along the passage till he was close upon the scene. His voice suddenly broke upon the noise, and it ceased as if by magic.

"What does this mean?"

"Faith! It's Quelch!" gasped Micky Desmond. "Cave!"

The crowd in the passage melted away like snow in a tropic sun.

Mr. Quelch, with a frowning brow, strode to the door of No. 1 Study. The combatants had heard nothing. They were as furiously engaged as ever, and for a moment or two Mr. Quelch stood gazing into the study, speechless.

He found his voice at last.

"Boys!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Phew! It's Quelch!"

"The honourable Quelch!"

"Great Scott!"

The struggle ceased. The combatants sat up on the carpet, blinking at the Form-master, and rubbing their eyes and noses, which showed very plain traces of the combat.

The Remove-master looked fixedly at them.

"What does this mean, Wharton?"

"I—I—I don't know, sir."

"What?"

"Blessed if I do, either," said Bob Cherry. "It's—it's only a little bit of fun, sir. That's all, sir."

"The funfulness is terrific."

"Wharton! Linley! I am surprised—shocked! This—this is amazing! You boys have always been such good friends, and now I find you fighting. Really, I do not know what to say."

Bob Cherry scratched his head.

"If you please, sir—"

"Have you any excuse to make, Cherry?"

"Yes, sir! If you please, it's your fault."

Mr. Quelch almost jumped.

"What! What did you say, Cherry?"

"It was your fault, please, sir. This is what comes of putting me in a different study, sir. I'm sorry, sir, but you asked me, sir. I was bound to tell you."

The Form-master smiled grimly.

"H'm! Well, I shall not put you back into this study, Cherry, if you cannot keep order when you are here, and when you are not here, I think I shall have to try the effect of caning. Meanwhile, you will remain a tenant of No. 13. Each boy present will take two hundred lines, and show them to me by bedtime to-morrow night. If there is any more of this nonsense, I shall double the imposition."

"Oh, sir—"

"And you who belong to No. 13, go there at once, and do not come to this study again this evening."

Bob Cherry, Mark Linley, and Wun Lung grinned ruefully at Wharton & Co., and slowly withdrew, under the eye of the Form-master. Harry Wharton was mopping a reddened nose with a handkerchief, Nugent wiping a cut lip, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh nursing an eye which would have looked very black on any complexion but his. The trio of No. 13 carried away with them similar souvenirs of the battle.

In the common-room, the "kick-up" in No. 1 was talked over and chuckled over for the rest of the evening. One opinion was prevalent there among the Removites—that the "one-man" rule in the Remove was over, and that from that day forth, No. 1 and No. 13 would be rival studies!

THE END.

(Another splendid tale of the Chums of Greyfriars next Tuesday, entitled "Billy Bunter, Editor," by Frank Richards. Order your "Magnet Library" in advance. Price One Halfpenny.)

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A Splendid Tale of Life in the British Army.

A BRIEF RESUMÉ 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, enlists in the Royal North Wessex Regiment under the name of Chester, and is sent down to Woolchester. Arrived there, Ronald unfortunately manages to fall foul of Bagot, a bullying sergeant, and Foxey Williams, a private, on the first day, and so he comes in for a rough time. On the night that he is doing his first sentry-go, Ian Chenys, his unscrupulous step-brother, enters the regiment as a subaltern. Ronald, who is on duty, is thinking over this coincidence, when he hears the sound of a stealthy footstep through the mist, and challenges the invisible intruder.

(Now go on with the story.)

The New Subaltern.

"Friend!" answered a muffled voice.

"Pass, friend. All's well!" said Ronald, and paced towards the end of his beat.

Suddenly a figure stepped out of the darkness.

"So it's you, is it?" said a voice; and he found himself face to face with his step-brother.

There were wine-stains on the lad's crumpled shirt-front. His face was flushed and feverish, and his hair wispy with perspiration, though the night was bitterly cold.

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"BILLY BUNTER, EDITOR."

"You, hang you!" he added after a pause. "What fiend's own luck brings you across my path again—eh? I thought—I hoped I had done with you for ever!"

"To speak with equal frankness, Ian, so did I. But it seems we were both wrong," said Ronald coldly, bringing his rifle down from his shoulder to attention, without thinking what he was doing.

"Confound your impudence!" blustered Ian, detecting the slip. "Don't you know your duty to an officer? Come to the salute, and say 'sir' when you speak to me. D'you hear?"

"Sir!" added Ronald with perfect calmness, sloping his rifle again and standing as rigid as bronze.

Ian regarded him, scowling, for a long minute.

"Yes," he sneered, "we both were wrong, it seems. You thought you were done with me, though, by Heaven you'll find out that blunder to your cost. When we heard that you had slunk off like a thief after your blackguardly trickery had been exposed, I thought I had done with you."

He expected Ronald to wince under this venomous stroke; but he did not move a muscle.

"I was a fool—a double fool!" snarled Ian again, "for a week later they showed me a man they had dragged from the Thames mud. I looked and saw it was you, as I thought, and gave you credit for doing the best thing you could have done under the circumstances. Pah! I might

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
and the Pupils of Cliff House.

have known! Yet, on the strength of that belief, I was idiot enough to—"

"Raise money—" suggested Ronald quietly. "On the grounds that you were sole heir to the Chenys fortunes."

"Confound you, who told you that?" demanded Ian hotly.

"Nobody, I guessed."

"You hound! You blackguard, you—"

Ian was at boiling point.

"I should like to draw your attention, sir, to the fact that these are not the terms in which an officer may address a private," interrupted Ronald. "The ranks have their rights as well as their betters."

"Indeed!" sneered Ian, shaking with passion. "Then let me tell you, you cur, that I shall address you as I please."

"Then I shall follow your example and do likewise," answered Ronald, in tones as cold as ice. "This is the first time you and I have met, Ian, since that afternoon, when through your machinations, to satisfy your hate of me and greed, I was proclaimed a common, paltry cheat, and kicked from the Service as one unfit to associate with honest men. I say again that this was your doing."

"It's a lie!" hissed Ian, recoiling for the moment.

"It is not a lie. The proof of your guilt was offered me at a price by a man who has no doubt made a better bargain with you since to keep his mouth sealed. But for a few sovereigns I could have bought evidence then which would have held you up to the execration of the world as the most loathsome of all creatures—the betrayer of your own flesh and blood."

"Take care!" warned Ian, through his clenched teeth.

"I have taken care, God knows," replied Ronald.

"Taken the burden of your sin upon my own shoulders, to save our name from a more hideous blot, and the old dad, who thinks all the world of you, from his death-blow. Ronald Chenys is dead now," he continued bitterly. "Twelve good men and true have said it, and we'll let it go at that. He will never come to life again from any wish of mine. You can take the glory of his death for what it is worth, and the gold, too, for which you have sold your wretched soul."

The last bitter touch proved too much for Ian's inflamed passions. There is nothing so biting as the truth.

Drawing off a pace, he leapt straight at Ronald's throat. Ronald was the bigger man by six inches, but the force of this unexpected charge flung him against the wall with stunning violence.

Ian's hand was gripping at his throat, and his right fist came thudding between his eyes. His rifle fell with a clash to the flagstones.

Across the parade ground a light came swinging, casting a halo in the dank mist. It was the officer of the day making his belated round of inspection. Ronald, though dazed, was able to grasp the danger which threatened them.

Ian, mad with hate and the joy of unexpected success, was battering at him with right and left.

So swift and vicious had been his attack, that Ronald had neither time nor thought to ward it off. His lips were bruised and bleeding, and darts of flame leapt before his eyes. For a moment he was inclined to let his brother reap the consequences of his treachery.

Then he remembered what Ian's fate would be if he, an officer, were discovered pinning a sentry by the throat and savaging him like a madman.

It would mean disgrace and certain ruin to a lad who had scarcely his foot on the threshold of his new career. If he could save him from himself he would; but Ian's anger was like the whirlwind, and he was heated with wine.

Gripping the wrist which still clutched wildly at his throat, he swung the youngster round, and pointed to the light of the approaching lantern.

"The rounds!" he said hoarsely. "Do you realise what that will mean to you if you are discovered here like this?"

Ian blinked at the light like one coming slowly back to his senses.

"Go, while you have the chance," said Ronald, releasing him. "You may think better of this in the morning."

The lantern was swinging nearer.

"Halt! Who comes there?"

Ronald smeared away the blood from his bruised lips, and caught up his rifle, reeling a little, for he was still dizzy with the blow when his head struck the wall in the first onslaught.

"Visiting rounds!" came a voice from the mist.

"Pass, visiting rounds. All's well!"

Ian had turned in panic at the first challenge, and the patter of his light dress-boots could be heard moving stealthily away into the darkness.

If only the rounds had steered clear of Ronald's post, all might have been well; but Captain Carthew was a stickler for duty, and the battalion orderly-sergeant who accompanied him bore down upon the sentry, lantern in hand.

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ONE
HALFPENNY.

Ronald stood with sloped arms, hoping yet against hope. But the lantern rays showed the blood trickling from his lips, and the bloodshot eyes. Rifle and bayonet, too, were covered in dirt.

"Hallo! What, in the name of goodness, is the meaning of all this?" demanded Captain Carthew, in angry amazement.

Ronald kept silence. He had no excuses to offer, and he did not mean to stoop to a lie.

"Why, the man's drunk!" continued the officer, turning to the B.O.S. "Who is he, Colour-Sergeant Jones?"

"Private Chester, sir. Very steady man, sir," said Jones, anxious to do his best for a man he liked.

"Well, look at him! It's perfectly scandalous! Here, have you no explanation to make?" turning to Ronald with rising rage.

Ronald hesitated a moment.

"None, sir. There is an explanation, but I would rather keep it to myself."

"Oh, indeed!" echoed Captain Carthew scornfully.

"There is an explanation for your being in this disgraceful condition, but you would rather keep it to yourself. Colour-Sergeant Jones, just call an escort and put this man under arrest!"

"If you please, sir—" commenced Jones.

"Silence!" said the officer curtly.

The necessary order was hailed from sentry to sentry until it reached the guard-room. Meantime, Captain Carthew paced up and down restlessly, while Jones looked in blank amazement at Ronald, whose face showed up ghastly white in the lantern light. Soon the footsteps of Corporal Kedge and the escort were heard approaching.

"You still have no explanation to offer, Chester?" said the officer, obviously perplexed.

"None, sir," said Ronald.

"I think now that I heard voices when I was approaching your post. Were you speaking with anybody?"

"I was, sir."

"With whom?"

"That I may not divulge, sir, even to escape a disgrace I do not deserve."

"Ah, then make him a prisoner, corporal, and march him off!" said Captain Carthew drily. "Perhaps he'll think better of it after a night in cells."

Lieutenant Bob Takes Ian's Measure—Office Hour.

"Ah, good-morning, Fairly! You know a man named Chester in No. 4 Section, of course?" asked Captain Carthew, the morning after Ronald's arrest, as Lieutenant Bob Fairly strolled into the mess.

"Chester? Yes, sir, rather! A recruit. Quite a keen sort of chap, and a clinking good boxer. Fact is, I'm going to get the colonel's permission to match him, if he will, against the Navy heavy-weight champion. You remember Commander Cropper at mess last night? He was gassing away about what their man could do, and the cracks he had mopped up in one round, and all the rest of it, until at last I was fairly sick, and told him I would find a man of ours who I would back to lay their prodigy out inside of six rounds. We've fixed the contest for fourteen days from now, to be fought at Plymport, at the charity assault-at-arms in aid of the widows and orphans of the H.M.S. Firecrest wreck."

"Well, you'll have to find another man, I'm afraid," said Captain Carthew.

"You don't say that, sir!" exclaimed Lieutenant Bob, in dismay. "Why, what's wrong?"

"I can't quite make out. Only on my rounds last night I found him sentry on No. 3 post, looking very groggy, with his face covered in blood, and a rifle in a filthy state, as if he had been digging mud with it. At first I thought he was under the influence of drink."

"Really! Well, I don't mind betting that's wrong!" exclaimed Bob Fairly with some warmth. "He may touch intoxicating liquor, for all I know, but he's far too keen an athlete and a soldier to make a beast of himself."

"That's what Colour-Sergeant Jones says. But, as I told you, that was only my first impression. My second was that he had been fighting."

"Well, from what I know of Chester's capacity with the gloves, I am sorry for the other man, that's all, sir. But what had he got to say for himself?"

"Nothing. Just flatly refused to open his mouth. Said that there was an explanation, but he preferred to keep it to himself. That settled the matter, of course, and I put him under arrest."

"On what charge, sir? Not of drunkenness?" asked Lieutenant Bob.

"No. I had made up my mind that there was some mystery somewhere. What's more, I'm positive I heard

voices as I approached his post. I am not sure now that I did not hear scuffling. If that was so, and he had been attacked, why the dickens can't he say so?"

"Most likely he's keeping silence to save the other chap. If so, he's a sportsman."

"Most unlikely I should say," said Captain Carthew. "Tommy Atkins in the general run hasn't got the same distaste for sneaking that a public schoolman has. In my experience of him, if he can only save his own hide, he is not too particular on to whose shoulders he puts the blame. Certainly he is not the man to suffer in silence for the sins of another."

"I don't know that I agree, sir," said Bob quietly; and Captain Carthew looked up in mild surprise. Hitherto it had been Fairly's invariable rule in life to agree with everyone. "My experience of Tommy Atkins, as an average, is that he has just as fine a sense of honour and good sportsmanship as the bluest blooded pup that ever emerged from public school or 'Varsity."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed the captain. "That's ridiculous!" "Maybe; but it's my estimate of him, and I think I know my Tommy pretty well. There are exceptions, of course—lots of 'em; but, then, so there are in our set, and every other."

"Really, Fairly," said Captain Carthew, "you're in an amazing mood this morning."

"There is another thing," drawled Fairly, ignoring the remark. "Supposing this chap Chester happens to be a gentleman born? There are plenty such shouldering a rifle in the ranks."

"Quite so—down-at-heel wasters and rogues."

"Oh no, not necessarily rogues. Down at heel, perhaps. It's not everybody can afford Sandhurst and a King's commission. Personally, from what I know of Chester, I am inclined to think my theory is right. I am the more convinced, because I know Bagot and one or two others in the company have got their knife into him—Bagot particularly. If he gives evidence against Chester to-day, you watch if I am not right."

"Well, we shall see. If, as you suggest, Chester is keeping silence to save another, one can't help admiring him for it; but it is rank defiance nevertheless, and he must suffer for it. It must be a friend he is shielding."

"Not necessarily," drawled Bob Fairly.

"Oh, fiddlesticks! I don't know what's wrong with you to-day," cried Captain Carthew, picking up his cap and cane and glancing at the clock. "It's time, though, that I was strolling down to the orderly-room. You'd better look in, too, some time."

"I certainly will, sir," answered Bob, but still made no offer to move at once.

When Captain Carthew had gone he snuggled down deeper into a luxurious saddle-bag chair, crossed his long legs, and puffed vigorously at his cigarette.

"Well, that puts the tin hat on my proposed boxing match," he growled to himself. "I'll have to forfeit that hundred now, for there's not another man in the battalion in anything like condition to fight in fourteen days, to say nothing of there being no one fit to put into the ring against the sailor. Can't make it out at all. If anyone went for Chester, even if he took him unawares, that man would be in hospital by now. Besides, what reason can he have for keeping silence?"

His eyes turned to the long windows opening on to the verandah.

"Hallo! There is young Chenys!" he said, half-aloud. "He seems a bright young spark. I wonder how his head is this morning? He was going it pretty strong last night I thought. Good-morning, Chenys! How goes it?"

Ian stood in the door, looking dapper enough in his uniform, but white and pecky.

"Only so-so, thanks!" he growled peevishly, dropping into a chair.

"You left us early last night."

Ian shot a lowering glance at Lieutenant Bob, as if to see what danger lurked ahead.

All night he had been tossing on a bed of thorns. In his panic at the approach of the "Rounds" he had slipped away under cover of the fog, and never halted until he reached his quarters and gained his bed-room.

Lieutenant Bob had seen him enter, being only a few paces from the door as he fled in. Ian did not know this, however, and the fair, sunburnt face and languid eye, peering at him through the monocle, were as innocent-looking as a babe's.

Ian at that moment would have given a hundred pounds to know what had happened after his flight.

Had Ronald confessed the truth to save himself? That would be unlike Ronald; yet, if he had, it was no more than Ian could expect.

"You left us early," Lieutenant Bob had said, and the casual look of inquiry was still on his face.

"Yes—comparatively, that is. You seem to keep late hours here in the Wessex," Ian answered. "I had a bit of a headache, and I slipped away for a breath of fresh air before turning in. Coming back to my quarters, by the way, I tripped on that infernally narrow staircase outside my room, made my nose bleed, and smashed my hand up."

He held up a bruised and puffy right fist for his comrade's inspection.

Lieutenant Bob's eyes went up just a shade at this, but his eyes were as lazy as ever.

"Now, I wonder what you've spun me that yarn for?" he asked himself. "I was at the gate close on your heels, though you didn't see me, and I distinctly heard you walk straight upstairs and enter your room."

He looked across at Ian, who was nursing his hand ostentatiously.

"That's hard lines," he said quietly. "It's a rotten awkward turn, I know, and you must have had a precious bad fall to hurt yourself like that."

"I did. I came down with a crash like an earthquake."

"You little liar!" thought Lieutenant Bob. "Now, I wonder what your game is, really? By Jove, I believe I've got it!"

The solution so startled him that he sat forward in his chair with a bounce, as though someone had stuck a hatpin through the stuffing into his shoulder.

"By Jove, just ten o'clock!" he said, in pretended surprise, for Ian, he could see, was alarmed. "It's time I was off to the orderly-room. You'd better come along, and I will show you round."

"Delighted!" said Ian. "What's on now?"

"Oh, 'office hour,' as we call it, at ten sharp! That's the time when, among other things, the colonel takes the list of 'overnights' in the guard-room. There's one man of our company I particularly wanted to hear turned off!"

"Who's that?" asked Ian sharply.

"A man named Chester. But come along, or we shall be late!"

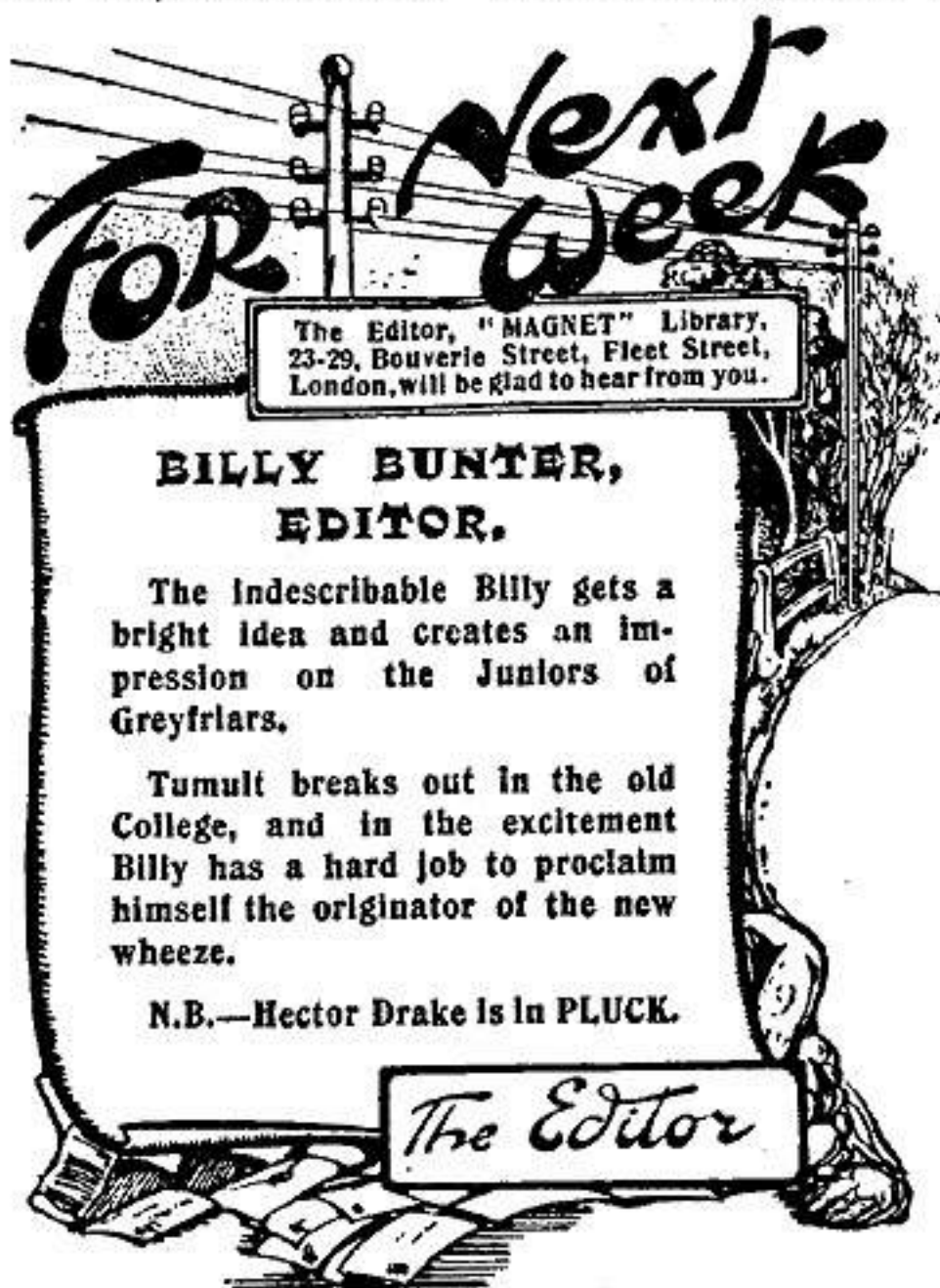
"I don't think—I don't think I'll come!"

"Oh, yes; you must! It's no good you being bashful. I know exactly what it is when one first joins."

"It isn't that!" blurted Ian.

"Oh, yes, it is!" chaffed Bob, with jovial insistence. "You put yourself under my wing, and I'll pilot you round! Besides that, the old man likes to see his young subs. early to the fore in everything. Come along!"

(Another long instalment of this splendid Army story next Tuesday. Please order your copy of "The Magnet" Library in advance.)



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