

"THE HEAD'S HOLIDAY!"

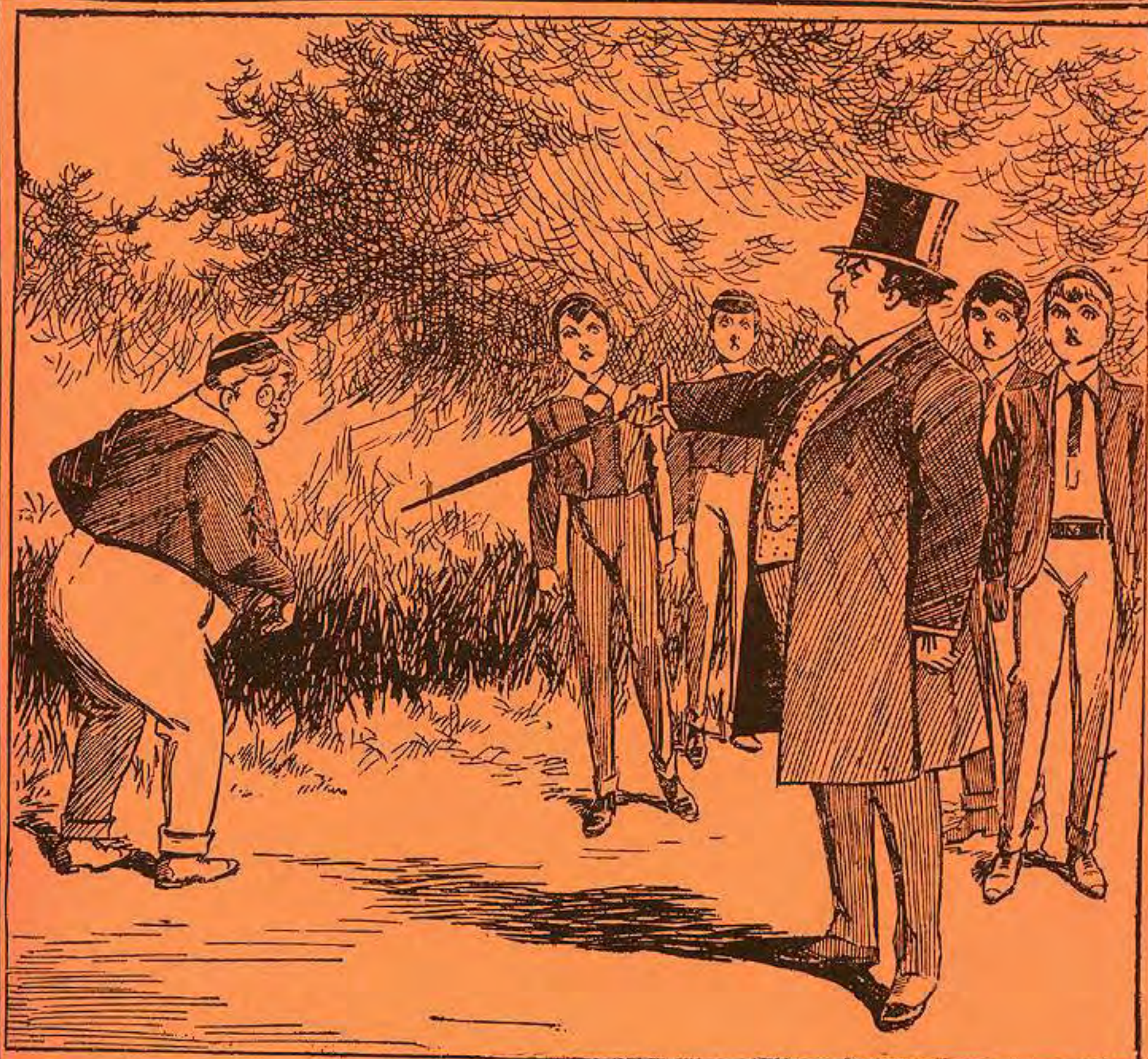
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LIBRARY VOLUME 3.
NUMBER 82.

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Grand School Tale of
THE CHUMS OF GREYFRIARS.

By
Frank
Richards.



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turned round with a gasp of affright!

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The Head's Holiday



A Splendid, Long,
Complete School Tale
of
Harry Wharton & Co.

BY

FRANK
RICHARDS.



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Change at Greyfriars.

"THE Head looks queer!"

It was Bob Cherry, of the Remove—the Lower Fourth at Greyfriars—who made the remark.

The fellows were all looking at the Head. They had been assembled in hall for the doctor to address the school, and when Dr. Locke came in, all eyes were turned upon him.

The Head did indeed look, as Bob expressed it, "queer." He was very pale, and moved very slowly, and there was a worn look about his face that struck most of the boys at once.

"By Jove, he does!" murmured Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove. "I wonder what he is going to say to us."

"Perhaps an appeal for less noise," murmured Nugent. "He may be going to request Bob, as a special favour, to take his feet off—I mean his boots off—when he goes upstairs."

"Look here, Nugent——"

"You see, it would make two stone difference in your weight, Bob——"

"Shut up, you ass!" whispered Wharton. "Quelch has his eye on you."

The faint sound of whispering had caught Mr. Quelch's ears, and the Remove-master was looking round with a frown.

The chums of the Remove were silent at once, assuming, mechanically, lamb-like expressions, as they were wont to do when the eye of authority was upon them.

Mr. Quelch frowned heavily at Bunter, the worst chatterbox in the Form, and turned his head away again. But his frown did not worry Billy Bunter, who was too short-sighted to see it.

The Head looked at the gathered school, which waited in respectful silence for him to speak.

Most of the fellows were sympathetic. The Head was greatly liked and respected at Greyfriars, and he certainly looked ill.

"I have a few words to say to you this morning, before lessons commence," said the Head quietly. "I am going away for a few days. I have been far from well lately, and my doctor has advised me to seek a change. A gentleman of

my acquaintance, upon whom I place the utmost reliance, has kindly consented to take my place here while I am absent."

There was a slight buzz.

A new Head at Greyfriars—even for only a few days—would mean a change at the old school—a great change in many respects.

"I am leaving this afternoon," said Dr. Locke. "I expect Mr. Lothrop to arrive before I go. I am not quite certain, however, that he will be able to do so. Therefore, as I may not be able to introduce him to the school, I am speaking a few words on the subject now. You will find Mr. Lothrop an able, a kind, and an agreeable head-master, for the few days that I am absent. I may mention that he is head-master of a school, and is now having a holiday, part of which he has kindly consented to sacrifice to oblige me. I wish to make an appeal to you all before I go. My words are particularly addressed to the Junior Forms."

Dr. Locke's eyes rested for a moment upon the ranks of the Remove.

He knew very well which Form at Greyfriars was likeliest to give trouble, if any excuse could be found for the same.

The Removites tried to look unconscious.

But that was not easy, for the Upper Fourth and the Shell and the Fifth all turned their heads a little to stare at the reprobate Form, with the most severe frowns they could muster up.

"I appeal to you to make Mr. Lothrop's task easy while he is here," went on the Head. "I hope you will all obey him cheerfully, and not cause him to regret his kindness in doing me this service. Some of the juniors in this school are prone to indulge in an excess of liveliness on occasions."

"Good old Remove!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Three shies a penny! Anybody can have a hand in chucking something at the Remove."

"I have never been harsh in condemning boyish spirits," said the doctor. "But there is a limit, and I trust that the Lower Forms will be careful to keep this limit in view during the next week or so. I trust that they will give their masters the smallest possible trouble, and make everything work quite smoothly while Mr. Lothrop is here. I am sure my appeal will not be wasted."

The Head paused.

Wingate, the captain of the school, stepped out of the ranks of the Sixth.

"You may rely upon us, sir," said Wingate. "You can rely on the prefects to keep the juniors in order; but under the circumstances I am sure the kids—ahem!—I mean the junior boys, will play the game and meet your wishes in every way, sir."

"Blessed if I don't think somebody ought to speak up for the Remove," growled Bob Cherry. "I don't see why we're to be classed as black sheep. You're Form captain, Wharton; get up on your hind legs and bark."

Wharton hesitated.

He did not wish to appear to put himself forward: but while he was thinking it over, Hurree Janset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur, stepped out from the Remove.

There was a delighted murmur from the juniors.

Hurree Singh—more familiarly known as "Inky," from his beautiful complexion—was the most urbane of juniors, one of the politest, and one of the longest-winded. If he began an assurance to the Head, in his best Oriental style, and in the native Bhanipur variety of the English language, it was certain to be funny.

Mr. Quelch made a slight gesture to the nabob, but Hurree Singh, bent upon assuring the Head that he had nothing to apprehend from the Remove, did not observe it. He advanced into full view of the dais where the doctor stood, and received a surprised glance from Dr. Locke.

"If you pleasefully deign to listen, revered Head sahib—"

"Have you anything to say to me, Hurree Singh?"

"The yesfulness is terrific, worthy sahib. I desirefully wish to speak on the behalf-fulness of my honourable Form," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "Your esteemed and august self has expressly declared a wish that the honourable Lower Forms in this respected school shall play the game cricketfully during your welcome absence."

There was a suppressed giggle.

The Head smiled slightly.

"Really, Hurree Singh—"

"I desire, speaking for my worthy self and the honourable Form to which I have the august happiness to belong, to assure the revered sahib that his fearfulness is ungrounded. The Remove will set an honourable example to the esteemed Senior Forms in the terrific behaviorfulness."

"You—"

"They will play up gamefully, and back up the new Head like winking," said Hurree Singh. "I desirefully wish, with my hand upon my esteemed heart, to assure the noble and respected doctor that he can rely upon us. We are all there."

THE MAGNET.—No. 82.

NEXT
TUESDAY:

"BUNTER THE BULLY."

We are, as the honourable Shakespeare says in his justly celebrated poem, 'We are Seventeen—'

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"As the honourable poet Shakespeare says in his poem—"

"Really, Hurree Singh—"

"Never mind the honourable Shakespeare, Inky," said Bob Cherry in a stage whisper. "Get on with the washing!"

"As the honourable Shakespeare says," repeated the Indian junior obstinately, "To be or not to have the slings and arrows of outrageous fortunes, which are nobler in the minds to suffer than the little life that is rounded by a sleep. Therefore we shall playfully make the game, and the relyfulness upon our honourable selves is complete. I feel called upon to make this personified assurance to the honourable doctor, that while he is awayfully absent he may be easy in his mind, and bet his esteemed boots that the Lower Forms are setting the revered example to their elders."

And Hurree Singh, having delivered himself of his sentiments, stepped back into his place with a smile of conscious merit.

The whole hall was giggling.

The quotation from Shakespeare appeared about the funniest part of the nabob's speech, but it was all pretty good, to judge by the grins and chuckles on all sides.

The Head passed his hand over his mouth to conceal a smile.

"I accept this assurance in the name of the Remove," he said. "I shall expect a perfectly clean record for the Form when I return."

"Hear, hear!" shouted Bob Cherry.

And the school was dismissed.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The New Head.

WHEN the Greyfriars fellows came out of the class-rooms that morning, the general talk ran on the subject of the new head-master.

The boys were curious to know something about him.

They knew what the Head was like, and they were satisfied with him; but what was the other fellow like?

"You never can tell," said Bob Cherry oracularly. "When Quelch was seedy, and we had a substitute to take the Remove, you remember what a high old time we had."

"What ho!" said Nugent. "I don't think we shall forget the Chesham ass in a hurry. Let's hope the new Head won't be anything like that."

"The hopefulness is terrific," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "But under any circelfulness we are bound to play up gamefully, after the assurance I gave the revered Head sahib in the name of the Form."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Well, we'll give the johnny a chance, anyway," he remarked. "Lucky it's a half-holiday this afternoon; we shall be able to see something of him before we settle down to work under the new regime."

"Might get up a sort of ovation to meet him," suggested Nugent. "Band of the Junior Operatic Society, playing stirring tunes—"

"Ha, ha! That would be a good beginning. I must say."

After dinner, the Head's carriage was seen to draw up outside his house, which faced on the green old Close. The Head came out, with Mrs. Locke, and little Miss Molly. The three drove away, the boys near standing cap in hand as the carriage rolled down the drive. Harry Wharton gave a low whistle as the carriage disappeared through the gateway.

"The new chap hasn't arrived!"

"I believe the Head expected him to lunch," said Skinner. "I suppose he'll be along some time in the afternoon."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Cherry, I was thinking that if you fellows wanted

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A School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By Frank Richards.

to stand a feed or anything to celebrate the Head's going away, I could help—"

"Why, you fat young villain, we're sorry the Head's going." "Ye-es, of course. That's what I mean," said Bunter. "If you would like to stand a feed as a—a—a token of respect and regret for the Head's going away, I—"

"My word! He hasn't had dinner half an hour, and he ate enough for a regiment of dragoons!" exclaimed Bob Cherry in disgust. "Bunty, old man, we're not going to stand a feed. We can't even stand you—buzz off!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Scat! May as well fill up the time by going into the woods," Bob Cherry remarked. "I've often intended to explore that old priory in the woods on the way to Lindale. Who's coming?"

"Are you going to take any grub, Cherry?"

"No, oyster."

"Got any there already?"

"No."

"Then I'm jolly well not coming," said Billy Bunter.

And he walked away. Bob Cherry looked inquiringly at Harry Wharton & Co. Bob was in No. 13 Study now, and generally chummed with Mark Linley, the lad from Lancashire, his study mate. But the Famous Four joined together as of old for any little excursion or row that might be on the carpet.

Harry Wharton nodded.

"I'll come," he said. "I walked past the priory once, and wanted to look at it. They say there are secret chambers underneath the ruins."

"I shouldn't wonder. Follow your uncle."

And the juniors strolled out of the gates. It was a clear, bright summer's afternoon, and as they turned out of the hot, dusty lane into the woods, the green shade and shelter was very cool and grateful.

It was a walk of a mile or more to the old priory in the wood. A path ran by it, a short cut from Lindale to the railway-station at Friardale; but though many used the path, the ruins were seldom visited, at all events after dark. Tradition had it that they were haunted, and though no one could be discovered who had actually seen the ghost walk, the belief of the country people was not weakened by that. Ghosts, however, had no terrors for the Greyfriars juniors, especially in the daylight.

They strolled through the shadowy woods. Bob Cherry cast a rather wistful glance down the footpath that led towards Pegg Bay—where Cliff House, Miss Penelope Primrose's school for girls, fronted the North Sea. He was thinking that a cycle ride with Marjorie Hazeldene would have been very pleasant that sunny afternoon.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! there's a cyclist on the path!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Cheek!" said Wharton.

"Yes, rather! Wait till he comes by, and bump him."

The juniors grinned and scuttled into the bushes. The footpath was a narrow one, and cyclists were forbidden to ride there, though they might wheel their machines. The Greyfriars juniors might have ridden it themselves, perhaps, if they had been in a hurry; but that did not make any difference. It was against the rules to ride there, and the cyclist was to be bumped.

There was a whirr of tyres over the grass of the footpath. Through the thick green bushes the juniors saw him very indistinctly—they could make out a Norfolk jacket and a cloth cap, and that was all.

As he came abreast, Harry Wharton gave the signal.

"Bump him!"

And the juniors rushed out of their ambush.

The cycle was stopped, and the cyclist yanked off the saddle and bumped into the grass in the twinkling of an eye.

The astounded rider gave a yell of surprise, and struggled. Bob Cherry uttered a shout.

"Hold on! Ha, ha, ha! It's one of our fellows."

"My hat!"

They released the cyclist, and he sat up, with a very red face.

"You silly asses—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You frabjous idiots!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was Hazeldene of the Remove. He had evidently been over to Cliff House to see his sister Marjorie. He rose to his feet, glaring at the Removites.

"You burbling lunatics! What's the matter with you?"

"We didn't know it was you," said Harry, laughing. "We were upholding the rights of pedestrians on the footpath."

"Why, you've ridden here yourself!"

"My dear chap, that makes no difference to the principle of the thing."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hazeldene snorted.

"You've given me a bump," he growled. "Gimme my machine. You're a set of dangerous maniacs—more dangerous than the chap who's just escaped from Grimwood."

"Chap escaped from Grimwood?"

"Yes," growled Hazeldene discontentedly. "A lunatic chap has got out, and has been free twenty-four hours, so they are saying in Pegg. He's a harmless lunatic, you know; but Miss Primrose is alarmed, and won't let any of the girls come

THE MAGNET.—No. 82.

NEXT
TUESDAY:

"BUNTER THE BULLY."

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

out till he's been captured. Rotten, isn't it? I went over to take Marjorie for a spin, and she's gated, because of this Grimwood chap."

"Hard cheese."

"Blessed if I didn't think he'd got hold of me, too, when you duffers collared me," grunted Hazeldene. "So-long!"

And he jumped upon his machine and rode away. The juniors, laughing over the affair, which seemed funnier to them than it did to Hazeldene, walked on towards the ruined priory. They had reached the cross paths, a short distance from the ruins which were embosomed in the woods, when a gentleman came in sight, entering upon the footpath through the thickets.

They glanced at him carelessly. He was a man with a plump, pleasant face, a pair of very bright and sparkling eyes, and a continual jovial smile. He was dressed in black frock coat and silk hat, and carried a tightly rolled umbrella.

He glanced at the boys, and seemed to regard them with some interest.

As they were passing him, he held up his hand for them to stop.

"Can you tell me which of these paths leads to Greyfriars?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said Wharton, raising his cap. "We've just come from there. It's this path—a straight walk to the lane."

"Thank you. Perhaps you belong to Greyfriars?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ah! Then what are you doing out of school?"

It did not appear to Harry that this was any concern of the stranger's, but he answered politely enough.

"It's a half-holiday at Greyfriars, sir. It's always a half-holiday on Wednesday afternoons."

"Ah! I perceive. What Form do you belong to?"

"The Remove, sir—the Lower Fourth."

"Ah!" The gentleman fished an eyeglass out of his pocket, jammed it into his eye, and regarded the juniors more attentively. "I am glad to have met you."

The juniors exchanged glances of surprise. There did not seem to them the remotest reason why the stranger should take any interest in them. But his face was so jolly and cheerful that they rather took a fancy to him.

"Thank you, sir," said Bob Cherry solemnly; "the pleasure is reciprocated, I assure you. We are awfully pleased to have met you."

"Shut up, you ass!" whispered Nugent.

"Bosh! Why shouldn't I say the polite thing?"

The gentleman laughed.

"Where were you going?" he asked.

"To explore the ruined priory, sir."

"Ah! A lonely place, is it not?"

"Yes, a little, sir."

"Then I am afraid I cannot allow you to go," said the gentleman, shaking his head. "You may not have heard that there is a lunatic escaped from Grimwood Asylum. It might not be safe. The man might be lurking in the ruins—a very safe place, I should think, for a lunatic to lurk."

"Possibly," said Harry Wharton. "But—you will excuse me, sir, we're not afraid of the lunatic, and we don't mean to turn back."

"But I cannot permit you to go."

Harry Wharton smiled.

"I don't want to be rude, sir, but we shall not ask your permission. You are a stranger to us. Good-afternoon."

"Stop!"

"Really, sir—"

"You apparently are not aware who I am."

"I have never seen you before that I know of."

"Probably not; but you will see a great deal of me during the next week, I expect. My name is Henry Lothrop."

"Oh!"

And the juniors stared at the stranger blankly—a stranger no longer, but the new Head of Greyfriars in person!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter's Jump.

MR. LOTHROP laughed pleasantly as he met the surprised stares of the juniors. They took off their caps respectfully.

"I am sorry, sir," said Wharton at once. "Of course, I didn't know you."

"Quite so, my lad. I excuse you. How were you to know me? No one at Greyfriars knows me personally except the doctor—my old college friend, Locke. I trust the doctor is better now?"

"He was very queer this morning, sir."

"Ah! Has he gone yet?"

"He left in time for the half-past two train, sir."

"Then I have missed him. It was very unfortunate—through missing a train, and then walking from the station."

The new Head dropped his eyeglass again.

"You had better come with me to Greyfriars," he said. "You can show me the way, and we can make each other's acquaintance en route."

"With pleasure, sir," said Harry, with an effort. He was a dutiful boy enough, but it was hard to have the afternoon's excursion "messed up" in this way.

"I am sorry to spoil your excursion," said Mr. Lothrop gently, as if he read the junior's thoughts, as doubtless he did. "But, under the circumstances, I do not think the ruins would be a safe place for you to visit. I shall curtail the liberty of all the boys in this direction."

"Very well, sir."

They turned back the way they had come. The walk back was not so pleasant, needless to say, as the stroll out had been. Yet Mr. Lothrop made himself very agreeable. He chatted cheerfully with the boys, asked them their names, and asked them many questions about the school. Harry and Mark soon found themselves taking quite cheerily to him, while the other juniors walked mostly in silence. They came in sight of Greyfriars, and in the lane ran into a crowd of Removites. Billy Bunter was talking to a group of them, and they were grinning as if his statements were of an amusing kind. Wharton caught the word boxing, and he knew that Billy was descanting upon his latest hobby. Bunter had been very prominent as a boxer lately, and the juniors had "rotted" him elaborately over it, getting up a glove contest in which Bob Cherry had allowed Bunter to lick him—the said licking being watched by the Remove amid yells of laughter, which did not change Bunter's opinion that he had won a great victory. Indeed, Bunter, although things had been explained to him since, still remained of opinion that he was a great pugilist, and that he had given Bob Cherry the licking of his life. The curious part of it was that Billy, who was usually as humble as could possibly be to anybody more than half his size, had developed arrogant airs on the strength of his supposed victory, and was showing a side of his nature that had not been revealed before. The Remove generally regarded him as a worm; but it began to be seen that, given opportunities, he could have developed into a very fair specimen of a bully.

Bunter blinked round at the Famous Four as they came into the lane. He came over towards them, not knowing who they were with, of course.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up, Billy!"

"Look here, these chaps are saying I didn't lick Bob Cherry. What do you say about it, Cherry?"

"I say you're a silly ass!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! Look here, I told you that you fellows ought to stand a bit of a feed to celebrate the Head's illness——"

"Shut up!" muttered Nugent. Mr. Lothrop was close behind with Wharton and Linley, and Bunter's want of caution might have got him into trouble. But Billy Bunter only blinked disdainfully at the junior.

"I'm not going to shut up," he said, "and I'll thank you to talk to me a little bit more politely, Frank Nugent. I'm not going to be bullied."

"Eh?"

"If you want a thick ear you've only got to say so. I've licked Bob Cherry, and I can lick you."

Nugent could only stare at him dumbfounded.

"I've got something to say to you chaps," went on Bunter, with an air of consequence that astounded the Removites. "I think you ought to stand a feed. I've been disappointed about a postal order, and I'm stony. I'm hungry, too. Are you going to stand me a feed, Bob Cherry?"

"Not much."

"Then you can jolly well put up your fists."

Bob Cherry gasped.

"I've had enough of you chaps' airs and graces," said Bunter airily, while the fellows around looked on with broad grins. They knew what was the matter with Bunter, though Bob did not yet make it out. "I'm blessed if I'm going to stand any more of them. I don't see why Wharton should be captain of the Remove. In my opinion there ought to be a new election. Why shouldn't I have a chance?"

"You!"

"Et tu, Brute!" murmured Skinner.

"Yes. I'm going to take my proper place in the Form," said Billy Bunter. "And look here, there's not going to be any of this rot about knuckling under to the new Head. I think that it's time for the Remove to get its ears up, and I'm going to show the way. I've already made up my mind to jape the new Head——"

"Indeed!" said Mr. Lothrop, who had come up in time to hear that remark.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Blessed if I know you!" he said. "Don't you interrupt me——"

"I am the new Head!"

"Oh!"

"So you have made up your mind to jape me?" said Mr. Lothrop, with a genial smile.

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NEXT
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"BUNTER THE BULLY."

"Ow! I—I—I was only joking, sir. I—I——"

"I fear that I cannot allow a joke of that kind to pass. What is your name?"

"William George Bunter, sir, of the Remove."

"Well, I think I shall have to teach you obedience, Bunter."

"Ye-e-es, sir."

The new Head raised his umbrella and pointed to the ditch, deep and wide, and full of water, that ran beside the lane at this point. The boys, of whom there was now a great crowd round the spot, looked at him in surprise.

"Bunter!" rapped out Mr. Lothrop.

"Ye-e-es, sir."

"You must learn the lesson of obedience."

"Ye-e-es, sir."

"Jump into the ditch!"

Bunter fairly gasped.

"Eh, sir! Wh-w-w-what?"

"Jump into that ditch!"

"My only hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Did you ever!"

"Well, hardly ever!" gasped Nugent.

Harry Wharton looked utterly astounded. That a head-master should give such an order to a junior was amazing. He could not be in earnest; yet, if he were in jest, surely such a jest was not in keeping with the grave character of a head-master of a public school.

But Mr. Lothrop seemed in earnest.

The pleasant look was gone from his face, the pleasant tones from his voice. His face was hard, his eyes glinting, and his voice rang sharply.

Bunter blinked at him, and blinked at the ditch. Then he blinked round helplessly at the other fellows.

"I—I—I—I say, sir, you—y-y-you're j-j-joking?"

"I am not joking, Bunter. Jump into the ditch!"

"But, sir, I—I shall spoil my clothes."

"You will learn the priceless habit of obedience, which is more valuable than clothes. Obey me at once!"

"I—I—I—I say, you fellows," said Bunter feebly, "I—I——"

"I give you one minute," said Mr. Lothrop sternly. "If you do not obey me I shall expel you from Greyfriars."

Wharton started. Bunter met his eye pleadingly. In spite of his lately assumed airs, and his opinion that he would make a better Form-captain than Harry, he instinctively turned to Wharton for guidance at this moment.

But Harry could only nod to him. The order was astounding, but the Head of Greyfriars was entitled to obedience.

Bunter took a shivering little run towards the ditch. The fellows round simply held their breaths. Surely the new master would relent at the last moment.

There was no sign of relenting in Mr. Lothrop's face.

Bunter paused on the edge of the ditch, and cast a pleading glance backward. The new Head waved his umbrella threateningly, and Bunter, with a gasp of affright, plunged in.

He had meant to jump into the shallowest water at the edge, but the short-sighted junior missed his footing, and went staggering right in, and fell forward with a terrific splash.

"Oh—ow—er—groo—guggle!"

Bunter disappeared.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Quelch Is Astonished.

BILLY BUNTER was quite out of sight for a second.

When he rose into view a startling change had come over him.

Standing in the water to his waist, he blinked at the juniors through his wet spectacles. He was soaked through, of course, and smothered with mud. Mud and slime clung all over his face, and green ooze was festooned in his hair.

His aspect was so utterly ridiculous that the juniors could not help laughing, but Bunter did not laugh. He was gasping and gurgling.

"Ow! Help! Murder! I'm drowning!"

Harry Wharton dragged him out. Mr. Lothrop fixed a stern glance upon him.

"Let that be a lesson to you!" he exclaimed, and he marched in at the gates of Greyfriars, and disappeared from sight, leaving the drenched and muddy Billy surrounded by the astonished juniors.

"Well, if this doesn't take the cake!" ejaculated Ogilvy, with a loud whistle. "The man must be off his rocker."

"Groo—oo!"

"Mad as a hatter."

"Can't catch on at all."

"If this is how he is going to rule at Greyfriars there will be rows—big rows," said Bulstrode emphatically.

"What—ho—there will!"

"What does this mean?"

It was the sharp voice of Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove. He was returning from a quiet walk, with a book under his arm, and he stopped in utter amazement as he caught sight of the drenched and dripping Billy.

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By Frank Richards.

"If you p-p-please, sir——"

"Bunter! Is that you, sir?"

"Ye-e-es," stammered Bunter.

"How did you get into this state? Is it possible that anybody here has been brutal enough to throw the boy into a ditch?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, his brow darkening.

"I—I—I jumped in, sir."

"You—jumped—in!"

"Ye-e-es, sir."

"And why did you do that, Bunter?" asked the Remove-master, in an ominously quiet tone.

"The new Head ordered me to, sir."

"What!"

"The new Head—Mr. Lothrop—ordered me to."

"Take a thousand lines for impertinence, Bunter!"

"If you please, sir, it's true," said Harry Wharton.

Mr. Quelch stared at him.

"Wharton! Do you venture to join in this insolent jest?"

"It isn't a jest, sir. The other fellows will bear me out. I can't understand it—I don't pretend to. But Mr. Lothrop ordered Bunter to jump into the ditch."

"Impossible."

"It's true, sir," said Linley and Nugent and several others together.

The Remove-master looked utterly astounded.

"There must be some absurd mistake," he exclaimed. "I cannot possibly imagine Mr. Lothrop giving such an order. I have never seen him yet, it is true; but it is impossible that he could tell Bunter to jump into the ditch."

"But he did, sir."

"I shall inquire of Mr. Lothrop directly," said the Remove-master. "If this turns out to be a jest I am sorry for the jesters. Bunter, go in and change your things and wash yourself at once."

Billy Bunter crawled away. He left a trail of water and mud and green slime wherever he moved. Mr. Quelch, with a clouded brow, strode in at the gates. He walked straight into the School House, and the astounded boys remained in the Close discussing the strange event.

The Remove-master entered the hall, and started a little as a pleasant-faced gentleman, who had just divested himself of his gloves and silk hat, met him with a cheery smile.

"Ah! One of my masters, I suppose?"

Mr. Quelch looked directly at him.

"Are you Mr. Lothrop, the head-master's substitute, sir?"

"Exactly."

"I am pleased to meet you, sir. Of course, you have your credentials with you," said Mr. Quelch, with a faint glimmering idea that the affair might be a trick of some sort; exactly how and why he did not formulate in his mind.

Mr. Lothrop nodded and smiled.

"Certainly. The Doctor's letters and my own papers," he said. "My luggage will arrive from the station shortly, if it is not already here. Pray come into my study. I must ask you to show me the way to it."

"Certainly."

Mr. Quelch showed the way into the Head's study. The new master was to occupy the Head's old quarters. His manners were so pleasant that Mr. Quelch found himself, in spite of his uneasy surprise, taking quite a liking to him. His credentials were satisfactory enough, as the Remove-master could not doubt for a moment. Mr. Lothrop remarked how sorry he was that he had missed Dr. Locke.

"There has been a very curious occurrence, sir," said Mr. Quelch, as the new Head paused. "I have just seen a junior, who had been in the ditch——"

"Indeed!"

"And he had the amazing impertinence to declare that you had ordered him to jump into it, Mr. Lothrop."

The new Head smiled.

"Quite correct, Mr. Quelch."

The Remove-master jumped.

"You—you ordered Bunter to jump into the ditch?" he said faintly.

"Certainly."

"But—but—but may I ask why?"

"As a lesson in obedience. I have my own methods, Mr. Quelch," said the new Head, rubbing his hands, with twinkling eyes. "I shall make some extensive changes at Greyfriars while I am here."

"Excuse me, sir, as your stay is so short——"

"A week, I believe."

"Exactly. May I ask if you have Dr. Locke's authority to make extensive changes in that short space of time?"

"What a question, Mr. Quelch! Did not Dr. Locke inform you that I was to take his place here, and that his whole authority was delegated to me?"

"Yes, that is true."

"Did he not say that I was to be treated with the same respect that was shown to himself?"

"Something to that effect, certainly."

"Under those circumstances, Mr. Quelch, can you question the authority of my actions?"

"I—I—I suppose not."

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"BUNTER THE BULLY."

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"I should say not, Mr. Quelch," said the new Head, with emphasis, "I should say not, sir."

"But—but—but—the junior may take cold."

"Let him take cold."

"His health may be injured."

"Is his health so important as the establishment of a principle?"

"Really, sir——"

"I am a disciplinarian, Mr. Quelch. Now, if I order you to jump into a ditch, I should expect you to obey me," said Mr. Lothrop.

Mr. Quelch staggered.

"Eh! Did I hear you aright?"

"I hope such an occasion will never arise, certainly, but if I gave you the order, I should expect instant obedience."

"I can only conclude that you are jesting, sir," said Mr. Quelch, with frigid dignity, "as I am not in an especially merry mood myself, I will take my leave."

And Mr. Quelch quitted the study very abruptly.

He closed the door hard, and went down the passage. He passed Harry Wharton and his chums, and they looked at him curiously; but he did not glance at them. Mr. Quelch was in a state of amazement that he was not likely soon to recover from. He passed on to his own study, walking like a man in a dream.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Greyfriars Is Astonished.

THE astonishment caused by Billy Bunter's adventure did not soon wear off.

The fat junior was called upon to relate the circumstances a score of times, and in his usual style, he worked in variations with every repetition. But the fellows had to believe that this time Bunter was not wholly romancing, for Harry Wharton & Co. had been eye-witnesses of the astounding occurrence.

Bunter had been ordered to jump into the ditch—ordered to do it by Dr. Locke's substitute—the new Head of Greyfriars.

So much was certain.

What did it mean?

Bob Cherry's suggested explanation, that the new head-master was "off his rocker," seemed to be the only plausible one.

Nothing else could account for it.

* Yet the manners of the new head-master were so pleasant that he had made a very favourable impression, in spite of the surprise he caused in the case of Bunter.

Mr. Quelch did not know what to make of him. But Mr. Capper, the master of the Upper Fourth, and Mr. Prout of the Fifth, liked him very much at the first meeting. The masters all dined with him that evening, and they found him exceedingly pleasant.

The boys, too, liked what they saw of him. He spoke to Wingate on the subject of the school sports in a way that went right to the Captain's heart.

Wingate's chief object in life, at present, was to make Greyfriars First the finest public school eleven in the country, and Mr. Lothrop seemed to fully understand and appreciate the idea.

"I hope I shall see a big match while I am here," said Mr. Lothrop. "Have you any good first eleven fixtures for this week?"

"Yes, sir—there's the Milberry match on Saturday, the last big one of the season for us," said Wingate, eagerly. "We shall be very glad for you to see us play, sir."

"I shall play for you."

Wingate was startled.

"You, sir!"

"Certainly."

The captain was nonplussed for a moment. Of course, it was not unusual for masters to play in the first eleven at a school. But the Head seemed too grave and reverend a person for anything of the sort.

"Of course, we should be delighted, sir," said Wingate.

Mr. Lothrop laughed pleasantly.

"I used to captain the first eleven when I was second-master at St. Austin's," he said; "You will like my play I think."

"I am sure of it, sir. It will be a great honour to us. Milberry play two masters in their team, so it will be quite fair on them."

"Very good. I shall look in when you are at practice to-morrow, Winchester—I think your name is Winchester——"

"Wingate, sir."

"Ah, yes, Wingate. I shall come and see your practice. By the way, do you find that you have time for practice?"

"Time, sir."

"Yes. In view of Saturday's match, I give you permission to take any amount of time away from classes, for training."

"You are very kind, sir."

"Not at all."

And Mr. Lothrop nodded and walked away.

"The new Head's a jolly decent chap," Wingate confided

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later to Mannering of the Sixth. "I don't quite make him out, in some ways; but he's a jolly decent chap, and understands cricket."

Wingate was not the only fellow who didn't quite make him out. Blundell and Bland, of the Fifth, encountered the new Head as he was being taken on a tour of inspection of Greyfriars, by Mr. Prout. The Head stopped them and spoke to them. He chatted pleasantly to them for a few minutes, and then offered Blundell a cigar. The captain of the Fifth stared at him and at the cigar-case in blank astonishment.

"You smoke?" said Mr. Lothrop, pleasantly.

"Smoke, sir?"

"Yes. Try these cigars; you will like them."

"T—t—those cigars, sir?"

"Certainly."

Blundell looked helplessly at his Form-master. Mr. Prout stood rooted to the floor. He said afterwards to Mr. Capper that he had had some surprises in his time, but that this fairly took him off his feet.

"Perhaps you do not smoke?" said the new Head genially.

"N-n-n-no, sir." "We—we are not allowed in the Fifth."

"Dear me! Perhaps you smoke, Brand—your name is Brand?"

"Bland, sir."

"Ah, yes, Bland. Do you smoke?"

"N-n-n-no, sir."

"Neither you nor Bungle—"

"Blundell, sir."

"Ah yes, Blundell. How extraordinary."

"Really, sir," said Mr. Prout, much scandalized, "Really, sir, the boys are not allowed to smoke at Greyfriars. Really, sir, I am surprised—you surprise me very much indeed. You must excuse me for saying so, sir, but you do indeed surprise me very much."

Mr. Lothrop gave a slight start.

"Upon my word!" he exclaimed, "How absent-minded of me! I am a very absent-minded man, Mr. Snout—"

"Prout, sir!"

"Of course, Prout. I am a very absent-minded man—indeed, it has been suggested, by way of a joke, that the mind is quite absent. Ha, ha, ha."

"Ha, ha, ha," echoed Mr. Prout, feebly.

"Of course they do not smoke. It would make them sick, eh? Quite right. Bungle and Stand, you are quite right not to smoke. Good evening Brand and Chungle."

"G-g-g-good evening, sir."

The new Head walked on with Mr. Prout, leaving the two Fifth-Formers staring at one another helplessly. Blundell finally tapped his forehead in a significant way, and Bland nodded solemnly.

The new Head chuckled as he walked on. He seemed to be very much amused by the incident.

Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Upper Fourth were peeping round a corner for a glance at the new Head, and he suddenly called to them.

"Stand out, there!"

"My hat!" murmured Temple, "He's spotted us—he's got the eyes of a hawk."

"Oh, rather," said Dabney.

The Upper Fourth fellows came up demurely. The new Head looked at them, asked them their names and their Form, and shook hands with them.

"So you wished to see me," he said genially.

"Yes, sir," said Temple. "We—er—we wished to pay our respects, sir."

"Very good. I am very glad to hear you say so, Rumble—"

"Temple, sir."

"I say Rumble," said Mr. Lothrop, with asperity, "Your name is Rumble?"

Temple stared blankly.

"It's Temple, if you please, sir."

"Boy, do not contradict me!" thundered the new Head.

Temple almost staggered.

"N-n-n-no, sir."

"Your name is Rumble," said Mr. Lothrop, severely. "It's no good telling me that I am absent-minded, and forget names. You may go, Rumble. You will do a thousand lines."

"W-w-w-what, sir?"

"You will write out a thousand times 'I must not forget that my name is Rumble!'" said Mr. Lothrop, in a terrifying voice.

"Ye-e-es, sir."

"Go!"

Temple, Dabney & Co. staggered, rather than walked, away. Mr. Prout was almost speechless.

"B-b-b-but the boy's name is really Temple, sir," he gasped out at last.

"He distinctly told me Rumble."

"Oh, no, sir, he said Temple."

"Rumble!"

"Temple!"

"Sir!"

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"BUNTER THE BULLY."

"Excuse me——!"

"Rumple!"

"Temple!"

"Really, Mr. Trout——"

"Prout, sir, if you please."

"Yes, of course," said the new Head, laughing heartily. "Of course, sir. I am a very absent-minded man."

And Mr. Prout agreed that he was.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Head Calls on No. 1 Study.

"BLESSED if I know what to make of him!"

Bob Cherry delivered that opinion, sitting on the table in No. 1 Study, with his hands in his pockets, and his long legs stretched out across the rug to the fender. He was speaking, of course, of the new Head.

Wharton, Nugent, and Hurree Singh were in their study, and Billy Bunter was making a brew of toffee at the fire, and Bob Cherry had looked in to give his opinion on the subject of Mr. Lothrop.

"Blessed if I know, either," said Harry Wharton, "It was surprising enough to see him order Bunter into the ditch. But since then——"

"He's been surprising everybody," said Bob Cherry, "He can't remember a chap's name for a minute. He met me in the passage just now and called me Cheryble."

"Ha, ha! He called Inky Holy Spring."

Hurree Singh nodded. He was used to variations on his name. When he was not Inky, he was Hurry Up or Holy Jampot. But he had never heard any of the variations from a head-master before.

"Funny beggar altogether," said Nugent, "He seems jolly good-natured though."

Bunter blinked up from the fire.

"Jolly good-natured to make a chap tumble into a ditch. I came jolly near catching a cold. I only saved myself by feeding the cold in time. If there hadn't been a lot of grub in the cupboard, I should have succumbed."

"As it was, the grub succumbed, as it usually does when you're about," growled Nugent. "Nice tea we had, too, after it."

"I suppose you didn't want me to perish of cold in this study."

"Not a bit; I'd much rather you choose some other study."

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

Tap!

It was a knock at the door.

"Come in, fathead!" called out Nugent.

"Thank you."

It was the new Head's voice. Mr. Lothrop opened the door and entered. Nugent turned scarlet.

"I—I beg your pardon, sir. I thought it was one of the fellows."

Mr. Lothrop laughed. His bright, strangely-sparkling eyes roamed round the study.

"I excuse you. I am making a round of the school before bedtime. Let me see, you boys belong to the Fourth Form, do you not?"

"The Lower Fourth, sir."

"Ah, yes! Your name is Puggles?"

"Nugent, sir."

"Puggles," said Mr. Lothrop sternly, "I hope you are not going to contradict me, Puggles."

"N-n-no, sir," gasped Nugent.

"Very good, Puggles. I am looking into all the studies to see if there are any improvements that can be suggested by the boys. Have you anything to complain of?"

"No, thank you, sir," said Harry Wharton.

"Can you suggest any improvement in the arrangement of the studies?"

"N-n-no, sir."

"Would you like any extra gas burners put in, or the walls repapered?" asked Mr. Lothrop, in the most benevolent way.

The juniors stared, as well they might. Dr. Locke had been a kind head-master, but he had never thought of inquiring into or meeting their wishes in this way.

"Well, sir, we wouldn't mind the study being repapered," said Harry Wharton. "Of course, it is for you to decide."

"Not at all. I will make a note of it." The new Head made a pencilled note on his shirt cuff: "Study repapered, in pink. You prefer pink?"

"Ye-e-es, sir."

"Good! In order to make quite a success of it, I shall do the work myself."

ANSWERS

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"Y-y-y-you, sir!"

"Certainly. You did not know that I was a very good amateur paperhanger, of course. When I was a master at St. Austin's, I was captain of the paper-hanging eleven."

"W-w-w-what, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" exclaimed the Head, suddenly laughing. "A little joke."

"Oh, I see, sir," murmured Wharton, wondering where on earth the joke came in, and whether the new master had been drinking.

"I will see to the paper-hanging to-morrow morning," said the Head. "Can you suggest anything else? I intend to make some reforms while I am here, and I shall lose no time, in case the other fellow should turn up."

"The other fellow, sir?"

"Yes. At present I am the other fellow, so to speak, but the case might be reversed at any time."

"Oh! You are alluding to the Head, sir?"

"Exactly. I have shut him up, you know."

"You have shut Dr. Locke up?"

"No, no, the other fellow."

"The—the other fellow?"

"Exactly."

"I—I don't quite understand, sir."

"You are a very obtuse boy, Harrington."

"Wharton, sir."

"Harrington, I say. Are you going to contradict me, Harrington?"

"N-n-n-no, sir."

"Very good. I hope not, Harrington. Have you any suggestions to make?"

The juniors could only come to one conclusion. If the new Head was not mad, he had been drinking. Astounding as it was for Dr. Locke to have selected a man with such a weakness to take his place at Greyfriars, there was no other explanation possible.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I say, you fellows, as the Head is so kind I think——"

Mr. Lothrop jerked out his eyeglass, screwed it into his eye, and gazed attentively at Billy Bunter.

"Ah! I have seen you before, I suppose?"

"Ye-e-es, sir."

"Your name is Thompson?"

"Bunter, sir; William George Bunter."

"Herbert Henry Thompson," said the new Head, frowning.

"Do you mean to contradict me?"

"N-n-n-n-no, sir," stuttered Bunter.

"Very good. What suggestion have you to make, Thompson?"

"I—I was thinking, sir, as you are so kind, that—that there might be an improvement in the meals, sir," ventured Bunter. "I never get enough to eat, sir."

"Ah, indeed! What would you prefer?"

"I should like more at every meal, sir, and more variety. I don't see why we shouldn't have steak and kidneys for breakfast, as well as bacon, sir, and I could do with some eggs and sausages as well."

"Very good. I'll make a note of it."

"And some extra holidays, sir," said Bunter, encouraged.

"A half-holiday three times a week instead of twice would be a good wheeze, sir, don't you think so?"

"Excellent. I will grant a half-holiday every day in the week."

"Hurrah!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Ah, I see you are making omelettes!" said the Head, glancing at the pan in Billy Bunter's hand.

"Toffee, sir."

"I said omelettes, Robinson—your name is Robinson, is it not?"

"N-o-o-o—ye-e-es, sir."

"You are making omelettes?"

"Ye-e-es, sir."

"Good. I will taste them. May I sit down?"

Wharton rushed to place a chair for the distinguished guest.

Billy Bunter, in an almost stupefied state of amazement, served up the toffee. It was far too hot to eat, but the Head did not attempt to eat it. He looked it over, sniffed at it, and then glanced sternly at Bunter.

"Are you certain the eggs were fresh?" he demanded.

Bunter nearly fell down.

"Eggs, sir?"

"Yes, Thompson. The eggs you made this omelette of."

"Ye-e-es, sir," murmured Bunter feebly. "They were quite fresh, sir. We had 'em laid 'specially, sir."

"Ahem! I do not care for the omelette after all," said the Head, picking up the plate and rising from his seat. "I wonder whether I could take the top pane in one shot."

He was looking at the window. The juniors stood dumb-founded. Mr. Lothrop lifted the plate, and sent it whirling to the window.

Crash!

It smashed through one of the top panes, and plate and broken glass went shivering down into the Close.

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NEXT

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ONE

HALFPENNY.

"Good-night, boys!" said the Head agreeably.

"G-g-g-good-night, sir!"

There were rapid footsteps in the passage, and Carberry the prefect reached the door, with a cane in his hand, as the Head turned towards it. The prefect burst angrily into the study. The juniors there were old enemies of his.

"Who's that smashing glass here—oh, I beg your pardon, sir! I did not see you."

"Who are you?" demanded the new Head.

"Carberry of the Sixth, sir—a prefect," said the senior submissively. "I heard a sound of breaking glass, sir, and I came to inquire——"

"Indeed! I suppose I am at liberty to break a pane of glass if I choose, Mulberry?" said the Head sternly.

Carberry almost staggered.

"Y-yo-yo-you, sir?" he gasped faintly.

"Yes, I, sir. Give me that cane, Blackberry."

Carberry handed over the cane.

"Now hold out your hand."

"What, sir!" said Carberry, scarcely able to believe his ears. The Sixth were never caned at Greyfriars, and a prefect, too—it was astounding, unheard-of, unthinkable. It seemed to Carberry that he was dreaming.

"Hold out your hand!" thundered the Head.

"W-w-w-what, sir!"

"For the last time——"

"The Sixth are never caned, sir."

"Nonsense!"

"What have I done, sir?"

"Done! You have broken that window," said the Head, pointing to the window with the cane. "I distinctly heard you fling a plate through it."

Carberry staggered against the wall. He told Loder later that he could have been knocked down with a feather.

"Oh, sir! I—I——"

"Hold out your hand!"

"I refuse, sir," said Carberry, with spirit. "The Sixth are never caned. I shall complain to Dr. Locke when he returns."

"Or the other fellow, eh?" said Mr. Lothrop, with a laugh.

"W-w-w-what, sir?"

"I shall cane you severely," said Mr. Lothrop, advancing upon the prefect. Carberry fled, and the new Head pursued him, and got in several sharp cuts before the prefect, yelling with rage and terror, escaped.

The chums of the Remove watched the two disappear down the passage, and then gathered in the study again with awed faces.

There was a general silence; no one knew what to say, or what to think; and when at last Bob Cherry broke the silence, he voiced the general feeling by his exclamation,

"I'm blowed!"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for the Sixth.

THE next morning Greyfriars was in a state of fluttering excitement such as had never been experienced before at the old school.

Some of the fellows openly expressed a doubt as to whether they were on their heads or their heels, while others opined that it was all a dream, and that they would wake up later and find that Dr. Locke hadn't been ill, and hadn't gone away at all.

More prosaic fellows were of opinion that the new Head was given to partaking too freely of the wine when it is red, and that he had been in a state of exhilaration when he had arrived at Greyfriars, and had kept it up during the evening.

But even if that were the case, it was startling enough. Such undignified conduct in Dr. Locke's substitute was amazing.

The whole school was in a state of expectancy.

If the Head were in a normal state that morning, his escapades the previous night could be attributed to drink. If not——

The only alternative theory was that he was "off his rocker."

And so the school waited anxiously to see the Head.

Morning chapel was not taken by Mr. Lothrop, however. The boys did not have a chance of seeing him till lessons commenced.

It was usual for the Head to take the Sixth; and the Sixth were looking forward to first lesson in a peculiar frame of mind. Carberry had related his griefs and wrongs to all who would listen to him. Carberry was not liked in the top Form, but the outrageous insult to the dignity of a prefect could not pass unnoticed. If there was any repetition of it, all the prefects were agreed that they would resign in a body, and refuse to resume their duties until Dr. Locke returned.

Glad enough would many of the juniors have been to be in the Sixth that morning, to see how matters would go.

The seniors were very silent and solemn when they took their places. Mr. Lothrop came in with a cheery good-morning.

7

A School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.

By Frank Richards.

Every eye was turned keenly upon him.

The new Head certainly seemed normal enough.

His healthy, freshly-shaven face was very good-humoured, and there was an almost gay sparkle in his eyes.

He had a book under his arm, which he proceeded to open.

"Ah! I trust we shall do a good morning's work together," he said, "I have not yet mastered the details of the regular work here, and so I am substituting a subject of my own choice for first lesson."

The seniors were silent.

Was this a beginning?

Were the strange freaks of the previous evening to be repeated in the sacred precincts of the Sixth-Form room? Mr. Lothrop did not look as if he had been drinking. The bright sparkle of his eyes, however, might have been due to intoxication. But what sort of man could he be, if he indulged in strong liquors early in the morning?

"Ahem!" said Mr. Lothrop, running his eyes over the pages of his book, "very good. What languages do you study in this form, Waterton?"

As there was no one in the Form of that name, no one replied.

"Pray answer me, Williamson."

"Certainly, sir," said a fellow who happened to own that name. "We—"

"I was not speaking to you," said the Head.

"Oh, sir! I—my name is Williamson, and—"

"Pray do not joke with your head-master," said Mr. Lothrop, severely. "Your name is Samuels—Herbert Arthur Reginald Samuels."

Williamson gasped. Mr. Lothrop fixed his eyes upon Wingate.

"Is not your name Williamson?"

"No, sir! Wingate."

"Absurd! You are Arthur Henry Williamson. Pray do not contradict me," said the Head, frowning. "What languages do you study?"

"French, Latin, and Greek, sir. German is an extra."

"Not Esperanto?"

"Esperanto?" gasped Wingate.

"Yes, Williamson, Esperanto. You have surely heard of Esperanto?"

"Ye—es, sir. It's a new dodge for a universal language, isn't it, sir?"

"That is it. I invented it myself," said Mr. Lothrop.

Wingate did not know much about Esperanto, but he knew that that statement wasn't correct. Mr. Lothrop looked at his book again.

"Let me see! By the way, Winchester—I think your name is Winchester—have you ever tried to practise bowling at a gas burner?"

"N-n-n-no, sir."

"I will show you how to do it," said the new Head, blandly.

"You take a book as a ball, thus—and hurl it—thus!"

And Mr. Lothrop hurled the book in his hand at the nearest gas burner, and brought it to the floor with a crash.

The Sixth looked on, dazed.

The wildest stories they had heard about the new head-master were substantiated, then! He was either a confirmed drunkard, or wrong in the head.

"There! how's that?" exclaimed Mr. Lothrop, triumphantly.

"Out!" said Wingate, grimly.

"Exactly. Mulberry!"

There was no reply. Carberry did not feel inclined to answer to that variation of his name, although he guessed that he was meant.

"Mulberry!" shouted the Head, "Blackberry! Gooseberry!"

Carberry scowled.

"Stand out here, Whortleberry."

Carberry did not move.

"Boy! Obey me!"

"My name is Carberry," said the prefect, doggedly.

"Well, stand out here, whatever your name is."

The prefect obeyed.

"I have often thought of the story of William Tell, as an example of what might be done in schools in the way of training the hand and eye," said Mr. Lothrop, with a smile.

"Carberry, take that globe—the largest on the shelf."

The prefect obeyed.

"Place it on your head."

"On m-m-m-my head, sir."

"Certainly—at once."

The prefect obeyed dazedly. He balanced the big globe on his head, holding it there with both hands. The class looked on dumbfounded. The Sixth Form at Greyfriars had certainly never seen such an exhibition before.

"I will now take this smaller globe," said the Head, "I will stand at a dozen paces, and will undertake to bring down that globe from Whortleberry's head at a single shot."

"That you jolly well won't," exclaimed Carberry, fiercely.

"Do you think I'm going to be made a cockshy of?"

"Stand still—"

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"I shall complain to Dr. Locke."

"Or the other fellow, eh?" said Mr. Lothrop, with a peculiar grin, as if he found something very amusing in the thought of the "other fellow," whoever that was. "You will obey me, Carberry, or I shall cane you severely. I shall not hurt you. Now, stand quite still, and it will soon be over."

Mr. Lothrop raised the smaller globe to hurl it.

"Oh, I'm dreaming," murmured Wingate, desperately. "This can't be really happening, you know. We shall wake up presently."

Carberry blinked at the master, and then dropped the globe and bolted. The missile swept through the air and crashed on the floor. Both were smashed, of course. The floor was littered with fragments.

Carberry dashed out of the room, and fled. He was beginning to think that Mr. Lothrop was a lunatic, and he did not intend to face him any more, whatever the consequences might be of leaving the class-room without permission.

Mr. Lothrop gazed at the shattered globes, and laughed.

"Very good," he exclaimed. "Boys, you are dismissed."

"Dismissed, sir!" exclaimed Wingate, astounded more and more, for the first lesson had not yet commenced.

"Yes, I grant the Sixth a whole holiday. You will put in the time at cricket practice, to prepare for the match on Saturday."

"Well, that's jolly sensible," murmured Wingate. "He's not so mad after all."

And the Sixth walked out of the class-room. Mr. Lothrop followed them, and went down the passage, and looked in at the Remove room.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Head Plays Cricket.

MR. QUELCH was taking the Remove, as usual; and he was not finding the task an easy one. The Remove never was an easy form to handle; but this morning the general excitement made it almost impossible for the boys to fix their attention upon their lessons. Almost every few minutes there was a subdued buzz of talk, and Mr. Quelch, who was greatly worried himself about the strange proceedings of the new Head hardly knew how to suppress it. He was fast losing his temper, when the class-room door opened, and Mr. Lothrop came in.

"Good-morning," exclaimed Mr. Lothrop, "I have dismissed the Sixth, Mr. Squeleh—"

"Queleh, sir."

"Squeleh, I think."

"I trust, sir," said the Remove-master, with some heat, "I trust that you will allow me to know my own name, sir."

"Really, Mr. Squeleh, I must insist that my memory is very good, and I am certain you introduced yourself to me as Squeleh. However, we will split the difference, and I will call you Mr. Welch."

"Really, sir, you amaze me. I—"

"Not at all, Mr. Welch. I think you look ill, and I am going to take your class for a few hours while you rest."

"You are very kind, sir, but—"

"Not at all, Mr. Welch. Pray go."

"But I—"

"Let me see, the lesson is geography, I think," said Mr. Lothrop, looking at the map unrolled on the blackboard. "A subject I am very well up in. Pray retire, Mr. Squeleh, and leave the boys to me."

"I cannot disobey your orders, sir, as you were placed in authority here by Dr. Locke."

"Exactly! Pray go."

Mr. Quelch went, shutting the door with unnecessary force. He might be excused for being a little ruffled.

The Remove looked on with keen interest. They were gleefully anticipating a high old time; and they were not disappointed. At their age, they were hardly likely to be worried about the strangeness of proceedings which furnished them with leisure and fun—which was one of the advantages of being juniors.

"Now, then, what country is this," said Mr. Lothrop, taking up the pointer, and tapping France on the map.

"France, sir," said a voice.

"Nonsense. That is Spain."

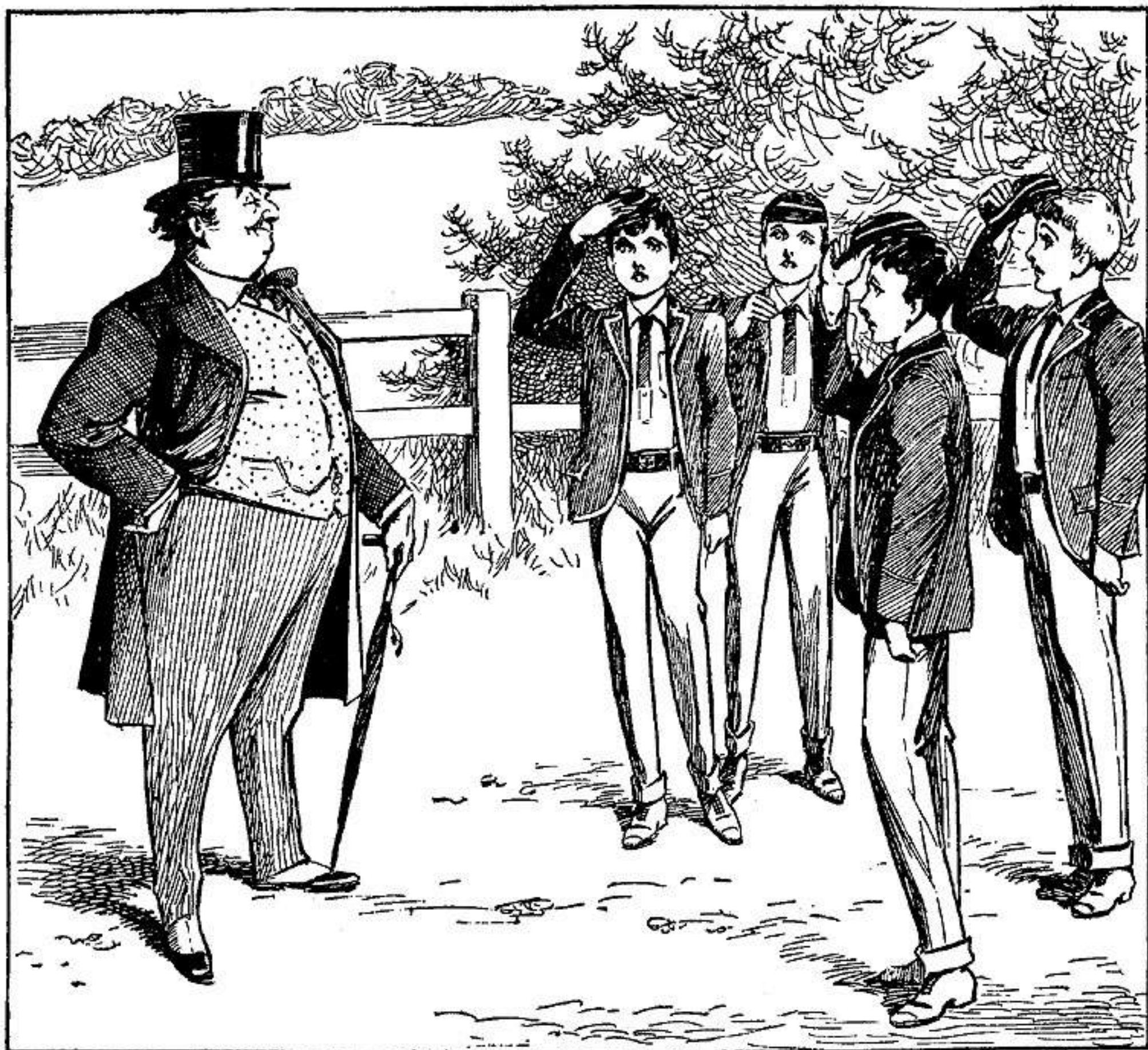
"M-m-m-m-my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry, "Spain, is it?"

"Pray do not make these absurd mistakes," said Mr. Lothrop. "This map, is, however, useless. I will destroy it."

He dragged the map down, and tore at it with both hands; but the tough linen it was mounted upon did not easily tear. He rumped and crumpled it and hurled it into a corner instead.

"Now," he said, "I am sure you boys are tired of sitting still. I have been in the habit of leading an active life. I was usually confined to one small room in my last quarters, but I seldom sat still in it. Rise."

The Remove rose as one man.



The juniors stared at the stranger blankly—a stranger no longer, but the new Head of Greyfriars in person!

"Can you play leap-frog?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very good. Come out here and play, and I will join you," said the Head, throwing open the door. "When I was at St. Austin's, I was captain of the leap-frog eleven."

"By Jove!"

Not sorry to escape morning lessons, the Removites crowded out into the passage. There they formed up in a long line for the game. Mr. Lothrop took the head of the line, and decided upon himself to take first jump.

"It's a dream," said Nugent. "It's a giddy dream."

"The dreamfulness is terrific."

"He's mad!" murmured Harry Wharton.

"Stand steady, boys."

"Right-ho, sir."

"Tuck in your tuppenny!"

The Remove gasped. To be told to tuck in their tuppennies by a head-master was simply flooring.

But Mr. Lothrop seemed to see nothing extraordinary in the matter. He was in high spirits.

He took a run, and went over the first bent back in fine style. Then the second, and the third. The suppressed laughter of the Removites, the noise of moving feet, and the jumping of Mr. Lothrop, made a noise that naturally attracted attention from the class-rooms that were still occupied. Mr. Prout put his head out of the Fifth Form-room with an angry frown.

"What is all this noise?" he exclaimed. "Boys! Why

are you not in your class-room! How dare you play leap-frog in the passages? Why—what—how—"

Mr. Prout staggered as he saw the figure of the head-master, in fluttering gown, coming down the line of bent backs.

"Upon my word!"

The Fifth Form-master gasped and rubbed his eyes.

It was no dream.

The new Head of Greyfriars was coming along, jumping back after back with all the hilarity of a schoolboy.

He reached the end of the line, and made a back himself, and the next fellow took up the running.

Jumping over one another, the Removites proceeded right down the passage, through the hall, and out into the Close, head-master and all.

Mr. Prout staggered into the Fifth Form-room. He fanned his heated brow with a pocket-handkerchief.

"Incredible!" he murmured dazedly. "Absolutely incredible!"

A grinning Removite put his head in at the door.

"If you please, sir, the Head says the Fifth are to be dismissed."

"What!"

"Whole holiday to-day, sir, for the whole school."

"Impossible!"

"Head's message, sir."

And the fag retired, chuckling. Little cared he what the

mysterious cause of it might be, so long as the school had a whole holiday.

Mr. Prout dismissed the Form with a few gasping words. The Fifth crowded out. They found the Remove and the Sixth already out, and the Upper Fourth and the Third Form came out a few minutes later. It was evidently a whole holiday.

Mr. Lothrop had ceased leap-frogging. He had thrown his gown aside, and he had strolled down to the cricket ground, where the Sixth were at practice. Wingate had not been sorry for the chance of putting in an extra morning on the playing-fields.

Interested to see what the Head would do next, the boys followed him in a crowd. Mr. Lothrop looked on at the game for a few minutes, and then walked on to the field.

Wingate was just bowling to Carberry when Mr. Lothrop tapped the prefect on the shoulder. The surprised batsman swung round, and the ball crashed on the wicket.

"Hold on," exclaimed Carberry, "I'm not out!"

"You are out!" said Mr. Lothrop sternly.

"You touched me."

"I am going to take your place at the wicket, Elderberry."

"You're not! I—"

"Give me the bat."

Carberry hesitated; but it was impossible not to obey. He handed the bat to Mr. Lothrop, who gave him a gentle clump on the chest with the business-end of it, which made Carberry sit down on the grass.

"How clumsy you are!" ejaculated Mr. Lothrop.

Carberry scrambled up, and strode off the field, scowling. Wingate hardly knew what to do. Even if it had been a regular match he could hardly have ordered his head-master off the ground, and it was only a scratch match for practice. He decided to put up with the Head's interference with as good a grace as he could.

"Bowl!" said the Head.

"Certainly, sir."

The wicket was set up, and Wingate bowled. Mr. Lothrop flourished the bat round his head, but did not hit the ball. The wicket went down.

"Upon my word," said Mr. Lothrop, "that is not the way to bowl!"

Wingate grinned.

"The wicket's down, sir."

"Nonsense! Set it up again."

"B-b-b-but—" stammered the wicketkeeper.

"Put it up, I tell you!"

"Ce-e-ertainly, sir."

"Now, Williamson, bowl again, and give me a better ball."

The captain of Greyfriars passed his hand over his brow. However, he bowled again, with the same result. Mr. Lothrop threw down his bat.

"That isn't bowling!" he exclaimed. "Take the bat and give me the ball, and I will show you how to bowl."

"Just as you like, sir."

And Wingate took the bat. Mr. Lothrop went down to the bowler's wicket. He kicked the stumps out of the ground, and stood where they had been pitched to bowl to Wingate. The boys looked on dazedly.

Mr. Lothrop did not bowl the ball. He took careful aim, and threw it. Wingate gave a fiendish yell.

The ball had crashed on his shoulder, with considerable force. He dropped the bat, clasped his hand to the injured place, and danced with pain.

"There, that is better!" exclaimed Mr. Lothrop.

"Ow! I'm hurt!"

"What does that matter?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the juniors. "What does it matter, Wingate?"

Wingate glared at the Head. Only his respect for Mr. Lothrop's position in the school prevented him from saying some very direct things. He walked off the field in high dudgeon, and the rest of the cricketers followed him. That practice match was over.

THE NINTH CHAPTER. A Mystery of the Crypt.

HARRY WHARTON and his friends strolled down to the school gates. Mr. Lothrop had gone indoors after the sudden termination of the cricket match, and the whole school was discussing his amazing conduct in awed tones. Sunstroke was the latest theory to find favour with the boys. That there was something the matter with Mr. Lothrop was certain, this was more than mere eccentricity.

As the fun seemed to be over for the time, Harry Wharton and Co. strolled out of the school grounds. They had thought of taking advantage of the unexpected holiday to visit the old priory. Mr. Lothrop had interrupted their visit there yesterday, but there was nothing to stop them now.

"He turned us back," said Bob Cherry argumentatively; "but he didn't say we were not to go another time."

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NEXT
TUESDAY:

"BUNTER THE BULLY."

"Exactly," agreed Harry. "He said, too, that he was going to place the priory out of bounds; but he hasn't done it, so we are free to go."

"He has forgotten all about it, I believe."

"Then it can't be important enough for us to remember."

"Right-ho! Anyway, as the priory hasn't been placed out of bounds we're free to go there if we like, and I vote that we go."

"Good enough."

And the chums of the Remove strolled away to the ruined priory in the heart of the dense woods.

It was a fine summer's morning, and the walk was very enjoyable. Their feelings were kindly enough towards the new Head. This was better than the class-room.

But as they turned from the footpath to the faintly-marked track leading to the ruins, Harry Wharton's face became grave.

"We'd better remember why the Head was going to place the ruins out of bounds," he remarked. "There's a lunatic at large in the neighbourhood somewhere, and the ruined priory is just where he would go."

"Very likely," agreed Bob Cherry.

"The likelihood is terrific."

"I've heard about that chap," said Nugent. "One of the keepers came to the school, and was speaking to Mr. Prout at the gate last night. They're inquiring for him everywhere. He's quite a harmless chap."

"Still, one needs to be careful in dealing with a lunatic, harmless or not."

"Oh, yes, that's right enough."

They plunged through the thick bushes that surrounded the ruins. Little of the old Priory of the Grey Friars remained standing. In some places the ruin was so complete that the stone foundations, deep in the earth, could be seen. In other spots the huge stone flags of the floor and parts of the walls were intact.

A yawning cavity revealed where a stone staircase, still whole and strong, led down to the crypt. The oaken door was long since rotted away.

"Shall we go down?"

"What-ho," said Bob Cherry.

The spirit of adventure was strong in the juniors. The crypt was dark and dreary, and a lunatic might be lurking in the shadowy depths.

But there were four of them, and they were all plucky. Nugent had brought his bicycle lantern. They lighted it, and descended.

The crypt was quite dark, the sunlight above had no chance of penetrating into those gloomy recesses.

The rays of the lantern glimmered through the murk with an eerie effect. Harry Wharton shivered a little.

"Shivery place," he remarked, "a good deal like a tomb."

"Yes, rather. Hark!"

"What's the matter?"

"I heard something."

The juniors grouped quickly together with beating hearts. Harmless or not, a lunatic was not a pleasant person to meet in those underground recesses.

"Blessed if I can hear anything," said Nugent, after a long pause.

Harry Wharton held up his hand.

"Listen!"

Tap!

The sound came clearly, with a strange distinctness, through the eerie silence of the crypt.

Tap, tap, tap!

The boys looked at one another with startled faces.

"It's the lunatic," whispered Bob Cherry. And the Nabob of Bhanipur whispered that the lunaticfulness was terrific.

Tap, tap, tap!

Wharton knitted his brows.

"Blessed if I can see why a lunatic should be tapping on the stone," he said. "More likely there's another chap in here exploring the vaults, and he's playing a trick to scare us."

"My only hat! If that's it—"

"We'll warm him," said Nugent, "we'll teach him to play his giddy tricks on Greyfriars fellows! Let's have a look for him."

"Come on, then," said Harry determinedly.

Bob Cherry carried the lantern, holding it up before him, and casting the light into the gloom. The juniors advanced with their eyes on the alert, and their fists clenched.

Tap, tap, tap!

Harry Wharton stopped. The sound was fainter now. Yet they had passed no one. It seemed to be upon the stone wall they were following, and yet it sounded behind them. The Removes looked amazed.

"Blessed if I catch on," murmured Bob Cherry. "He's dodging us."

"The dodgefulness is terrific."

Nugent uttered a sudden exclamation.

"It's all right, I know what it means."

Nugent had been longest at Greyfriars of the Famous Four.

A School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By Frank Richards.

and he knew many things in connection with the school and its surroundings that the other fellows had not yet discovered. They looked at him inquiringly.

"There's a secret chamber in the wall here," said Nugent. "It was discovered a long while ago, and the skeleton of a man was found in it. The door always remained open so that the chamber could be explored. Somebody has got in, and the door has closed somehow."

"Phew!"

Tap, tap, tap.

"Nugent's right," said Harry Wharton. "I notice now it has a muffled sound, as if it comes from the other side of the wall. Show us where the place is, Frank."

"We've passed it—come back."

They returned on their tracks along the wall, Bob Cherry flashing the lantern-light upon the grim cold stone blocks.

There was no sign of the secret door; but it was well known to Nugent, as to most fellows who had been more than a term or two at the school. The Greyfriars lads often explored the priory.

Tap, tap, tap! Nugent stopped.

"Here it is!"

The tapping was loudest at this point, and it was clear that it proceeded from the other side of the great block of stone upon which Nugent had laid his hand.

"Poor chap, whoever he is!" said Bob Cherry. "I don't envy him, shut up there! I wonder who it is; some village kid exploring the place, or the lunatic?"

"The lunatic, I should say," remarked Nugent. "I don't see how a kid could close this great stone door on himself. It swings on a pivot, and it takes a man to move it. Only a lunatic would make a big effort to shut himself up in a place like that, I should think."

"Some crazy notion of getting away where the keepers couldn't find him, perhaps."

"H'm! I'd prefer Grimwood Asylum, I think."

"The preferfulness would be terrific on the part of my worthy self."

"Yes; I'm blessed if I see how he could pull the door shut from inside, either," said Nugent, perplexed. "It wanted shoving hard to move it."

"Well, he's in there!"

"I suppose he can't have been shut up on purpose, whoever he is!" Harry Wharton suggested, with a startled look.

"Whew!"

Tap, tap, tap!

"Well, we'd better jaw to him before we open the door," said Nugent uneasily. "We don't want the lunatic bursting out on us, you know. If he's in there he'd better remain there till we can fetch the keepers."

"Good egg!"

Harry Wharton tapped on the stone.

"Hallo, there!"

A faint voice responded:

"Help!"

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

A Startling Discovery.

HELP!"

"By Jove!"

"It is somebody shut up there who can't get out!"

Wharton tapped on the stone again. "Who are you?"

"Help!"

"How did you get in there?"

"I was shut in."

"Who are you?"

"My name is Lothrop—Henry Lothrop."

The juniors simply jumped.

"Your name is what?" yelled Wharton.

"Lothrop!"

"Who are you?"

"I am a schoolmaster."

The Greyfriars juniors looked at one another in the lantern-light. Nugent grinned a little.

"Mad!" he murmured. "He's heard the name somewhere, of course, and he says he's Lothrop, so as to keep it dark that he's the lunatic. Madmen are awfully deep, you know."

"I suppose so."

"Of course, he doesn't know that we know Lothrop. If we had been strangers to the name we should have believed him."

"That's so."

"The sofulness is terrific."

"The best thing we can do is to go for the keepers," said Wharton, in a low voice. "The poor chap must be in a bad state if he has been in there ever since he escaped from the asylum. It was some time yesterday morning."

"Nearly starved, I should think."

"I suppose he shut himself up to keep safe, without thinking that he'd ever want to get out again. He wouldn't reason it out with his rocky brain. Let's get off and fetch the keepers here. It's a short cut to the asylum through the wood."

Tap, tap, tap!

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NEXT
TUESDAY:

"BUNTER THE BULLY."

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

The man imprisoned in the stone chamber was knocking again.

"All right!" called out Bob Cherry. "Don't be afraid!"

"Cannot you open the door?"

"We'll get it open soon."

"I have been here for days, I think. I am cold and famished."

"Poor chap!" murmured Nugent. "He hasn't been there twenty-four hours yet. Another hour won't hurt him—better than getting loose in the woods and giving the keepers a long hunt. He might break his neck on the cliffs, or tumble into one of the sand-pits if he gets going again."

"Look here, one of you cut off to Grimwood," said Harry Wharton, "the rest of us can stay here and watch, and keep the poor beggar company. We don't want him to think we've deserted him."

"Right-ho! I'll go," said Bob Cherry. And he left the crypt at once.

It was likely to be a good hour before the keepers from Grimwood Asylum arrived upon the spot, even if they lost no time on the way; and the Greyfriars juniors settled down to wait.

They filled in the time by exploring the crypt, and sometimes exchanged words with the unfortunate man behind the stone door; but the door they did not open. For the man's own sake, it was necessary for him to be delivered to the keepers. A lunatic wandering on the rocky coast near Greyfriars was likely to come to a sudden and violent death, even if there were no other reasons.

A sound of footsteps on the stone stair at last drew Harry Wharton's attention there. Bob Cherry came down, followed by two men, one a sturdy fellow in uniform, and the other a kindly-looking old gentleman in a silk hat. The latter was Dr. Benson, the proprietor of Grimwood Asylum.

Harry Wharton raised his cap.

"I'm glad you've come," he said. "I suppose Cherry has told you about it. The chap has been asking to be let out all the time."

"Dear me!" said Dr. Benson, with a shuddering glance round the dim old crypt. "What a place! What a place! He is really shut up here! Poor, poor fellow! Where is he?"

"This way, sir."

Harry Wharton led the way to the stone door in the wall.

Dr. Benson looked at it in surprise.

"Ah, I see! How does it open?"

"I can open it, sir," said Nugent. "You'd better be ready in case he dodges out, sir. He may try to bunk for it."

"Yes, very true! He is usually very quiet and good-tempered—in fact, I have never known any man so good-tempered as Valence. I was quite surprised when he left the Asylum. We allowed him every liberty, because he was so good and so amiable. His only weakness was a continual recurrence of absurd illusions, which led him to suppose he was somebody else—different persons at different times."

Harry Wharton smiled.

"He has just told us that his name is Lothrop, sir, and that he's a school-master," he said, as Nugent fumbled at the door.

"Ah! That latter fact is correct; He certainly was a school-master a few years ago," said Dr. Benson. "He was head-master at St. Austin's."

Wharton started.

"St. Austin's!"

"Yes; a public school in Cornwall."

"It's coming open, sir," said Nugent. "Look out!"

"Harris, stand ready!"

"Yes, sir," said the asylum attendant.

The great stone swung back. A dark cavity was revealed, and in the cavity a white face that looked out into the light of the lantern.

A dark figure rushed forth, with a gasp of passionate relief. The attendant had him by the collar in a moment, and Dr. Benson spoke in soothing tones.

"Quiet, my friend, quiet! Don't be unruly, Valence, my dear fellow. We are only going to take you home again!"

"What!" gasped the other, struggling in the grasp of the attendant. "What! Why do you call me Valence? My name is Lothrop."

Dr. Benson started.

"That is not Valence's voice! There is some mistake! Show the light upon his face."

Wharton obeyed. The lantern light illumined a white, haggard face—a face totally unknown to the juniors of Greyfriars, and apparently to Dr. Benson also.

"This is not the man!"

"Not the man!" gasped Wharton.

"No; I have never seen this man before."

"Great Scott!"

The juniors were dumbfounded.

"But—but he must be mad!" gasped Nugent. "He says his name is Lothrop—unless there are two Lothrops. We thought—"

"My name is Lothrop!" shrieked the stranger. "I am a

school-master. I was going to Greyfriars School when I was kidnapped by a mad villain."

"To Greyfriars School, sir?"

"Yes, certainly; to take the place of Dr. Locke, who is away ill."

"W-w-w-what!"

"I tell you—"

"But Mr. Lothrop, Dr. Locke's substitute, is at the school!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, almost stupefied. "There can't be two."

"What!"

"Mr. Lothrop arrived last evening."

The unfortunate man gave a yell.

"Then that is why he took my clothes!"

"What?" ejaculated Dr. Benson.

"I tell you I was kidnapped here. I came in the train to Lindale, and as I found I should have to wait at the station for the local to Friardale, I decided to walk. I met that villain—"

"What villain?"

"The villain who kidnapped me. I met him on the footpath. He seemed a very pleasant and agreeable man."

"Ah, it was Valence!"

"He offered to show me the way, and I accepted. We talked freely. I told him who I was and where I was going, and he told me he was Dr. Benson, the proprietor of an asylum in this neighbourhood."

"Dear me! I am Dr. Benson!"

"You!"

"Certainly. What you are telling me shows me that you have encountered Mr. Valence, a patient who escaped from my care yesterday. Pray go on. I hope this will lead to his recapture. But—but"—the doctor looked at the stranger in amazement—"you are wearing his clothes. They are Valence's clothes."

"I should think so, sir, when he took mine."

"He—he took your clothes?"

"Yes, sir. He led me here, then he suddenly seized me, without a moment's warning, and dragged me into the crypt. He seemed to have the strength of ten men, and I was helpless in his hands. He made me take my things off and change into his clothes. He took my letters, my papers—I did not know why then. Now I surmise that he has passed himself off as me at Greyfriars, doubtless for purposes of robbery."

"Oh, no; an insane freak, that is all."

The stranger, who was calming down a little now, turned to the juniors.

"Do you belong to Greyfriars?"

"Yes, sir," said Harry Wharton. "I hope you will forgive us for not letting you out sooner, sir; but when you said you were Mr. Lothrop, we—we naturally thought—"

"Quite right; quite right. You must have thought me mad. But is this lunatic, then, at the school?"

"I suppose, so, sir. He came last evening—we met him near the ruins here, and he wouldn't let us come here as we intended."

"His reason for that is plain enough. He was afraid you would find me here."

"I suppose so, sir. He has been doing extraordinary things at the school, and the whole place is simply turned upside down. None of us could understand it, but now—"

"Now it's plain enough," said Nugent. "But he's an awfully decent chap, sir, even if he is rocky. He's given us a whole holiday to-day."

"Indeed!"

"Which is very fortunate," said Dr. Benson, "as otherwise you would never have discovered your real head-master here. Dear me, the affair might have turned out very serious indeed for Mr. Lothrop."

"I should say so," said the ill-used master. "I am very much obliged to you boys. It will be best to proceed to the school at once, Dr. Benson, and secure this man."

"Certainly, certainly. I have a carriage on the road, half a mile from here; we shall have to walk to it, and then we shall soon get to Greyfriars."

"Very good."

And the party left the crypt. Mr. Lothrop, who seemed weak and spent after his long confinement in the stone chamber, leaned on the arm of the asylum attendant as they went. The juniors discussed the matter in low tones as they followed.

"Jolly lucky we came here," Bob Cherry remarked. "If that lunatic chap didn't speak on the subject, Lothrop might have starved in the secret chamber."

"Quite possible."

"The hardness of the cheese upon the honourable Lothrop would have been terrific," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"No wonder there has been a high old time at Greyfriars, with a lunatic as Head-master," chuckled Nugent. "I wonder what he's been up to while we've been here. We'll jolly well be on the scene when he's captured."

"What-ho!"

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NEXT
TUESDAY:

"BUNTER THE BULLY."

They reached the carriage, and Dr. Benson and Mr. Lothrop entered it, with the attendant. There was no room for the boys, but they preferred to walk. They were strictly cautioned not to enter Greyfriars until the carriage had arrived, in case of giving the alarm to the new Head.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Last Scene.

"BOYS!"

"I say, you fellows, there he is again!"

The new Head had appeared on the steps of the school-house. Every eye in the Close was turned upon him at once.

The freaks of the new Head had almost ceased to excite surprise.

After the cricket affair the boys had no astonishment left, as it were. They heard that the Head had been seen in the library tossing the books about and breaking the glass doors of the cases. Then they heard that he had gone into the kitchen, accused the cook of not knowing her business, and taken the matter in hand himself. He had left the kitchen in a state of anarchy, and wandered forth in search of fresh worlds to conquer.

But the fellows were getting fed up with surprises. They would not have been very much astonished now if the Head had cake-walked across the Close.

"Boys!"

The new Head stamped his feet to attract attention, but it was hardly needed. Seniors and juniors crowded round.

"Boys! To celebrate my coming to Greyfriars, I am going to stand a big treat!"

"Hear, hear!" shouted Billy Bunter enthusiastically.

"Bravo!" yelled Bulstrode.

"I have ordered the housekeeper to send up all the food there is in the house, and have also ordered the whole stock of the school shop," said the new Head. "All who are inclined to join me may do so."

"Hurrah!"

"Hip-pip!"

"The feast is now ready!" said the new Head. "Come in! Walk up! Roll up! Hear, hear!"

"My only hat!" said Wingate. "He's mad! There's no other explanation. He's as mad as a giddy hatter!"

"Right off!" said Blundell. "Absolutely off. What will be the end of this?"

"I wonder what Dr. Locke will say when he gets back?" grinned Bland.

"My hat! I wonder."

But, whatever they might think of the Head's strange freaks, there was no reason why the fellows should not join in the feast. It was getting towards dinner-time, anyway, and schoolboys are generally ready for a feed.

Billy Bunter led the way.

The tables in the dining-room were loaded—in novelist language, they groaned under the goodly viands.

The astonished maids had obeyed the Head's orders—everything eatable in the house was brought up, and the whole stock of the school tuck-shop had been added.

The boys' eyes naturally glistened at the sight of such a feed.

Billy Bunter wasted no time upon the order of his beginning, but began at once. He was in the seventh heaven.

The new Head waved his hand hospitably.

"Fall to, my lads."

"Thank you, sir."

"Hurrah!"

It was a splendid feed.

Amazement did not take away the boys' appetites, and at the most generous picnic they had never had so splendid a spread.

Billy Bunter travelled through the eatables at express speed, and his fat, round face soon assumed a shininess and greasiness that told of over-feeding; but he did not leave off. He kept on till by no possibility could he eat more; and then he began to cram things into his pockets. He would be hungry again, and now was the time to prepare for it.

When every available pocket was crammed with oranges, apples, cakes, nuts, mince-pies, and similar articles, Bunter left the table at last. He was the last to leave, of course. The Head during the feast, had not eaten; he walked up and down the room, gesticulating a great deal, and making remarks to the boys, many of them without any connected sense or meaning.

"You have finished, boys?" he said at last.

"Yes, sir," said Temple.

"Good! Then clear away the crockery! Follow your leader!" said the new Head, taking up a dish of potatoes.

He hurled the dish through the dining-room window, and there was a smash of glass and broken crockery in the Close.

"By Jove!" gasped Wingate.

Orders from the Head had to be obeyed, and it is to be feared that the spirit of mischief was strong upon the junior boys, too. They readily followed his example. The crockery was hurled through the windows, with crash on crash.

The new Head chuckled with glee.
 "Ha, ha, ha! This will be a surprise for the other fellow, Williamson," he said to Temple. "Your name is Williamson, isn't it?"
 "N-n-no, sir."
 "Don't contradict me, boy. Your name is Williamson."
 "I—I—I—"
 "What is your name, boy?"
 "T-t-t-t-Williamson, sir."
 "Very good. The other fellow will be surprised when he sees this, eh?"
 "Yes, sir. What other fellow, sir?"
 "Why, the other fellow—the one I have shut up, you know."
 "Ye-e-e-es, sir!" gasped Temple, not understanding in the least.
 "A little excitement livens the scholastic day," said the new Head. "Let us live while we are alive, for, as the poet remarks, we are a long time dead. Come, come!"
 "Rum beggar," said Wingate. "He grows rummier every moment. I wonder Quelch doesn't stop him."
 Mr. Quelch was in the passage when the boys crowded out. Mr. Quelch did not know, that day, whether he was on his head or his heels. Everything was topsy-turvy, and he hoped that it was all a terrible dream.
 The new Head nodded to him genially.
 "We are getting on, Mr. Squelch."
 "My name is Quelch, sir," said the Remove-master frigidly.
 "Nonsense! Your name is Squelch. Bosh, sir! Do you think I do not know your name, sir? But no matter! We are getting on, are we not?"
 "I am glad you think so, sir," said Mr. Quelch drily.
 "I am filling up the time pretty well, I think."
 "You are, certainly. But I must speak out, Mr. Lothrop. If this frantic conduct does not cease, I shall wire to Dr. Locke!"
 "Oh, come, Squelchy—"
 "Yes, sir; I can only conclude that you are under the continual influence of liquor," said the Remove-master sternly.
 "I consider myself absolved from all obedience to your orders."
 "Oh, come! You have indigestion this morning, Squelchy, and it is bad for your temper. Why not be jolly?"
 "Sir!"
 "Grin and bear it, my boy. Banish dull care!" said the new Head. "Look at me. I am enjoying myself!"
 "I think you must be mad."
 "Of course I am," said the new Head genially. "I make no secret of it. We are all mad, you know."
 "Upon my word!"
 "I am mad, thou art mad, he is mad, we are mad, you are mad, they are mad!" said the Head. "Of course. What else are we here for?"
 "Really!"
 "But there is no reason why we should not enjoy life, even if we are mad," said the Head, smiling. "I have never been so jolly as since I was mad. Consider the narrow, cramped life of a sane person. He has but a single identity to last him all his life. Now, I am the Emperor of China one day, and the Kaiser the next. One day I make myself King of Siam. Another day, President of the United States. I get variety that way. You understand? A sane man has only one identity. Has it not occurred to you that he must get dreadfully bored with himself in the course of his life. Fancy being named Williams for seventy years. Absurd!"
 Mr. Quelch stood petrified.
 There was no doubt about it now, if there had been any before. The man was a lunatic. It might be sunstroke. Whatever it was, he was mad now.
 At the thought of that, all Mr. Quelch's bottled-up anger dissolved away. One could not be angry with an insane person.
 His only thought now was to get the new Head quietly into a room where he could be shut up till a medical man could be sent for.
 "I see you agree with me," said the new Head, smiling. "Consider, too, a sane person is always his real age. Now, I am any age it suits me to be. I am at the present moment twenty years of age, and this is a ball-room. You are a charming girl! I am going to waltz with. You understand?"
 "Really—oh!—help!—upon my word!"
 The new Head had seized the Remove-master, and was beginning to waltz. The boys crowded back with yells of laughter.
 Mr. Quelch was no weakling, but he seemed a child in the hands of his partner. The new Head grasped him firmly and waltzed. They waltzed round the hall, bumping into several of the fellows and sending them flying, the Remove-master gasping and struggling spasmodically.
 "Help! Ow! Oh, dear!"
 And still they waltzed.
 There was a sound of wheels on the drive, and several forms darkened the open door. Dr. Benson looked in, and the real Mr. Lothrop; behind them the asylum attendant and Harry Wharton & Co.
 They were petrified at what they saw.
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EVERY TUESDAY, The "Magnet" ONE HALF PENNY. LIBRARY.

The wildest freak of the new Head, so far, was that of dancing a waltz with the Remove-master in the midst of a crowd of yelling boys.
 "Bless my soul!" gasped Dr. Benson.
 His voice reached the ears of the new Head.
 The waltz suddenly stopped, and the breathless and exhausted Remove-master staggered away, and Harry Wharton caught him and helped him to a seat.
 The new Head stared at Dr. Benson.
 The jollity faded out of his face, and a hunted look came there, as of an animal caught by its master after running away.
 "Valence!"
 The new Head cast a quick glance round. He was evidently meditating flight. But the asylum attendant was by his side in a moment, with a hand on his arm.
 "Don't try it, Mr. Valence," he said quietly.
 The new Head smiled again. He held out his hand to Dr. Benson, and shook him warmly by the hand.
 "I am glad to see you, Roberts," he exclaimed. "Your name is Roberts, is it not?"
 Dr. Benson smiled.
 "Anything you like, my dear fellow," he said. "Are you ready to come with me?"
 "I shall be very happy to accept your kind invitation," said the new Head, in a stately way. Then he laughed. "Is that the other fellow?"
 "Yes; that is Mr. Lothrop."
 "Ah! I shut him up, you know."
 "Dear me!" said the real Mr. Lothrop. "He is quite mad. But he seems to be harmless."
 "Certainly," said Valence cheerily. "I am as mad as you are, sir."
 "Oh!"
 "I have been looking after the school for you, and I trust you will find everything to your satisfaction now you have returned after your illness, Dr. Locke," said the new Head, having already forgotten Mr. Lothrop's identity. "Let me see. Your name is Herbert Henry Harrison, is it not?"
 "Come, come!" said Dr. Benson, slipping his arm through that of the lunatic.
 "With pleasure, my dear Robinson."
 And the new Head was gently led down the steps to the waiting carriage. He turned to look at the crowd of staring boys and waved his hand.
 "Good-bye," he said. "I am sorry to have to leave you. I am compelled to go away, owing to an attack of illness, but my place will be taken by Mr. Lothrop. I should specially recommend Mr. Lothrop not to be shut up in a stone cell by another fellow. In that case, the other fellow—"
 "Come, come!"
 "Certainly. Good-bye, gentlemen; and I hope you will all recover shortly," said the new Head, waving his hand—apparently under the impression now that he was quitting a lunatic asylum, and the patients were seeing him off. "In cases of mental disease, I can recommend my friend Dr. Benson, who has completely cured me. Good-bye!"
 "Good-bye, sir!" called out the boys.
 And the carriage drove away with the polite lunatic.
 Mr. Quelch shook hands with Mr. Lothrop with a gasp of relief.
 "It has been an astounding affair," he exclaimed. "But I am very pleased to be able to welcome you to Greyfriars, my dear sir."
 And Mr. Lothrop went in with the Remove-master, to explain and to be explained to. Under the circumstances, as the whole school was in a state of utter confusion, the day's holiday was not rescinded, and the boys enjoyed the rest of it to the full; and so—though they were satisfied with the real Mr. Lothrop when they came to know him—they always retained very kindly recollections of "The Other Fellow."

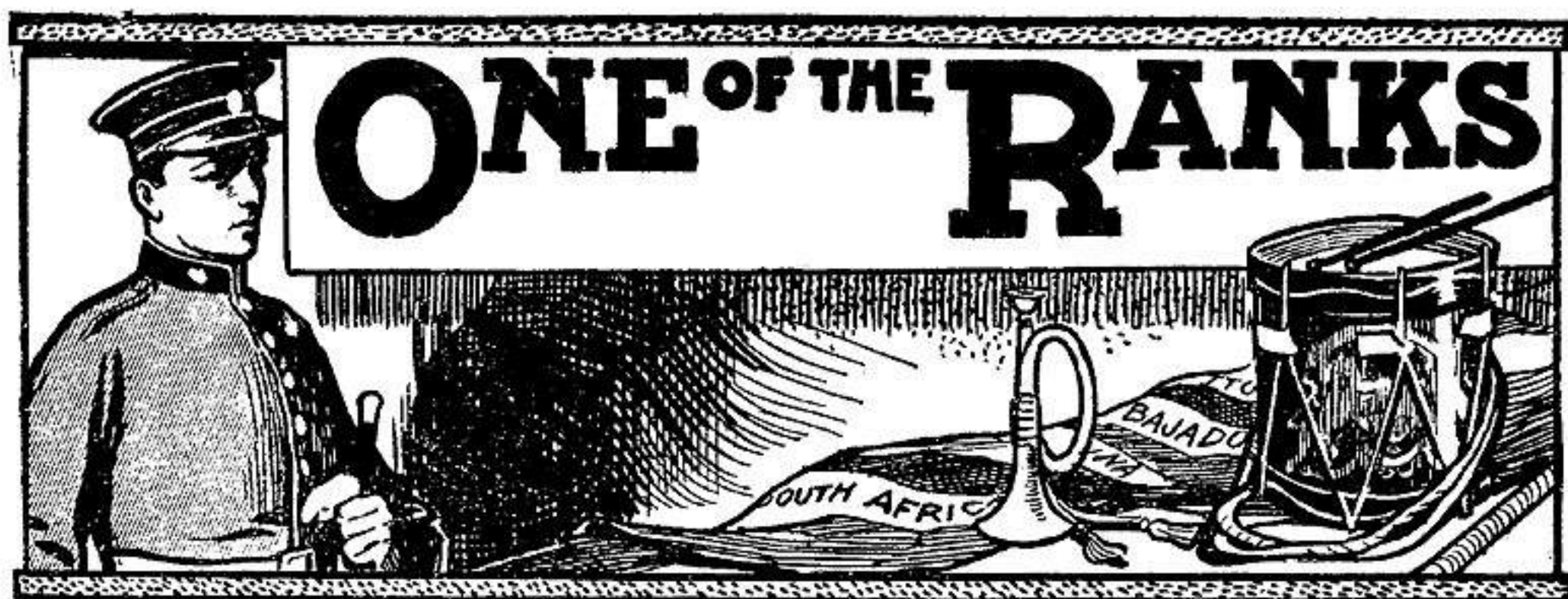
THE END.

NEXT WEEK!

"Billy Bunter, the Bully."

A splendid, long, complete tale of the Chums of Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.



A Splendid Tale of Life in the British Army.

A BRIEF RESUMÉ OF THE EARLIER CHAPTERS.

Ronald Chenys is forced to leave Sandhurst through the treachery of his step-brother, Ian, and enlists in the Wessex Regiment under the name of Chester. Unfortunately for Ronald, Ian joins the Wessex as a subaltern, and, assisted by Sergeant Bagot and Private Foxey Williams, does his best to further disgrace Ronald. In a sham fight with an Irish regiment, a recruit named Augustus Smythe loses his head and uses his bayonet, wounding one of the Irishmen. Ronald snatches the rifle from the hands of the hot-headed Augustus, who promptly bolts. On examination the rifle proves to be Ronald's own, and it is entrusted to Sergeant Bagot's charge, while Ian Chenys orders Ronald's arrest.

(Now go on with the story.)

Ronald's Trial.

Meantime, Gussy had let an innocent man bear the blame which should have been his. Was he to see him stand his trial, and perhaps be proved guilty, or should he own up? His conscience cried out for the latter resolve, but his weak nature said, "Let well alone!"

The man who held the tangible evidence of the crime was Bagot, and from what he knew of the sergeant's hatred for Ronald Chester, he felt that he was safe from any awkward inquiries from that quarter. Bagot's one idea would be to make the charge against Ronald as hot and complete as possible.

An hour before "Reveille" Gussy fell asleep, worn out with making and re-making up his mind. At the first note of the bugle he was awake once more, and his eyes turned to the scabbard on the pegs up above his cot.

He stared at it, rubbed his eyes, and stared at it again. It was no longer empty. There was the hilt of his own bayonet protruding, bright and burnished, and he could read the number from where he lay. How on earth had it got there?"

Gussy wondered, and the more he cudgelled his brains for a solution to the mystery, the firmer grew the resolve which last night, in the dark, torturing hours, had seemed so unwise.

At breakfast there was only one topic discussed—that of the row of the preceding night. Some said that it was impossible for a man, so cool as Ronald, to have lost his head in that ridiculous schoolboy fashion; others that the evidence was so strong that there could be no doubt in the matter.

All agreed that it was only to be expected that the Fermanaghs would take the matter of vengeance into their own hands, and that they of the Wessex must look out for squalls. For those that loved a shindy there would be no lack of fighting for the next week at least, whenever they and the Irishmen should meet.

Poor Augustus Smythe listened to this with misery in his heart. His mind was made up, nevertheless, and after breakfast was over he asked Corporal Kedge to march him before Lieutenant Bob Fairly.

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NEXT
TUESDAY:

"BUNTER THE BULLY."

Lieutenant Bob would curse him, no doubt; but he would help him to the best of his ability, of that he was sure.

The officer heard him out, whistled, polished his eye-glass several times, got up from his chair, walked twice up and down the room, sat down again, and then proceeded to tell Augustus exactly what he thought of him.

After that he strolled over to the orderly-room to be present when Ronald's case came up for hearing, while Gussy slunk about outside within call.

In due time Ronald's case was called, and Colonel Conger frowned as so promising a recruit was marched in before him. If only he pleaded guilty the offence, though most serious, might be looked upon as due to youthful inexperience and hot blood. If, on the other hand, he persisted in denying the charge, he would have to be dealt with severely.

Sergeant Bagot was the principal witness, for everything turned on the ownership of the weapon. The rifle was Ronald's. That there was no denying it was produced in court with the bayonet fixed and stains still upon the blade.

"I ask to have the bayonet examined, sir," said Ronald, in defence. "It will be found that the number on it does not tally with the rifle, which is 839. How the man from whom I wrested it came to exchange my rifle for his I do not know. I can only suggest that in unpiling arms in the dark he got mine and I got his. But the bayonet is his, and its number will identify the owner."

"Humph! Examine the bayonet, Captain Carthew!" said Colonel Conger curtly.

"No. 839!" said that officer, reading the figures stamped upon the bayonet.

"Why, bless my heart, then it is your own!" exclaimed the colonel. "What the deuce do you mean by standing up there and telling this pack of—"

"Perhaps, sir, you will pardon the liberty of my interrupting," broke in Lieutenant Bob, rising and addressing the colonel. "I happen to know something of this matter, and should like your permission to ask the last witness a few questions."

Colonel Conger snorted consent.

"Now then, Sergeant Bagot," said Lieutenant Bob blandly. "The bayonet used by the prisoner remains on the rifle exactly as it was handed into your charge by Mr. Chenys."

Bagot became a trifle mottled about the gills, but he answered, "Yes, sir!" promptly and firmly.

"It has not been unfixed since you got it?"

"No, sir!"

"You are quite sure that it was not No. 27 that was on the rifle originally, and that you did not unfix that particular bayonet and substitute No. 839—that of Private Chester—for motives best known to yourself?"

Bagot turned ashy-grey at this.

"Really Lieutenant Fairly, your question is rather pointed," said Conger, shuffling the papers before him. "You insinuate a deuce of a lot, you know, by couching it in that form. I must ask you for your justification."

"My justification, sir, is that Private Chester did not commit this act; that he really disarmed the man who did, as he has told you; that the bayonet which was actually used is not the one fixed on the rifle now; that the one you

A School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By Frank Richards.

see was taken from Chester when he was captured yesterday by the enemy. It was handed to Mr. Chenys by an officer of the Fermanaghs, who handed it to Sergeant Bagot, who, I maintain, substituted it for the proper one, for motives best known to himself. The one actually used in the affray was returned to the guilty man's scabbard without his knowledge or connivance last night."

"But, one minute, Fairly! You have rattled on with your thises and thats, until I can scarcely make head or tail of what you have said. You talk of the guilty man. Who is he?"

"Private Augustus Smythe, now ready to stand his trial on his own confession, sir!" answered Lieutenant Bob, shooting a glance of triumph in the direction of Ian Chenys.

He had been watching with contempt the look of gloating in the lad's eyes as the evidence was piled fact by fact to his stepbrother's charge. Now he could enjoy the expression of dismay and rage which had spread over Ian's face as he exploded his little string of bombshells, shattering the charges to atoms.

Bagot had gone as white as death. He realised that he had stepped beyond his depth this time, and that degradation and punishment alone awaited him for his perjury. In his blind desire to vent his spite on the gentleman-ranker he had chanced everything and come a cropper.

"Call this man Smythe!" said the colonel sternly.

Gussy came in, looking as scared as an urchin who has just been pulled out of an apple orchard by the ear. But he made a clean breast of it, all the same, and Ronald was ordered to step from between the escort a free man, while Gussy took his place, and was marched back to the guard-room.

"Sergeant Bagot," said the colonel in a dry voice, "you are placed under arrest, pending court-martial. Mr. Chenys, I shall want a word with you later. Report yourself to me after second parade."

Sergeant Bagot stood for a moment glaring like a trapped tiger. Then, remembering himself, he took off his shoulder sash and handed it to the sergeant-major—the sign that he was a prisoner at large.

Poor Rough—A Night Out—The Vulture.

When Bagot emerged from the orderly-room Ronald was still close at hand, surrounded by his chums. Bagot regarded him for a moment with scowling brows and lips twitching with suppressed fury. It looked as if he were about to turn aside and rush headlong at his enemy; but, thinking better of it, apparently, he turned and strode past the group.

Rough, the terrier, who was sitting scrubbing his stumpy tail from side to side on the gravel, and looking up at his master as much as to say, "There you are, what did I tell you?" caught sight of their common foe, and lazily shifted a pace out of his path. He was not suspecting treachery, and, in any case, did not intend to hurry himself for a thing like Bagot.

The next instant, the sergeant's heavy boot lunged out with all the force a man could put into a kick. The toe caught poor Rough in the short ribs, and lifted him six feet, forcing a yelp of agony from the game little beast. Down he came with a thud, and lay moaning and writhing on his side, his eyes fixed on his master's face in dumb, piteous appeal.

Ronald took one look at his four-footed chum, then, with brows blacker than any thunder-squall, he strode to where Sergeant Bagot had halted, half startled at his own act, half sullen.

Had it not been for Mouldy, who caught his comrade by the arm and swung him round, Ronald would have knocked the inhuman brute down with his fist where he stood.

"Hold up, Chester, you fool. Think what you're doing," said the old soldier anxiously.

"Think what I'm doing! Great Heaven! It's just because I am thinking that—"

But Mouldy clapped his hand across his mouth.

"Dry up, you ass! It's just that he's waiting for," he hissed under his breath. "Word, blow, or look—it's all the same in the Army. He'll run you for one or the lot if you don't mind your eye. Will you give him the chance he's hoping for, or won't yer? Now, then, think."

Ronald saw the wisdom in Mouldy's words. He saw, too, the satanic grin curving Bagot's hard-set mouth, betraying that the deed was a deliberate one to trap him into an act of mutiny which would bring months of imprisonment, even taking into account the gross provocation.

Bagot had nothing to lose himself. His fall was already accomplished.

"Think and wait," said Mouldy under his breath as Ronald drew back. "You'll not be long before you can tan the hide of him ten times a day if you've a mind to."

"You're right, Mouldy, I'll wait," he replied, and, turning his back on Bagot, he stepped to where poor Rough was

lying, his limbs twitching as if death were very close. "If my little chum dies, I'll thrash the fiend twice round the barracks. Rough, old boy. You're not done yet. Look up!"

Rough turned his glazing eyes at the familiar voice, and gave Ronald a look which wrung the lad's heart and forced tears into his eyes. He gathered the dog tenderly into his arms as if it were a sick child, and carried him over to the guard-room, where he knew that he would be among friends.

Sergeant Bagot stood his ground as he passed, the same evil, taunting smile on his face, as if hoping yet that he could spur his enemy to open mutiny, then he turned on his heel and departed to his bunk, amid a storm of hisses and half-suppressed hoots of contempt, which he could only affect not to hear.

Poor Rough was in a sorry plight. Corporal Kedge came down to the guard-room on hearing the news, and found Ronald sitting there in dogged silence, his little chum quivering and twitching in his arms.

"Let me have a look at him," said Kedge, and lifted Rough on to the table. "My father knew a good deal about dawgs. He kept a bird-shop in his time, with a dawg hospital as a branch business in the back area. He'd have as many as sixteen or twenty patients when trade was good. Six-and-twenty 'mummy's darlin's' at half a thick 'un a week, and all the grub they got between 'em in a day wouldn't have filled my cap. 'Starve 'em' was the old man's motto, and it worked like a miracle; but Rough's case is different to their's, I can see. His ribs are broken. That's what's wrong with him. I'll get Adams down and see what he can make of him."

Adams was the ambulance-corporal. He strapped poor Rough up in bandages, while Kedge physicked him and Ronald held his head. The men of the guard gathered round in silent sympathy, and passed news of his progress to the scores of Tommies who came over to inquire.

As if he felt that much was expected of him, Rough gave a pathetic little shrug at last, and seemed to set his heart on getting well. They put him down on a dry, warm coat before the guard-room door, and there Ronald had to leave him to dress for the next parade.

That evening, news came from the Naval Hospital at Plymport that Alf Sheppard's life was no longer in danger, and that he had taken a sudden and decided turn for the better.

Colonel Conger, feeling that the many innocent had suffered long enough for the sins of the few guilty ones, promptly cancelled the order confining all men to barracks, and Ronald, Tony, and their two old soldier chums determined on an expedition into the town.

The three last would all have much money to spend, for they had backed Ronald to win in his contest with the Navy champion, and their gains would be lying waiting for them.

Ronald, therefore, was to be their guest for the evening, and the programme, a slap-up dinner at the Roebuck Hotel, and an adjournment to the Woolchester Paragon, in time for the "second house" at nine.

As Rough seemed to be progressing well under the care of his many nurses, and Corporal Kedge, having prescribed certain medicines which would have to be purchased in the town, Ronald consented to attend the first half of the entertainment, at any rate.

In the anticipation of the evening's enjoyment, no one remembered the scrimmage of the previous day with the Fermanaghs, and the fact that there would be certain trouble for all Wessex men who came in contact with the infuriated Irishmen that night.

It was early yet, and none of the Fort Kit battalion were at present in the town. With light hearts, the four warriors, in spick and span "walking-out rig," came swinging down Woolchester High Street, heading for the Roebuck Hotel, the best hotel in the town.

It was far from their intention to dine "table dotty with the nob's," as Mouldy put it, but the host, having been an old soldier himself, kept a warm corner in his heart for a redcoat, and could always find a modest private room, and a table spread with good things for those who could afford his reduced tariff and knew how to behave themselves.

Mouldy and Hookey, as patrons of the Roebuck Tap, were on this special list, and a substantial dinner having been ordered, it was decided to take a stroll until it was ready.

Woolchester is a flourishing town, apart from the military garrison which it is called upon to supply. There are big, comfortable shops in the High Street, and among the brightest lit and busiest was Dottrell's, the poulterer and game-dealer, for Christmas was close at hand, and the season of festivity was already in full swing.

Reaching across the open shop-front, in double rank, like so many pink soldiers paraded standing on their heads,

were a couple of score of the very finest turkeys that a very fine turkey-farming district could produce.

Mouldy's pockets were full of money, and his heart bursting with good feeling at that moment.

"Look here, Hookey," he said, fixing his eye on the biggest and fattest turkey in the line, "you and me have done ourselves pretty well over Chester's scrap—being right in the know, so to speak. What d'ye say to giving the boys of No. 4 section a good blow out? What d'ye say to buying that turkey there—that whacking big 'un what is blank-file on the left of the company—and getting old Dripping to cook it, and having it for Sunday's dinner—eh? What say, old chum?"

"Right-ho! I'm game!" agreed Hookey readily, jingling the handful of jimmy-o'-goblins which represented his winnings. "Ask 'em how much it is, an' offer 'em half."

Mr. Dottrell having listened to this interesting dialogue from behind a screen of pheasants' tails, emerged, prepared to bargain on the proposed basis.

"Say, mister," said Mouldy, prodding at the selected turkey with his cane, "how much is this thin one, what must have died of a broken heart—the one I can smell from here?"

"Twelve-and-sixpence to you!" said Dottrell fiercely.

"Well, I'll tell ye what. My friend and me are poor men, and we ain't what you'd call dainty feeders, so we'll give yer five shillings, and a written guarantee to have it safe out of the way afore the sanitary inspector gets a whiff of it, and orders it to be thrown in the dustbin. Come, now, say the word! Five shillings, and we'll arrest it on the spot."

"Get out!" said Mr. Dottrell, turning as red as any of the wattles on his plump wares.

"Five-and-sixpence, then, and we'll find our own disinfectant," said Mouldy.

The sight of four redcoats paraded in front of the poulterer's shop was beginning to attract unwelcome attention, and Mouldy's witticisms were scarcely calculated to improve trade.

"Twelve-and-sixpence!" said Mr. Dottrell, casting an eye up and down the street to see if there were any red-caps in sight to appeal to for protection. There was no sign of the military police, and Mouldy, having shaken his head determinedly, he said: "Look here, you can have it for ten bob!"

"Then," said Mouldy, "since you're so accommodating, we'll split the difference, and make it five-and-ninepence. Hand over the bird, and, Hookey, my lad, stand ready to fetch it a clip with your boot if it starts to walk away on its back. Hang me, if he ain't breathin' hard now!"

"Five-and-ninepence 'be hanged!" said Mr. Dottrell hotly, while the little crowd of onlookers sniggered. "Look here, I'll take seven-and-sixpence, and not a penny less! If you don't like it, lump it, and clear, or I'll call the police. You impertinent scoundrels, coming here and making nasty remarks about the finest show of poultry and the freshest that ever was. Get out!"

"Say, Hookey," said the genial Mouldy to his mate, "he seems a nice, kind sort of a gentleman; let's make it six bob."

"Right-ho, Mouldy! There's my 'alf. Give it to the old grumpus, and I'll carry the bird."

The six shillings were pressed into the poulterer's unresisting palm, while Hookey deftly hooked the bird down with his stick and tucked it under his arm. Then the four

gallant warriors departed, leaving old Dottrell undecided whether to yell "Stop thieves!" or make the best of a bad bargain.

There being no sound of pursuit, the four dropped into an easy stride, and headed for the Roebuck, laughing over the success of Mouldy's bargaining. Suddenly, from a turning leading to the barracks, a dapper figure emerged and headed past them on the opposite pavement.

A second glance revealed that it was Lieutenant Ian Chenys.

Realising that a naked turkey could scarcely be included as a part of a soldier's walking-out rig, Hookey slung his bird with a swift jerk of the arm into a sweetstuff shop, to the amazement of the ancient proprietress. The four then lined up on the edge of the pavement, and came to the salute.

Ian passed by without a sign, his eyes bent upon the pavement. At the door of the hotel he stopped and entered. At that instant a station cab rattled up the street.

While Hookey was repossessing himself of his property, disguising it this time in his overcoat, Ronald glanced casually at the occupant of the vehicle.

One look at the heavy, saturnine face, thrown into strong relief by the little lamp inside the cab, made him catch his breath in horror and disgust.

For the man was none other than Joseph Mordecai, of Mordecai & Evans, perhaps the most powerful, and certainly the most relentless firm of moneylenders in the kingdom.

In a flash Ronald recalled how, on the occasion of their one and only meeting, he had had the satisfaction of kicking Mr. Mordecai down two flights of stairs, and flinging his hat and umbrella into the street after him.

That was when young Loverson, a wild cadet, had become entangled in the usurer's snares, and Ronald had only discovered his plight just in time to release him before the noose had tightened beyond all hope.

"I wonder what the cur can be doing in Woolchester?" Ronald muttered to himself as the cab trundled by.

The eyes of the two men had met, but Mr. Mordecai was either deep in thought, or he failed to recognise in the guise of a soldier's uniform one of the many against whom he harboured an undying grudge.

The cab passed on, and pulled up before the Roebuck Hotel, where the moneylender alighted.

"Ian!" gasped Ronald, suddenly awakening to the truth. "From what he said it must be right. Poor, miserable wretch! If he has put himself into that man's claws, then Heaven help him!"

Mr. Ian Chenys, of the Wessex Regiment, had scarcely flung himself into a chair in the private room he had engaged at the Roebuck, than a waiter entered.

"Gentleman to see you, sir."

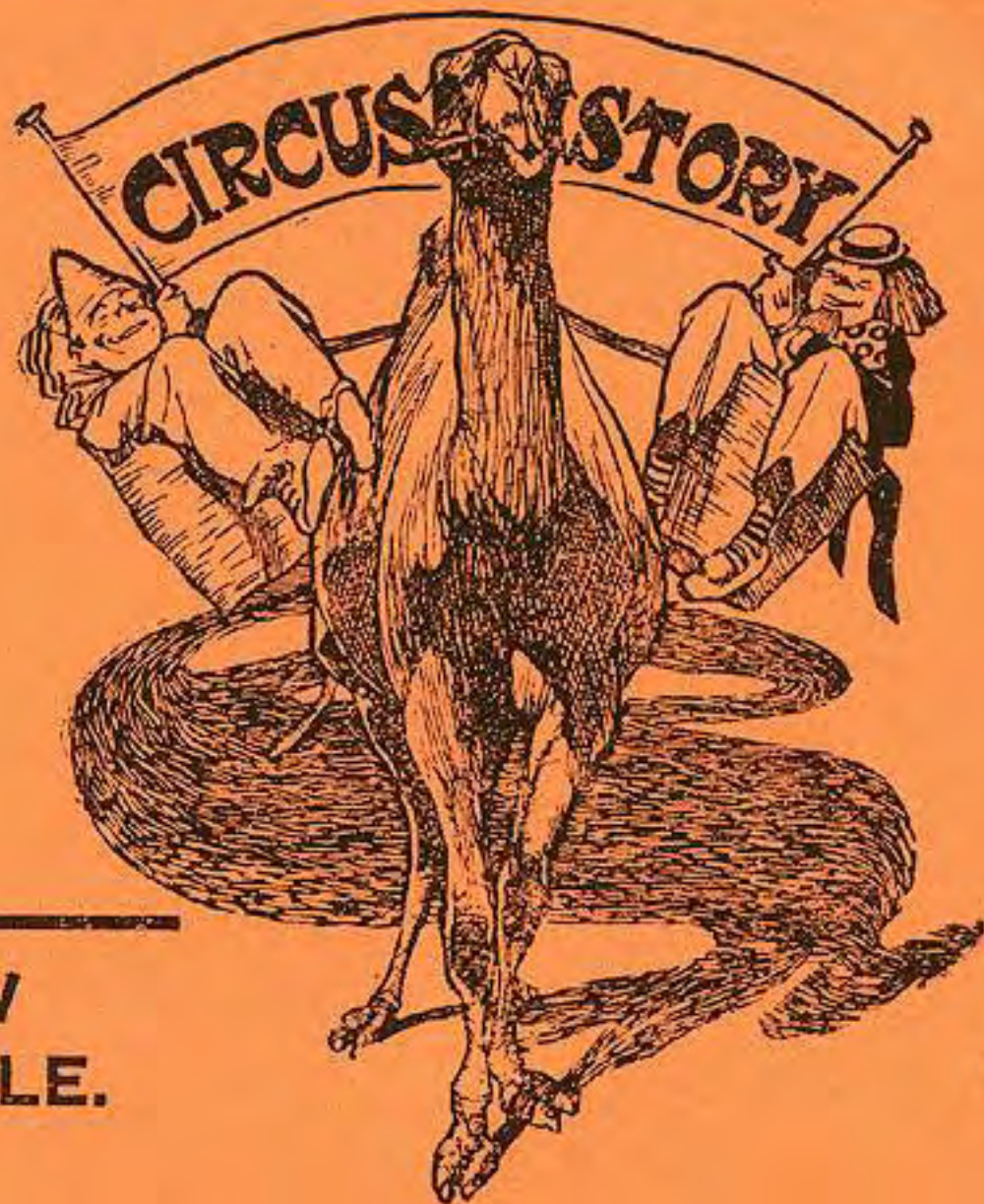
"Show him up!" answered Ian, with peevish impatience, adding: "Ah, here you are!" as Mr. Mordecai brushed the man on one side and entered.

"Sit down!" said Ian.

"Ah, thanks! Hope you are well, Mithter Chenyth? Lovely weather for the time of year, ain't it? Only two weekth to Chrithmath, too! Lovely time, Chrithmath. I like it."

"Indeed!" said Ian, in a chilly voice.

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