

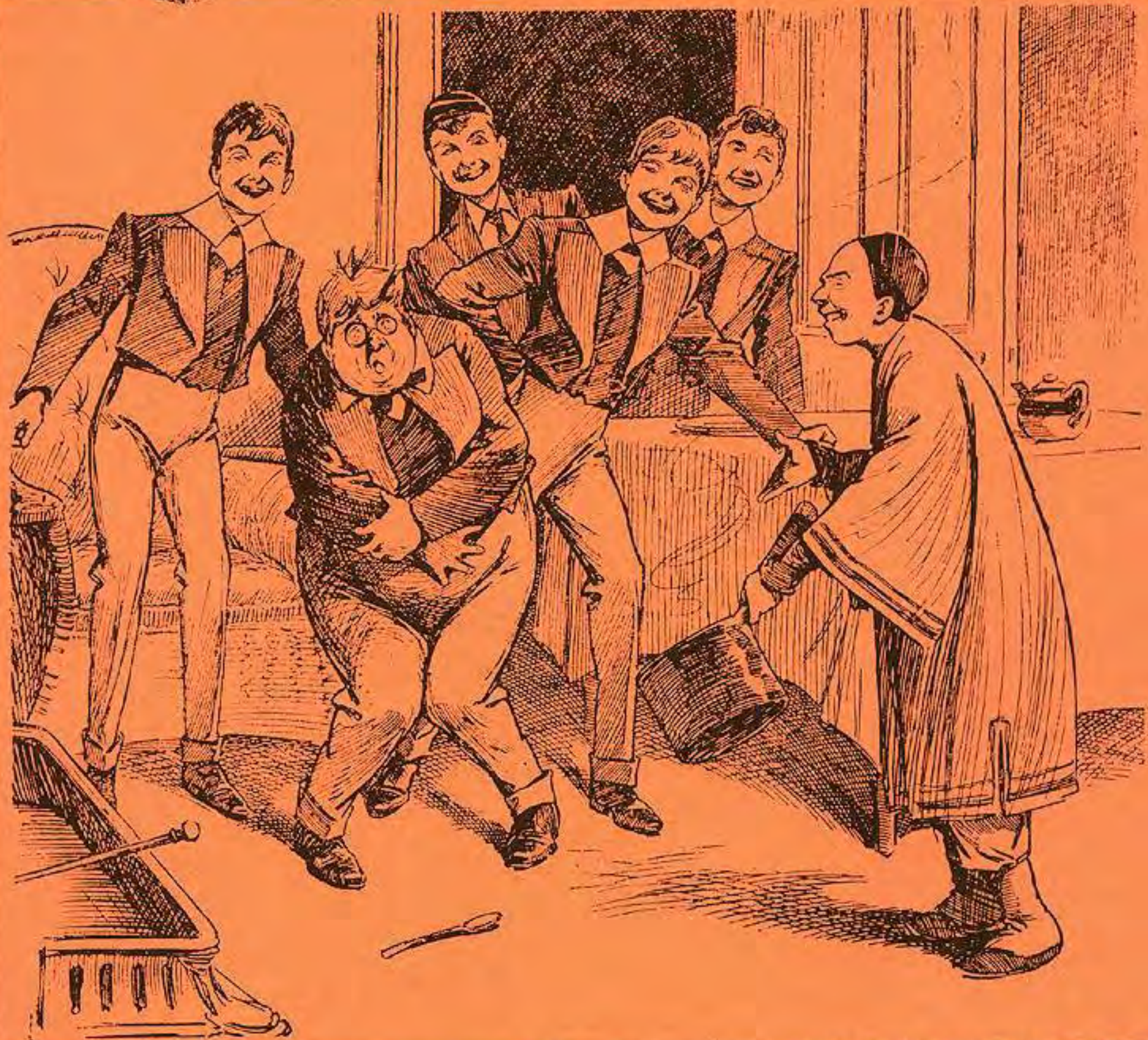
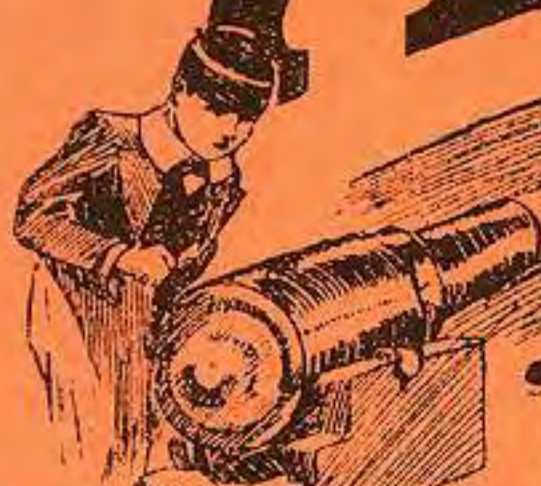
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DOUBLE LENGTH
STORY BY
FRANK RICHARDS

THE FIFTH of GREYFRIARS



Billy Bunter thought of what he had eaten, and his face went a pale green colour.





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The Fifth at Greyfriars

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

BY

FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Bulstrode Takes his Medicine.

"HURRAY!"

It was Bob Cherry, of the Remove, who gave utterance to that shout, which rang through the passages far and wide, and was heard over half the extent of Greyfriars.

Bob Cherry had glanced up at the notice-board in the hall, to see if there was anything new in the football line, and the sight of a notice in the Head's handwriting had brought forth that formidable cheer.

The Head's little notices did not generally evoke enthusiasm. But this was a special occasion. Bob Cherry was the first to see this particular notice, but his "Hurra!" brought a crowd to the spot, and there was a general shout.

"Hip, pip!"

"Hurra!"

"Here, cheese it!" said Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove. "Not so much row, you know. It's all right for us, but—"

"Oh, rats!" said Bulstrode. "Why shouldn't we cheer if we like? Hurra!"

"Hip, pip!"

Wharton frowned.

"I wasn't thinking of the row, but the chap principally concerned. If he hears us yelling like this—"

"Serve him right! Hurra!"

"Shut up! Here he comes!"

"Hurra!" shouted Bulstrode defiantly. "Hip, pip, hurra!"

Wharton set his lips. But he could not silence Bulstrode just then. A pleasant-looking gentleman was coming along the passage, and the noise made by the enthusiastic juniors had evidently attracted his attention, for he stopped and looked at them.

It was Mr. Chesham, the temporary master of the Remove at Greyfriars.

Mr. Quelch, the Remove-master, was away, and the new Form-master had taken his place during his absence—without much success, from the Remove point of view.

The Remove—the Lower Fourth at Greyfriars—were not an easy Form to handle, and Mr. Chesham was the least likely of all men to succeed with them.

He was given to fancying himself, and everybody else, ill, and to prescribing weird and wonderful remedies for the imaginary ailments; and if the Remove hated anything, they hated medicines and laying up.

To be excused from lessons to take a run on a bike, or a punt on the footer field, was all very well. They could have understood that. But to be sent from the class-room to lie down quietly, with the blinds drawn down, and perfect quiet maintained—that was a refined torture. The slackest slacker in the Remove preferred grinding Latin in the class-rooms.

Mr. Chesham was good-natured and kind, but he did not understand boys. He meant well; but good intentions were not quite enough.

The group of juniors standing in front of the notice-board

griained as they saw him stop and look at them, and Bulstrode chuckled audibly.

"Give him a rouser," he muttered.

"Shut up!" muttered Bob Cherry. "Don't be a cad."

"Why, you were the first to yell when you saw the notice."

"Yes; but Chesham wasn't in hearing then."

"All the better if he's in hearing. It will show him what we think of him."

"Don't be a pig," muttered Wharton. "He's going to-night. Can't you be decently civilised for a bit, Bulstrode?"

"Oh, rats! Give him a cheer."

"Shut up!"

"Hurrah!" roared Bulstrode. "Hip, pip!"

Mr. Chesham came up, looking somewhat curious.

"Dear me!" he remarked. "There must be a very interesting notice on the board. Please allow me to see it."

"Certainly, sir," said Bulstrode, making room. "It's a notice from the Head, sir."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, sir. We're jolly glad to see it."

"Ah! Please let me look."

Mr. Chesham glanced at the notice on the board. Then a dark shade overspread his face.

The notice which had called forth the cheers of the Removites ran as follows:

"Mr. Quelch will resume his duties at Greyfriars to-day at afternoon school.
J. LOCKE, Head-master."

It was short, but very sweet.

Mr. Quelch was a Tartar sometimes. He ruled the Remove with an iron hand—the only way they could be ruled—and they knew it.

But there was no nonsense about him. He had never been fussy. He did not bother his head about matters that did not concern him. If a fellow had a cold, he sent him into the sanatorium; but he did not trouble to be always poking his nose, as Bob Cherry expressed it, into a fellow's chest, and asking questions about the state of his lungs and his heart.

Harry Wharton hardly dared to look at Mr. Chesham's face as he read the notice.

The gladness of the Remove at the promised return of their old Form-master was natural enough, but such a demonstration as this was an insult to Mr. Chesham.

Bulstrode fully intended it to be taken as one. He had suffered as much as anybody from the attentions of the faddist Form-master, and he wanted to get his own back a little.

Mr. Chesham frowned as he read the notice.

"Ah! You are pleased with Mr. Quelch's return?" he remarked.

"Yes, sir," said Wharton, at whom Mr. Chesham was looking as he made the remark.

"Very pleased, sir," said Bulstrode. "We all like Quelch—ahem!—Mr. Quelch, I mean. We all respect him, sir."

Bulstrode placed an emphasis on the word "him" that made the remark utterly insolent, but Mr. Chesham did not appear to notice it.

"Well, I am glad you are pleased," he remarked. "I am glad to see you so attached to your master. I hope I have made you like me during my stay here, though we have not been able to agree always upon all matters. I hope to leave you all in better health when I go than you were in when I came."

"Thank you, sir," said Harry. "We're all right."

"I wish I could think so. Bulstrode does not appear to me to be all right," said Mr. Chesham, looking attentively at the bully of the Remove. "You were shouting very loudly just now, Bulstrode."

"Yes, sir."

"Did you find that it placed any strain on your chest in any way?"

"No, sir," said Bulstrode hastily.

"Ah! You are quite sure?"

"Quite sure, sir."

"One cannot be too sure," said Mr. Chesham, with a thoughtful shake of the head. "You would be better for taking precautions against any strain. A dose of the—"

"Oh, no, sir, I—"

"A dose," went on Mr. Chesham, unheeding, "of the Golden Gargle for Little Larynxes would be of great assistance to you."

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

"I think you must allow me to know best on this subject, Bulstrode. Pray follow me to my study."

"If you please, sir—"

"That will do. Follow me."

Mr. Chesham stalked away. Bulstrode, casting a savage look at the grinning Removites, reluctantly followed him.

As they went down the passage, the Remove bully con-

soled himself by clenching his fists and brandishing them behind Mr. Chesham's back, as an indication of what he would like to do if he dared.

The Form-master looked round suddenly, and caught him with his clenched fists in the air.

"My hat!" murmured Harry Wharton.

The juniors looked on open-mouthed. Bulstrode, stricken with dismay, remained petrified, his fists still in the air.

"Dear me! What is the meaning of that peculiar attitude, Bulstrode?" asked Mr. Chesham, in his soft voice.

"I—I—I—"

"I did not know that you were afflicted with stammering, Bulstrode."

"I—I—I—"

"Dear me! Is that a peculiar form of exercise, or what?"

"I—I was doing some gymnastics, sir," gasped Bulstrode.

"A very peculiar moment to choose for doing gymnastics, Bulstrode. Kindly follow me to my study without any further gymnastics."

"Ye-e-e-es, sir."

And Bulstrode followed Mr. Chesham in. Some of the juniors waited for him to come out. It was not a caning he was to have, though he certainly deserved one. But his ordeal would probably be worse than a caning.

It was five minutes before Bulstrode came out, and when he came out his face was pale, and he was gasping like a fish. He glared at the juniors and rushed past them.

"My hat!" said Nugent. "He's had it bad. What was it like, Bulstrode?"

"Gr-r-r-r-r!"

"Nice?"

"Br-r-r-r-r!"

"Did you like it?"

"Groo! Gerrooh!"

And with that intelligent and intelligible reply, Bulstrode dashed off to the nearest bath-room, and for the next five minutes he was busily engaged in washing out his mouth under the tap.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Good Wheeze.

BOB CHERRY looked into No. 1 Study in the Remove passage.

Bob did not belong to No. 1 now, having been moved up the passage to No. 13, which he shared with Mark Linley and Wun Lung, the Chinese junior. Between the two ends of the passage there was a great deal of rivalry; and when Bob Cherry looked in at his old quarters, a row was as often as not the result.

But just now Bob was on a peaceful errand.

"Wharton, old man—"

But Harry Wharton was not there. The only tenant of the study was a fat junior with a large pair of spectacles—Billy Bunter, generally called the Owl.

He blinked at Bob Cherry.

"I say, Cherry—"

"Where's Wharton?"

"I think he's gone down to the footer with Nugent and Brown. He seems to be chumming up a lot with that chap Brown from New Zealand," said Billy Bunter. "I offered to take Brown up, but he wasn't even civil about it."

Bob Cherry laughed.

"How much did Brown lend you?" he asked.

"Oh, really, Cherry, I don't think you ought to imply that I take a fellow up for the purpose of borrowing money of him."

"We all know you, Billy."

"It's true I'm rather short of money at the present moment," said Bunter. "I've been disappointed about a postal-order. I was expecting an order for ten shillings this morning, but it hasn't come. What would you advise me to do?"

"Wire to the Postmaster-General, and say you'll report him if he doesn't send it on at once."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"So-long!"

"Here, hold on a minute! You see, I'm out of funds owing to that beastly postal-order not turning up. Could you lend me ten shillings, and have the postal-order for it?"

"I could lend you ten shillings, Bunter; but I'm afraid I couldn't have the postal-order for it, as that only exists in your giddy imagination. Would twopence do?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Bob Cherry selected two pennies from his trousers-pocket.

"Twopence, Bunter."

"Make it five bob."

"Five rats!"

"A shilling, then! If I don't get a bit of something to supplement dinner, I am afraid I shall have a return of my



Wun Lung stirred the stew, humming to himself a Chinese song as he worked. Billy Bunter did not move his eyes from the cook and the saucepan.

attacks of somnambulism, and you know what a lot of trouble they cause."

"Do you want the twopence, or don't you want the twopence?" demanded Bob Cherry, making a motion of returning the coins to his pocket.

Billy Bunter jumped up.

"I'll have it, Cherry, please. It may save my life."

"In that case you jolly well sha'n't have it!" said Bob Cherry emphatically. "I'm not the fellow to do the school a bad turn like that."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Well, here you are!" said Bob, laughing. "Catch!" And he tossed the pennies to Bunter, catching him on the nose with one, and in the neck with the other. "Got them?"

"Ow! Oh, really—"

Bob Cherry slammed the door, and walked away laughing. Billy Bunter blinked discontentedly at the twopence. But twopence was twopence, and the fat junior ambled off to the school shop to expend it, and to extract the greatest possible amount of comestibles from Mrs. Mimble's store for that humble sum.

Bob Cherry went down to the football-field, where he found most of the Remove, filling in the time before afternoon school. He called to Harry Wharton, but the captain of the Remove did not hear or heed.

He was engaged in a desperate struggle with Tom Brown, the New Zealander, and Frank Nugent for the possession

of a football, and a crowd of juniors were looking on and cheering.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, approaching the three combating juniors. "I want to speak to you, Wharton!"

"On the ball, Browney!"

"Have it out, Wharton!"

"Buck up, Nugent!"

"Go it!"

"Wharton, I want to speak to you!"

"Go it—go it!"

Tom Brown hooked the ball away from Nugent, and ran with it; but Wharton was on it like a shot. He brought it round, and Nugent rushed at him, and Wharton kicked clear—or, rather, he would have kicked clear if Bob Cherry hadn't been there.

But Bob was there.

He was directly in the path of the ball, and before he knew it was coming, he had stopped it with his nose.

There was a terrific biff, and a bump, as Bob Cherry sat down suddenly and violently.

The juniors roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat! I—ow—what was it? Something hit me on the nose!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

NEXT
WEEK:

"BUNTER, THE DETECTIVE."

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton
& Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

"You cackling asses! I'm hurt!" Bob Cherry put his hand to his nose, which felt as if it had swollen to double its usual size, and was certainly turning of a fiery red. "Ow! Who biffed that footer at me?"

"Awfully sorry, old chap!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "What did you come so close for? I didn't see you."

"You ass!"

"Sorry! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, you look sorry!" growled Bob Cherry, getting upon his feet. "Nice sort of a boko I shall have for some time to come."

"Well, if a chap will shove his nose in the way of a football—!" began Nugent, in an argumentative tone.

"Br-r-r!" said Bob Cherry, rubbing his nose. "I came here to speak to you chaps. It occurs to me that as Quelch is returning this afternoon, we ought to get up some sort of a welcome for him."

"Good wheeze!" said Harry Wharton; and Hurrce Jamset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur, added, in his peculiar English, that the wheeziness of the suggestion was terrific.

"Well, what shall we do?" asked Bob. "There isn't much time. If he's going to take afternoon classes it won't be long before he is at Greyfriars, so we can't go down and meet the train. Besides, that would be no good."

"Suppose we all rush at him and hug him as he comes into the Form-room?" suggested Nugent. "That would be effective."

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"Or I would play a triumphal march on my mouth-organ," said Nugent, more seriously. "I could strike up 'See the Conquering Hero comes,' and—"

"You're jolly well not going to make Quelch an excuse for inflicting that mouth-organ on us!" said Skinner.

"Look here—"

"I don't care! I'm agreeable to anything but the mouth-organ," said Skinner. "I appeal to the fellows!"

"What-ho!" said a dozen voices. "Besides, it wouldn't be fair on Quelch."

Nugent snorted.

"What price illuminating the class-room with signs of 'WELCOME HOME!' and coloured paper chains?" suggested Russell.

"Rotten!" was the general verdict.

"I've got an idea," Bob Cherry remarked. "I don't want to put it forward if anybody else has a better one, though."

"Fire away!"

"Get it off your chest!"

"And buck up, my worthy chum, for the return of the august Quelch is at hand, and the procrastinationfulness is the timeful thief," urged the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Well, I was thinking of a little speech in the class-room," said Bob Cherry, colouring a little. "I shouldn't mind making the speech—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you sniggering at, Snoop?"

"Oh, nothing!" said Snoop. "It strikes me you've got the speech cut and dried already, that's all. He, he, he!"

"Something else will strike you if I have any more of your he, he, he!" growled Bob Cherry. "If you think that sounds pretty, you are making a ghastly mistake. Look here, you chaps, do you think a speech is a good wheeze?"

"Jolly good!" said Wharton, with a smile.

"If anybody else thinks he could make a better speech than I could, I'm willing to resign in his favour," said Bob Cherry, glaring at the grinning juniors.

"Not a bit of it, dear boy."

"Go ahead!"

"Let's have a rehearsal of it now, look you," said Morgan.

"Hooray! Rehearse, Bob!"

"Rats! I'm not going to be such a giddy ass!" grunted Bob. "I haven't quite finished the speech yet, either. I've just sketched it out, that's all. My idea is that when Quelch comes into the class-room, we're all there first, and we all rise to our feet, and I make the speech of welcome."

"Good!"

"The goodfulness is terrific."

"Then Quelch will make a handsome reply, I expect, and we shall give him a cheer. He may be so pleased that he'll let us off early this afternoon. You never know."

"My hat! What a head you've got, Bob!"

"Well, I think of these things," said Bob Cherry modestly. "One thing's jolly certain, the speech-making will take up some time out of the first lesson, so we shall be that much the gainers, at any rate."

"Hurray!"

"It's settled, then?"

"Rather!"

THE MAGNET—91.

NEXT WEEK: "THE MAGNET" LIBRARY RETURNS TO USUAL SIZE AND PRICE: ONE HALFPENNY.

"Then mind you're all in the class-room five minutes early, so as to be in order, and ready to rise to the occasion when Quelch enters."

"Agreed!"

And, that important matter having been settled, Bob Cherry walked off to give the finishing touches to his speech.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bob Cherry Gets Excited.

"I SAY, Cherry—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"But, I say—"

Bob Cherry turned round, exasperated. He was sitting at the table in No. 13 Study, with a sheet of paper before him, and a pen in his hand. He was not writing, but was engaged in slowly and methodically gnawing the handle of the pen. He was not making much progress with the speech, but he was getting along at a good rate on the pen-handle, and it seemed likely that he would soon reach the holder.

To be interrupted in the midst of his deep thoughts was exasperating, and to be interrupted by a troublesome and persistent fellow like Bunter was doubly so. Bob Cherry fixed a glare of wrath upon the fat Removite.

"Get out, Bunter!"

"Yes; but I say—"

"Will you go?" roared Bob Cherry, picking up a book.

Billy Bunter dodged towards the door, and stood ready to dodge behind it if the book should be hurled.

"Yes; I'm just going, Cherry; but I wanted to speak to you about the Fifth."

"Blow the Fifth!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"What is the matter, you fat image?" demanded Bob Cherry. "If the Fifth have been ragging you, I dare say you deserved it; and, anyway, you can go to the fellows in your own study about it. Buzz off!"

"I don't mean the Fifth—"

"You ass! I don't believe you know what you do mean!"

"I mean, I don't mean the Fifth Form."

"Eh? Then what do you mean, dummy?"

"The Fifth of November."

"Oh!"

"It will have to be celebrated on the Saturday this year," said Bunter—"Saturday this week, you know. I have been thinking of a scheme for getting fireworks cheap, and I thought I would give you first chance."

"I don't want any cheap fireworks!" howled Bob Cherry. "I want to be left alone to get this beastly speech done!"

"Yes; but by my scheme you can save fifty per cent.," explained Bunter eagerly. "The other fellows are wasting their time at the footer, and won't listen to me; but you're a sensible chap, Cherry. I save you pounds—"

"Rats! Buzz off!"

"You advance a small sum, say five shillings—"

"Get out!"

"I get half a dozen other fellows to do the same—"

"Bunk!"

"And then, with my business ability, and by dealing direct with the manufacturer, I get the things at fifty per cent. below cost price—I mean at fifty per cent. below the usual selling price."

"Travel!"

"I save you heaps of tin this way, as—"

"Scat!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Biff!

The volume flew through the air, and it caught Billy Bunter before he had time to dodge. It crashed upon his chest, and he sat down in the doorway with a gasp like escaping steam.

"Ow! Wow!"

"Get out!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Ow!"

Another book came hurtling through the air, and Billy Bunter rolled out into the passage just in time. The book crashed on the floor.

Bob Cherry breathed hard through his nose.

"The fat worm!" he murmured wrathfully. "The fat bounder! Fancy talking about his rotten schemes to a chap who's engaged in composing a speech! Now, I wonder how this will do? 'Dear sir'—no; that sounds like beginning a letter. 'Respected sir'—that's better. 'Respected sir, we welcome you back to—' Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Billy Bunter was looking in at the door again.

"I say, Cherry—"

"Be off!" roared Bob Cherry, jumping up.

Bunter eyed him warily.

"Yes, but—"

Bob made a rush at him.

Billy Bunter dodged into the passage, and caught his foot in the mat in his hurry, and went over with a bump. Bob Cherry's grasp was upon him the next moment.

"Ow!" roared Bunter. "Oh! Help!"

Smack! Smack! Smack!

The portion of Bunter that was uppermost came in for three mighty smacks from Bob Cherry's open palm, which rang along the passage like pistol-shots.

Bunter roared in earnest then.

"Now, is that enough?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Ow! Yow!"

"Are you going?"

"Yes. Ow! Yes!"

"Then buzz off!"

Bunter squirmed away along the passage. Bob Cherry, very red and ruffled, returned to his unfinished speech.

Billy Bunter did not stop till he had reached the door of No. 1 Study. He was ready to rush in and lock the door behind him, but a glance back showed that he was not pursued. He hung on to the door post and gasped for breath.

There had been more sound than force in Bob Cherry's smacks, and the fat junior was not much hurt, but he was boiling with wrath and indignation.

"The beast!" he gasped. "The horrid, ungrateful beast! I go to him with a scheme for saving his money, only needing a little cash in advance, and this is how he treats me. I've never heard of such ingratitude in my life before. I'll make him sit up."

"Hallo, Owl!" exclaimed Wharton, coming along the passage. "What's the trouble?"

"Bob Cherry has been acting the rotten beast."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I just spoke to him, and he was upon me like a tiger cat, with a poker in his hand—"

"Ha, ha, ha! I've never seen a tiger cat handling a poker."

"I escaped in time to save my life, I think," said Bunter. "He was dangerous. At any other time I should have licked him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He seems to be off his rocker. He was writing some rot or other in his study—"

"You ass! You interrupted him when he was composing his speech," said Wharton, laughing. "You ought to have expected trouble."

"Speech! What speech?"

Harry explained, and Billy Bunter's round eyes glimmered behind his spectacles. It seemed a chance for the ventriloquist of Greyfriars to "get his own back," and that was the thought that flashed into Billy Bunter's mind at once.

"Bob Cherry's making a speech in the class-room to welcome Quelch back, is he?" he asked thoughtfully.

"Yes. We're all going to stand up while Bob gets the speech off. I hope it will go off all right."

"So do I," said Bunter; and he chuckled.

Harry Wharton stared at him.

"What are you sniggering about?"

"Oh, nothing!"

"There's no reason why Bob's speech shouldn't go off all right, is there?"

"Oh, no!"

And Billy Bunter followed up that remark with another inexplicable chuckle.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Bob Cherry's Speech.

FIVE minutes before the usual time, the Remove marched into their class-room, and took their seats. Mr. Chesham was gone; they had seen him drive off to the station, and though no one could be supposed to be sorry that he had gone, the Form had maintained a respectful silence. Bulstrode had tried to get up a hostile demonstration as the trap drove away, but Harry Wharton & Co., on this occasion, had had their way.

Wharton, Cherry, Nugent, Hurree Singh, Mark Linley, and Tom Brown, with a few others, had intimated plainly that anybody who hissed Mr. Chesham, or did anything else of an objectionable character, would be promptly bumped as hard as they could bump him.

Mr. Chesham had not been popular, and he had caused trouble in the Form; but when he was going it was just as well to be decent, as Harry Wharton put it.

And on this occasion Bulstrode & Co. had thought it better to give in.

Mr. Chesham was gone, and the Form were prepared to receive their old Form-master back again, and with some difficulty the whole Form had been persuaded to get into their places five minutes early.

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NEXT
WEEK

"BUNTER. THE DETECTIVE."

NEXT
TUESDAY.

The "Magnet"

LIBRARY.

ONE
HALFPENNY.

The first they would see of Mr. Quelch after his return would be when he entered the room to take them for afternoon lessons; and even Bulstrode agreed that it was a good "dodge" to take up some of the time of first lesson in speech-making and cheering.

Bob Cherry had finished his speech—not to his satisfaction; but, then, great artists never are satisfied with their work.

He confided to Wharton that it was pretty good, though not so good as he might have made it with longer notice, and Harry assured him that he had no doubt it was first chop.

Bob had the speech written out in big round hand, on a sheet of foolscap under his desk, and while the class waited for Mr. Quelch to come in, he frequently consulted it, refreshing his memory on various points.

Bob Cherry hadn't a very good memory for this sort of thing, but he hoped to be able to take surreptitious glances at the speech while he was making it, and so be able to keep up the thread of his discourse.

There was a buzz of voices in the room, and Bob Cherry looked round irritably at the muttering juniors.

"Here, shut up, some of you!" he said. "How the dickens am I to get this speech off by heart while you're jawing?"

"Blessed if I know," said Skinner. "Ask us another."

"Ring off, you magpie!"

"Oh, blow your old speech!" said Bulstrode. "It's beginning to get on my nerves. The only important thing is to spin it out as long as Quelch will stand it."

"Look here, Bulstrode—"

"Then we'll fill up as much time as possible cheering," said Bulstrode. "We may be able to cut half the Latin lesson that way."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The ha-ha-ha-fulness is terrific!" remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur. "It is a rippingful wheeze of our worthy chum Cherry."

"This speech is going to be a success," said Bob, glaring at Bulstrode. "You chattering asses shut up while I get it off."

"Rats!"

"Mind, you've all got to rise as Quelch comes in, and remain standing while I deliver the welcome-home speech."

"Hear, hear!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"But I say—"

"Shut up!" roared Bob Cherry.

And Billy Bunter shut up, but his round eyes glinted behind his big spectacles. The fat junior was ripe for mischief.

"We are all glad to see you home again," murmured Bob Cherry. "We all join hands in giving you a hearty cheer—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Bulstrode. "Do you cheer with your hands?"

"I mean that figuratively, of course, ass!"

"He means we all join hands in giving him a hearty clap," said Skinner. "Isn't that what you mean, Cherry?"

"No, it isn't. Shut up!"

And Bob Cherry, with a red face, went over that part of his speech again, his Form-fellows watching him with grinning faces.

"H'm! Perhaps that could be altered. It's all right, of course; there's no fault whatever to be found with it except by a grinning jackass, but perhaps I might as well alter it. We all join hands in giving you a hearty welcome home."

"Good!"

"Won't it be something like playing 'Here we go round the mulberry-bush?' " said Snoop, with an air of anxiety.

"You utter ass—"

"Well, if we all join hands, you know—"

"You crass idiot, that's figurative. We're not going to join hands."

"But you said we were."

"It's a way of putting it, idiot."

"Oh! Quelch will very likely misunderstand, if you say we're going to join hands and then we don't do anything of the sort."

"Oh, shut up!"

"Get on with the washing, Bob!"

"All right. 'Welcome home,' " went on Bob, with a heightened colour. "We have missed you, and have been very sorry—"

"Sounds as if you meant you had been shying things at him," commented Russell.

"Oh, cheese it, Russell! 'Very sorry,' " resumed Bob Cherry—"very sorry, and are very glad to welcome you back to the sphere—"

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton
& Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

"The what?"

"The sphere," said Bob Cherry warmly—"the sphere of your scholastic labours."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?" demanded Bob. "What's the matter with scholastic labours?"

"What's the matter with England?" said Skinner, chanting the refrain of the Territorial song. "She's all right!"

"Shut up, Skinner!"

"Oh, go on! Scholastic labours is good—distinctly good."

"The goodfulness is terrific."

"Go ahead, Cherry!"

"We intend to work hard, and prove a credit to the school—"

"Who does?" demanded Bulstrode.

"We do."

"I don't!"

"It's a way of putting it, to show Quelch we don't mind work," said Bob Cherry.

"But we do mind it!"

"We can't tell Quelch so."

"Well, I don't think you ought to tell him any whoppers!"

"Look here, Bulstrode—"

"It's not to say we intend to work hard! Besides, Quelch wouldn't believe it! He knows us!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I tell you it's only polite to say—"

"Cave! Here he comes!"

The handle of the door turned in the midst of the argument.

The Remove dropped into silence, and Bob Cherry remained standing with the speech in his hand, and with a very red and flustered face.

Mr. Quelch entered the room.

His clear-cut, strong face—very different from the irresolute countenance of Mr. Chesham, was a welcome sight to the juniors, though it meant the return of a time of hard rule and hard work.

He glanced at the class, and seemed a little surprised to see them all there, for he was a couple of minutes early himself. It was not like the Remove.

The juniors remained standing, and Bob Cherry took a hasty glance at his speech. He coughed violently to clear his throat, and fell into a fit of coughing in consequence; and if Mr. Chesham had been there, he would infallibly have made him swallow half a dozen Little Lozenges for Choky Chests. Mr. Quelch gave his class a nod.

"I am glad to see you all again, my boys!" he remarked.

Bob Cherry made an effort.

"Under the auspicious circumstances of your return, sir—"

Mr. Quelch looked at him with eyes like a pair of gimlets.

"What did you say, Cherry?"

"Under the auspicious circumstances of your return—"

"What do you mean?"

"Eh?"

"Are you joking, Cherry?"

Bob Cherry stared.

"Joking, sir? Certainly not!"

"Then what can you possibly mean by such a remark?"

"Under the auspicious circumstances of your return, sir, I wish to give you a welcome in the name of the whole Form—"

"Oh!" said Mr. Quelch.

That monosyllabic rejoinder seemed to take Bob's breath away, and he began to stammer. But from various places came encouraging whispers—stage whispers—which were perfectly audible to Mr. Quelch.

"Go it, Bob!"

"On the ball!"

"Pitch it out!"

"Go it, old chap!"

And thus encouraged, Bob Cherry plunged into his speech.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Not a Success!

UNDER the auspicious circumstances of your return to Greyfriars, sir, I wish to give you a welcome in the name of the whole Form—"

"Thank you, Cherry!"

"We all join hands in extending to you a hearty cheer—I mean we all join cheers in extending to you a hearty hand—"

There was a suppressed chuckle behind Bob, which added to his confusion.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Quelch.

A slight smile was lurking round the corners of his mouth now, and he seemed to have made up his mind to give Bob a chance, as Bob's good intentions were plain enough.

"We all join hands in giving you a hearty welcome home,"

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said Bob Cherry. "We have missed you, and are sorry you are back—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I mean we are sorry you have been away, and are glad to welcome you home, with a hearty cheer," mumbled Bob, "and to cheer you back to the sphere of your scholastic labours—"

"Go it, Bob!"

"Shut up, Skinner! We intend to work hard and prove—prove—prove—" Bob Cherry took a glance at the paper in his hand, saw the wrong part, and, in his confusion, went on with it. "And prove that during your absence we have not made the progress that—since your return we—we—we give you a hearty cheer, and hope that while the scene of your scholastic labours is under the auspicious circumstances of your return, we shall always fail to appreciate the trouble you take with us, and—and—"

The Remove were in convulsions now.

Bob was getting more and more mixed as he proceeded, and the juniors could not restrain their merriment.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

That roar of laughter finally put Bob Cherry out, and he broke off helplessly, and stood with a scarlet face staring at his paper.

Mr. Quelch smiled.

"Thank you very much, Cherry!"

"Not at all, sir. I—"

"Thank you for your speech of welcome—"

"I—I haven't finished yet, sir—"

"I am very much obliged," said Mr. Quelch, apparently not hearing Bob Cherry's remark. "I am glad to see that my return is so appreciated. We will, now—"

"Oh, hold on, Quelch!"

The juniors simply jumped. The tones were so exactly like Bob Cherry's that no one suspected for a moment that it was the Greyfriars' ventriloquist at work. Even Bob Cherry was amazed, and almost fancied for the moment that he had spoken.

Mr. Quelch stared.

"Cherry!"

"Ye-e-e-es, sir."

"How dare you!"

"I—I—I—"

Bob Cherry broke off helplessly, but there was a voice exactly like his own to carry on his remarks. Billy Bunter was out for vengeance.

"I think you might hear the rest, sir, and cut some of the rotten lesson. Blessed if any of us are anxious to grind Latin."

"Cherry!"

"Oh, sir! I—I—"

"Stand out here, Cherry!"

"I—I—I didn't—"

"Stand out here!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

Bob Cherry staggered out before the class.

"Now, Cherry, I do not wish to cane any boy immediately upon my return to the school, but I cannot pass over this impertinence!"

"But, sir, I—I didn't—"

"Not a word, sir!"

Bob Cherry gasped helplessly. The Greyfriars' ventriloquist would have filled up the pause, but Harry Wharton had tumbled to it this time, and his grasp was upon Billy Bunter's plump arm.

"Another word and I'll wring your neck, you young swab!" he muttered.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Shut up!"

Billy Bunter thought he had better shut up. But he was pretty well satisfied. Bob Cherry was in the hottest of hot water now!

"Not a word!" said Mr. Quelch. "This impertinence is astounding!"

"But—"

"I will not cane you, Cherry—"

"But, sir—"

"Do not interrupt me, boy! Go and stand in the corner, and remain there, sir, for the whole of the first lesson!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

Bob Cherry's face went scarlet again. It was a punishment more suitable for an infant in the Second Form than for one of the burliest fellows in the Lower Fourth.

"Oh, sir, I—"

"Obey me instantly, Cherry!"

Mr. Quelch's voice seemed to cut like a knife. When he spoke in that tone, it was useless to argue.

Bob Cherry walked to the corner, and stood there with a face like fire and his eyes upon the floor.

Mr. Quelch went to his desk with a heightened colour.

"I say, this is where we cheer!" whispered Bulstrode.

"Oh, shut up!"

"Sha'n't! It was in the programme to cheer when Cherry had finished his speech, and he has finished it now!"

"You ass—"

"Rats! I'm jolly well going to cheer, anyway!"

"What-ho!" said Skinner.

"Now, then, kids—all together!"

"Hurrah!"

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

Mr. Quelch started.

"Boys!"

"Hurrah!"

"Silence!"

"Hip, pip—"

"Boys! I—"

"Hip, pip, hurrah!"

The Remove simply roared it out. Mr. Quelch came in front of his desk with a very pink face.

"I presume this is intended for impertinence?" he said.

"Oh, no, sir!" said Bulstrode. "It's the cheer Cherry was speaking about in his speech, sir—the hearty cheer to welcome you home, sir!"

"Very good! You will take a hundred lines, Bulstrode!"

"But—but we were only cheering!"

"The class-room is not the place to cheer."

"But, sir, that was the hearty cheer to welcome you—"

"Take two hundred lines, Bulstrode!"

Bulstrode relapsed into silence. It was evident that Mr. Quelch was not to be imposed upon, and his impertinence might cost him dear if he proceeded.

"We will now commence," said Mr. Quelch, with a glance at the clock over the bookcase. "A quarter of an hour has been wasted in this nonsense. The class will remain in until a quarter to five, instead of dismissing at half-past four as usual, in order that the work may not suffer."

That was the last straw!

The whole Remove glared at Bob Cherry with basilisk eyes, and Billy Bunter groaned in spirit. It was his ventriloquism that had brought this about, added to Bulstrode's impertinence.

But the Remove had caught it now, and there was no help for it.

Lessons went off that afternoon without the cheery alacrity which should have been displayed on the first day of the Remove-master's return.

At half-past four the juniors cast fresh looks at Bob Cherry, expressing a yearning desire to scalp him.

It was not till the extra quarter of an hour had ticked away that the Remove were dismissed, Mr. Quelch seeing them out of the class-room with a grim smile.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Wun Lung Does Not Understand.

I SAY, you fellows—"

"You young sweep—"

"I say—Ow!"

Bunter broke off as a grasp of iron was laid upon his collar from behind, and he was swung round in the passage. He blinked through his spectacles at Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Trevor—"

"You young rascal!"

"Oh, is it you, Cherry? Leggo! That was a ripping speech you made, wasn't it? I—I—I—ow—I admired it immensely."

"Yes, and you messed it up with your rotten ventriloquism," said Bob Cherry wrathfully, shaking the fat junior till his spectacles slid down his fat little nose.

"Ow, ow! You messed it up, you know you must—ow!—admit that. I—I was trying to help you out, you know—ow!—really."

Shake, shake!

"Ow! You'll make my glasses fall off, Cherry; and if you break them, you'll jolly well have to pay for them. Ow! Make him leave off, Wharton."

Bob Cherry bumped the fat junior against the wall, and released him, with a sniff of disgust.

"Br-r-r! You're not worth licking."

"Oh!" gasped Billy Bunter, feeling very glad that he was not worth licking. "Oh! You have shaken all my breath out, you beast!"

"Well, let's get out and get some footer before dark," said Harry Wharton.

"Hold on, Wharton! I want to speak to you. I was just going to when that beast came and shook me. I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, get it over—quick!"

"I suppose you know that it's the Fifth of November at the end of this week."

"I believe so."

"We shall be celebrating it on Saturday."

"Well, it's not Saturday yet. Good-bye!"

"Hold on! We shall want some fireworks and things, you know."

"Mrs. Mimble is getting in her stock now," said Nugent.

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"I saw some of the boxes come by the carrier. It's all right."

"Yes, but I've got a scheme—"

"Oh, blow your schemes!"

"It's a jolly good scheme. I save you pounds. With my business ability, I can deal direct with the manufacturer, and get the fireworks at half-price."

"Rats!"

"All I require is a little capital to work with."

"In the tuckshop?"

"Oh, really, Brown—"

"I expect that's where most of your work would be done if you raised any funds," grinned Tom Brown. "We all know you. Where's that five bob I lent you the other day?"

"Five bob?"

"Yes, five bob," mimicked Tom. "F-I-V-E B-O-B, five bob. I was to have it back out of a postal-order the next day."

"I was disappointed about that postal-order."

"Well, where's the five bob?"

"I haven't it. Didn't I tell you that I was disappointed about the postal-order?" said Bunter, in a tone of annoyance. "I was depending upon that postal-order to pay you, but it didn't come."

"You young sweep!"

"I don't see why you should call me names. But I'll tell you what, Brown—I've got a postal-order to come to-night."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at. I've got a postal-order coming to-night, and it can't be for less than ten shillings. It may be for more. Suppose you hand me another five bob now, and take the postal-order when it comes to square both accounts. It may be for more than ten bob, and in that case you make a profit."

"And it's sure to come, of course?" asked the New Zealand junior sarcastically.

"Practically certain to come to-night, or to-morrow morning at the latest."

"Good! I'll wait till it comes before I cash it," grinned Tom Brown.

"Oh, I say, Brown—"

Tom Brown put his hands into his pockets, and walked away whistling. There was evidently nothing more to be got out of the lad from New Zealand. He had not known Bunter as well as he knew him now when he lent him the five shillings. Billy Bunter blinked round discontentedly in search of Harry Wharton & Co., but they had taken advantage of his talk with Brown to disappear.

Billy Bunter grunted.

"Fancy a scheme for saving them pounds and pounds going begging like this!" he murmured. "They simply haven't any grasp of the first principles of business."

Bunter strolled out into the Close, looking round for someone to whom he could confide his great scheme with some hope of success. As a matter of fact, Bunter's schemes for raising money were a little too well known in the Lower Fourth. He was never without a scheme, but he was always without money, and his great plans always seemed to begin and end in fellows handing him money, and never seeing anything of it again.

Bunter would explain at any length that the money had been expended in a businesslike way, and that their dissatisfaction was absolutely unbusinesslike; but those explanations did not quite satisfy fellows who had parted with hard cash, and received only words in exchange.

Bunter blinked round in search of a victim, without finding one. Bulstrode admitted that he intended to let off a good many fireworks on Bonfire-day, but he utterly declined to trust any money into Bunter's hands for getting them cheaply. Skinner listened to Bunter's proposals with deep interest, and Billy's hopes rose; but it came out at the finish that Skinner wanted to perform the business on credit, and it dawned upon Bunter after ten minutes of laborious explanation that the joker of the Remove was pulling his leg.

He marched off in great indignation, leaving Skinner chuckling.

"My word!" muttered Bunter. "Fancy not a single chap having any grasp of business—not a single fellow in the Remove! I—Ah! I wonder if I could work it with that Chinese chap. He's a bit more simple than the others. I—I mean, he's less suspicious."

Wun Lung was seated on one of the benches under the elms.

The Chinese junior, who shared No. 13 Study with Bob Cherry and Mark Linley, certainly did look simple enough; but most of the Remove had learned that his simplicity was not more than skin deep.

His sleepy, Oriental face always wore a smile that was "childlike and bland"; but the little Chinese had shown upon many occasions that he was quite able to take care of himself. Many fellows who had set out to "take a rise"

out of the little Chinese had learned to their cost that Wun Lung was "all there."

But Bunter was quite satisfied with his own sagacity; and, as a matter of fact, he never thought of looking below the surface in anything.

Wun Lung did not appear to see the fat junior as he came up. There came a glimmer into his almond eyes, but that Billy Bunter was too short-sighted to see.

Bunter halted, and blinked at the little Celestial.

"Hallo!" he said.

Wun Lung turned his head.

"Hallo, friend Buntel!" he said, speaking in the curious "pidgin" English which he had made familiar at Greyfriars, in which all the r's were turned into l's, and a long "e" added to the final consonants. "Me glad see friend Buntel."

"Room for a chap to sit down?"

Wun Lung made room.

"Plenty muchee loom, Buntel."

"I say, Wun Lung, I've got something to propose to you. You're not busy?"

"Me tinkee."

"Oh! What are you thinking about?"

"Me tinkee 'bout picnic on livel," said Wun Lung.

"Velly nice, me tinkee, with the pletty gills from Cliff House, Maljolie and Clara and the lest, you know. Nicée picnic if good weathel. What you tinkee?"

"Good idea!" said Bunter. "We had a picnic the other day with them, and it was ripping. I really got the thing up, you know. Marjorie Hazeldene and her friends would go anywhere where I was to be. I'll use my influence for you, if you like, and make the affair a success."

"Buntel velly good, but—"

"Oh, that's all right! I'll be glad to use my influence."

"Buntel velly goodee, but—"

"Don't mention it, my boy!"

"But me no tinkee askee Buntel."

"Eh? Not thinking of asking me?"

Wun Lung shook his head.

"Maljolie no likee Buntel."

"That's all you know," said Billy Bunter, with a con-
coited sniff. "Why, you should see the way she looks at me sometimes."

"Me see. She lookee as if she tinkee you funny animal."

"Look here, you heathen beast—" began Billy Bunter, wrathfully.

"Me lookee," said Wun Lung, looking innocently at Bunter. "What you tinkee?"

Bunter swallowed his wrath. Wun Lung had more pocket-money than any other fellow at Greyfriars, except Ionides, of the Sixth, and he was not a person to quarrel with under the present straitened circumstances.

"Look here, Wun Lung," said Bunter, "I've got a scheme on—a jolly good scheme. I suppose you know we're having bonfires and fireworks on Saturday?"

Wun Lung nodded.

"I've got a scheme for getting the fireworks in big quantities, and dealing direct with the manufacturer," explained Bunter. "I've got a relation in the business, who is willing to help me through. See? I save you pounds."

"Plenty good."

"You place a certain sum of money in my hands, to be expended in fireworks," said Billy. "I guarantee to provide you with double the amount of fireworks you could get at a shop—say, Mrs. Mumble's. Of course, you would have to allow for ordinary business risks."

"Of coulee."

"You expect to run a certain amount of risk in making a huge profit. But the risk in this case is practically nil as I have a relation in the business, and can deal direct with the manufacturer without any hitch."

"Velly good."

"If a certain number of fellows raise a certain sum of money, all will go rippingly. I have no doubt whatever that if one chap starts, the others will follow suit."

"Velly likely."

"How much will you start with, Wun Lung?"

"How muchee Buntel sayee?"

"Well, suppose we say a pound from you."

"Poundee velly goodee."

"Or a couple of pounds," said Bunter, encouraged. "Of course, the more you put down the more you save."

"Goodee. Buntel savee me two poundee."

"Exactly."

"Buntel velly goodee. Me likee savee two poundee."

"It's as easy as rolling off a log. If you liked to make it five pounds, I could save you a fiver. You see, I save you fifty per cent. by dealing with the manufacturer direct."

"Lipping!"

And Wun Lung, as if the matter were at an end, rose to walk away. Billy Bunter caught him by one of his long, loose sleeves.

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NEXT WEEK: "THE MAGNET" LIBRARY RETURNS TO USUAL SIZE AND PRICE: ONE HALFPENNY

"Hold on, Wun Lung! You've forgotten something."

The Chinese looked at him in mild surprise.

"No folgetee, Buntel."

"The cash, you know."

"What cashee?"

"You hand me five quid, and I save you five quid. See?"

"Plecisely."

"Well hand over the cash," said Bunter warmly.

"You savee me five poundee?"

"Yes."

"You wantee me givee you five poundee?"

"Yes."

"Make it same five poundee," said Wun Lung innocently.

"You keepee the five poundee you savee me, and allee light What you tinkee?"

"You utter ass—"

"All light," persisted Wun Lung. "Me givee you the fivee poundee you savee me. One fivee poundee good as anothee fivee poundee. What you tinkee?"

"You don't know anything about business."

"Me tinkee me givee you samee five poundee," said Wun Lung sweetly.

"I can't make the five pounds for you unless I have the first five pounds in hand," bawled Billy Bunter.

Wun Lung shook his head.

"Me no savvy."

"I must have the capital to work with. That's how I'm going to make the five quid for you. I can't do it without capital."

"No savvy."

"You hand me five quid—"

"No. You handee me fivee quid," said Wun Lung.

"You unspeakable heathen dummy! You don't understand business. You hand me five pounds—"

"You handee me fivee pounds."

"You fearful idiot! You hand me—"

"You handee me—"

"I can't work without capital, can I?" shrieked Billy Bunter. "How am I to save you fifty per cent.?"

"No savvy."

"I can't deal direct with the manufacturer, through my relation in the business, unless I have the capital in hand."

"No savvy."

"Oh, I've never met such an idiot! You hand me five pounds—"

"Oh, no! You handee me five pounds."

Bunter tore his hair.

"Can't you understand? You hand me—"

"You handee me—"

"Oh, you heathen ass! You fearful imbecile!"

"No savvy."

"You pigtailed, unspeakable, wall-eyed son of a swab!"

"No savvy."

"You horrid dog-and-eat-eating heathen!"

"No savvy."

Wun Lung smiled blandly all the time. Billy Bunter glared at him, and was about to hurl himself upon the smiling Celestial. But he remembered in time that at ju-jitsu Wun Lung had no equal. He rushed away instead, feeling that he was not equal to any further attempt to explain matters to the Chinese. And Wun Lung doubled up, under the trees, in a paroxysm of silent laughter.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Queers the Tea.

HARRY WHARTON came into No. 1 Study, and pitched a muddy football into the armchair. It was dusk in the study, and as the gas was not lighted, Harry naturally supposed that the room was empty. But a yell from the armchair showed him that he was mistaken upon that point.

"Ow! Yow!"

"Hallo! Anybody there?" demanded Wharton.

"Yow! Yes, I'm here! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Somebody chucked something at me. It biffed me on the nose! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Nugent. "You shouldn't come home in the dark, Bunt. What on earth are you doing there without a light?"

"Ow! I sat down here to think over that big scheme for saving you fellows pounds, and I suppose I fell asleep. Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Nugent scratched a match, and lighted the gas. The juniors gave a fresh yell of laughter as they saw Bunter's face. That football had been through some rough usage for the last half-hour, and it had rolled in and out of puddles galore. There was as much mud as football

about it. A considerable quantity of the mud had been transferred to Bunter's face, and, in fact, the fat junior's plump visage was smothered. The juniors simply yelled as he blinked at them.

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter peevishly, rubbing his nose. "I'm hurt."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?"

"Look in the glass. Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter blinked into the looking-glass, and gave a jump.

"B-b-by gum! I'm smothered. You beasts! I shall have to go and wash now!"

"Awful!" said Nugent gravely. "Fancy a chap having to have an extra wash! Talk about the tortures of the Inquisition!"

"The awfulness is terrific."

"Here, lend me your pocket-handkerchief, Wharton. I'm jolly well not going to fag along to a bath-room for nothing!"

"Borrow Nugent's."

"Will you lend me your hanky, Nugent?"

"Not much!"

"Hand me your handkerchief, Inky!"

"The cleanliness of my worthy handkerchief is great, and the dirtfulness of the esteemed Bunter's honourable chivvy is terrific. I prefer to retain my handkerchief pocketfully."

"There's nothing for it but a wash, Bunter," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Take it pluckily; go for it, you know, and you won't mind it so much."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"And buck up! We've got new-laid eggs for tea, and they may all be gone if you don't hurry back."

That was enough for Bunter. He made a rush for the door, and caught his foot in the carpet where the tread of many feet had worn it into a hole.

"Oh! Oh!"

Billy Bunter went whirling.

He made a wild clutch at the table, and missed it, and bumped right into the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Look out!" yelled Wharton. Hurree Singh was carrying the bag of eggs.

But the warning came too late!

Bunter crashed right into Hurree Singh, and sent him flying, and the bag of eggs dropped upon the floor with what a novelist would call a sickening thud.

The next moment, with another sickening thud, Billy Bunter dropped on the bag of eggs.

There was a shout of indignation from Wharton and Nugent.

"You ass!"

"You dummy!"

"Ow! Ow! I say, you fellows—"

"You've smashed the eggs! Yah!"

"I didn't! It was that ass!" Bunter sat on the streaming eggs, and blinked round him. "Where are the eggs?"

"You duffer! You chump!"

"Blessed if I can see the eggs!" said Bunter irritably. "Ow! I think I'm sitting in something wet! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The paper bag had burst, and a dozen big eggs had smashed under Bunter. He was sitting in the burst yolks and shells, and was quite unconscious of the fact so far.

"Ow! Where are the eggs?"

"You're sitting on them, idiot!"

"Oh!"

Bunter jumped up as if moved by an electric shock. In spite of the loss of the eggs, the juniors roared. Fresh yolks streamed down Bunter's trousers as he stood up, and fragments of eggshell clung lovingly all over him.

Bunter squirmed round and tried to look at his trousers.

"Ow! Wow! My trucks are spoiled!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You utter ass! You black idiot!"

"Really, my worthy chum—"

"And now what are we going to have for tea?" yelled Bunter.

Wharton wiped his eyes.

"Well, we can't have those eggs, as you've used them to sit on," he remarked. "We shall have to get tea in Hall."

"I'm jolly well not going to have tea in Hall!" said Bunter indignantly. "I'm hungry. I'm not going to have a tea of bread and scrape because Inky is a clumsy ass."

"Can't be helped, old man."

"Look here—"

"Oh, go and get yourself cleaned!" said Harry, laughing. "Funds are out, and we shall have to get tea in Hall or go without any. Scat!"

"I think you're a set of—"

"Get out!"

Bunter got out. He changed his trousers and washed his face in about a minute and a half. It was not a far-reaching wash. Then he came down from the dormitory in a hungry and wrathful mood.

THE MAGNET—91.

NEXT WEEK:

"BUNTER, THE DETECTIVE."

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

Tea in Hall did not appeal to Bunter. It was a spare meal certainly; and Bunter hated spare meals. He preferred square meals. He would willingly have made every meal a dinner, with double helpings of everything.

As he came down the stairs, a sniff of cooking caught his nose in the Remove passage, and he looked along to No. 13.

The door of Bob Cherry's study was open, and the smell of cooking and a bright glow proceeded from it.

Billy Bunter's eyes glimmered behind his spectacles.

No. 13 was at war, more or less, with No. 1, but Billy Bunter would not have allowed any consideration of that sort—or any other sort—to stand in the way of a feed.

He scuttled quietly along the passage, and looked in at the open door of No. 13.

Only Wun Lung, the little Chinese, was there. Bob Cherry and Mark Linley had not yet come in.

Wun Lung evidently had the door open for the sake of coolness, for he was cooking in a saucepan at a large and blazing fire.

What he was cooking, Billy Bunter did not know, but it looked like a stew, and it sent forth an appetising odour that made his mouth water.

"My word!" murmured Bunter. "I'm on in this scene. No measly feeds in Hall for me!"

The Chinese was too busy to notice that he was being watched. Billy Bunter did not move his eyes from the cook and the saucepan.

There were strange stories afloat in Greyfriars as to Wun Lung's cookery. On an historic occasion he had certainly served up dog stew at a feast of the juniors, not understanding—or pretending not to understand—that such Chinese dishes were unpalatable to English eaters.

But it was supposed that he had got out of those little ways by this time; and just now, too, Bunter concluded that he was cooking for Linley and Cherry, as well as himself, and in that case, of course, there would be nothing Chinese about the stew.

How to get hold of some of that stew—and a great deal of it—was the problem that now presented itself to Billy Bunter's mind.

Wun Lung stirred the stew, humming to himself a Chinese song as he worked, of which the refrain seemed to run some what as follows:

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"Ka, ke, ko, ko, ke, ka, ko, ko, ko, ke, ke, ki, ki, ki!" That was what it sounded like, at all events. The little Chinese seemed to be enjoying his task. He was quite as good a cook as Billy Bunter, and quite as keen about it.

Bunter debated in his mind whether he should hint for an invitation to tea. His relations with Bob Cherry were decidedly strained, and he had lately had rubs with Wun Lung. With Mark Linley he had never agreed. It was only too probable that if he presented himself to tea in No. 13, he would go out of No. 13 on his neck.

But that stew was not to be missed.

Suddenly Bunter popped back out of sight into the passage. Wun Lung had turned towards the door.

Bunter heard his footsteps, and dodged quickly into the box-room at the end of the passage.

Wun Lung came out of the study, still humming a song, and walked down the passage.

Bunter watched him with the box-room door ajar.

The fat junior could hardly believe in his good luck.

"My word! This is where I come in!"

He stepped quietly out of the box-room and into No. 13 Study, and shut the door. To turn the key in the lock was the work of a moment.

Billy Bunter gave a fat chuckle of satisfaction.

He was locked in the study, with the feed at his mercy; and in half a minute he had a big plate filled with the stew, and was feeding at express speed.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Rats!

TAP!

Tap, tap, tap!

Billy Bunter chuckled.

Someone had tried the handle of the door, and was now knocking on the panels, and he had no doubt that it was the chums of No. 13 coming in to tea.

He had already had three helpings of the stew, and now he took a fourth. Wun Lung had left it on the hob to simmer, but it was quite done. The liquid part of the stew was rich and thick, and nearly every kind of vegetable seemed to be floating in it, as well as succulent lumps of meat. Exactly what kind of meat it was Bunter could not determine, but he thought it must be veal.

It was very nice, at all events, and there was plenty of it, and after all they were the principal points.

Tap, tap, tap!

Thump!

"Open this blessed door, Wun Lung, you ass!"

Billy Bunter chuckled again.

It was Bob Cherry's voice, and remembering the shaking Bob had given him in return for his ventriloquism, Bunter was very pleased to keep Bob waiting.

Thump, thump!

The handle rattled again violently.

"Wun Lung, you heathen ass, open this door! Why—Hullo, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry broke off as the little Celestial came gliding up the passage. He stared blankly at Wun Lung.

"Why, I thought you were in there! You said you were going to cook yourself a stew if Linley and I had tea with Russell."

"Me cookee."

"Somebody's in the study and the door's locked."

"Malkee, pel'aps!"

Bob Cherry kicked at the door.

"Is that you in there, Linley?"

"No, it isn't," said a cheerful voice in the passage, as Mark Linley, the sturdy lad from Lancashire, came along. "I'm here! Have you chaps seen Brown—Tom Brown?"

"No; not since the footer."

"The Head wants him."

"I haven't seen him. Somebody's in the study, and the door's locked."

"Perhaps it's Brown."

Bob Cherry thumped violently on the wood.

"Are you in there, young New Zealand mutton?"

A chuckle was audible through the study door.

"My hat! I know that gurgle! It's Bunter!"

"Gleat Scott! He scoffee my stew!"

"The cheeky young beggar!"

"Well, I've got to look for Brown," remarked Mark Linley, and he went back along the passage, looking into the studies as he went.

Bob Cherry and Wun Lung remained outside the door of Study No. 13, wrathfully kicking at the panels. Several fellows came along and joined them, demanding to know what the matter was.

"That young sweep Bunter's had the cheek to lock himself in our study," said Bob Cherry, shaking the handle of the door.

THE MAGNET—91.

NEXT
WEEK:

"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY RETURNS TO USUAL SIZE AND PRICE: ONE HALFPENNY.

"My hat!" said Harry Wharton. "What for?"

"Blessed if I know!"

Wun Lung gave a wail.

"He scoffee feedee!"

"Oh, you were standing a feed, Bob!"

"No, I wasn't; Wun Lung was cooking some stew for himself. I suppose Bunter nipped in while he was out of the study."

"Me go fetchee salt," said Wun Lung. "Me no have nuffee. When me comee back, dool lockee, Bunter inside."

"Blessed if I should care to bone one of Wun Lung's stews," grinned Skinner. "You never know what they're made of."

"Oh, Bunter isn't particular!"

"Nicee stew! Velly nicee-nicee!"

Bob Cherry thumped on the door furiously.

"Open this door, Bunter!"

"Oh, keep your wool on!" said a fat voice from within. "I'll open the door when I've finished, Bob Cherry."

"I'll scalp you!"

"Rats!"

"I've got my prep to do."

"Never mind!"

"But I do mind!" roared Bob Cherry, hammering at the door. "I'll snatch you bald-headed! I'll squash you!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

Bob Cherry raged in the passage. The other juniors laughed. With a locked door between him and the owners of the study, Billy Bunter was as brave as a lion.

The clicking of knife and fork could be heard within the study. While Bob Cherry raged, Bunter was making good progress with the stew.

"I'll squash him!" muttered Bob Cherry.

"Nicee stew! He scoffee! Ow!"

"Blow the stew! I've got my prep. to do! Bunter, will you open this door?"

"I've nearly finished."

"You—you—you fat worm!"

"Oh, go and chop chips!"

Bob hammered on the door again. The crowd in the passage was gradually augmented by fellows who came out of their studies to see what the row was about.

Bob Cherry, in a tantrum, seemed to be regarded as an amusing sight, for the fellows were mostly chuckling or roaring with laughter.

There was a sound of a movement in the study at last.

Billy Bunter had finished his feed, and was ready to leave. Bob Cherry breathed hard through his nose. As soon as Bunter opened the study door, he would be sorry that he had entered No. 13.

"Open this door, you fat worm!"

There was a tap on the inside of the door.

"Hullo, there! You there, Cherry?"

"Yes, you worm!"

"Wun Lung there?"

"Me hele, Bunter."

"Good! I'm finished. I've had a jolly good feed. I've settled about half the stew, but Wun Lung can have the rest."

"Beastee—velly plenty beastee!"

"You want to come in and do your prep., Bob Cherry?"

"Yes!" roared Bob. "Open the door!"

"Right-ho! Make it pax!"

"What!"

"Make it pax, and I'll open the door," said Bunter coolly, through the keyhole.

Bob Cherry gasped.

"I won't! I'm going to lick you!"

"Me lickee, too! He scoffee my feed!"

"Oh, all right!" said the Owl of the Remove. "I'll take

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a snooze in the armchair. I'm not in a hurry to move. I'll stay here till bedtime, if you like."

"You—you cormorant! I've got my prep. to do."

"Sorry!"

"Me wantee eatee stew."

"Sorry!"

"My hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "I never thought Bunter had such a cheek before! I'll—I'll squash him!"

There was a sound of a creak inside as Bunter's weighty form settled down into the armchair. They heard him stirring the fire.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"He's got you in a cleft stick, Bob. You'd better make it pax."

"I won't! I'll scalp him!"

"Ha, ha! Then you won't get into the study."

"The honourable Bunter is in the winning position," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The openness of the door will not occur until the paxfulness is agreed to."

"I won't agree! I—"

"My stewee is bulning! Me smellee it."

"That fat duffer has put it on the fire again, I suppose. Bunter!"

There was no reply. Bob Cherry thumped on the door.

"Bunter!"

Still no answer.

"It's no good, Bob. You can't shift him. You'll have to make it pax."

"Makee it pax, Chelly. My stewee bulnee."

"Well, all right," grunted Bob Cherry. "Mind, I don't want to."

He knocked on the door

"It's all right, Bunter. You can come out!"

"You make it pax?"

"Yes, hang you!"

"Honour bright?"

"Honour bright!"

The door was unlocked, and Billy Bunter presented himself to the wrathful Bob, with a grin on his fat face.

"You can come in," he remarked.

"You worm!" gasped Bob. "If I hadn't made it pax, I—I'd—"

"My nicee stew!" murmured Wun Lung, rushing into the study and pulling the saucepan away from the fire. "Nicee stew! Allee light. Bunttee scoffee half of the lats, but 'nuff left fol me. All lightee."

Bunter gave a start.

"Half the what?" he ejaculated.

"Lats!"

"Rats?"

"Yes, lats! Me makee lat stew," said Wun Lung innocently. "Vellee muchee liked in China. Lats, ploppelly cooked, nicee, nicee."

Bunter turned pale. From the crowd of juniors in the passage went up a wild yell of laughter. They did not doubt Wun Lung for a moment. He was evidently stating the truth. Bunter had raided a Chinese stew—a stew of rats, and of what other extraordinary items the juniors could only guess.

Bunter caught on to the doorpost.

"Rats?" he murmured. "Did he say rats?"

"No," grinned Skinner; "he said lats. But he meant rats. Fancy Bunter scoffing a rat stew! My only aunt Matilda! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow!"

Bob Cherry, his wrath all gone, staggered against the door, gasping with laughter. It was an unexpected and overwhelming punishment for the raider.

Bunter was not particular what he ate as a rule. If he could not get good diet, he could take almost anything. But even he drew the line at rats.

The mere thought made him feel as if he were on a small vessel rolling in the chops of the Channel.

His fat face went a pale green colour, gradually changing to yellow. His round eyes blinked behind his glasses.

"Rats!" he murmured. "Oh, lor', rats!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nicee-nicee! Many nicee lats! Me catchee in dlain," said Wun Lung. "All light. Buntel welcome. 'Nuff left fol me."

"Ow! Groo! Yaioob!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The—the heathen beast! Groo—oop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, hold me somebody!" gasped Bob Cherry. "I believe my ribs are going! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Yaroooooooh! Grooooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter, with heaving chest and ghastly face, rushed away along the passage, and a wild yell of laughter followed him, till the Remove studies rang again.

THE MAGNET—91.

NEXT
TUESDAY,

The "Magnet"

LIBRARY.

ONE
HALFPENNY.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Where is Brown?

"WHERE'S Brown—Tom Brown?"

Mark Linley was asking the question right and left. But Tom Brown, of Taranaki, seemed to have disappeared.

While the Removites were roaring over Billy Bunter's misadventures in No. 13, Mark was looking for the New Zealander, but for a long time he looked in vain.

"What do you want the chap for?" asked Nugent, who was about the twentieth person he inquired of.

"I don't want him," answered Mark cheerfully.

"Then what the dickens are you hunting him for?"

"The Head wants him."

"Oh! A row?"

"I think not. He asked me to find Brown, and send him to his study. He had a letter in his hand, and he was looking rather worried, I thought. Some news from home for the Maori, I suppose."

"Oh, I'll help you look for him!"

"So will I," said Harry Wharton. "I saw him talking to Gosling some time back. Gossy may know where he is."

The three juniors crossed over to the school-porter's lodge, but Gosling was not there. They looked round the stables for him, and the form of Gosling was discerned on a bench outside a little tool-shed on one side of the yard. They hurried over to him. Gosling was smoking a pipe. He glanced at the juniors with an eye of disfavour. Between him and the Greyfriars Removites there was little love lost.

"Seen Brown?" asked Wharton.

"Brown?" said Gosling, taking his pipe from his mouth, and speaking with irritating deliberateness. "Yes, I 'ave!"

"Where is he?"

"He's gone."

"Gone! Where?"

"To Friardale, I suppose."

"Oh, blow!" said Linley. "Fancy the ass going off to the village just when the Head wants him. I wonder whether I had better go after him, or go and tell the doctor?"

"He'll be 'ere again to-morrer," said Gosling.

"To-morrow!" said Wharton, staring. "He'll be here again to night, I should think!"

"Then you're mistook, Master Wharton."

"Look here, what are you getting at?" demanded Harry.

"What has Brown gone to the village for?"

"Because he lives there, I persoom, Master Wharton."

"Lives there? I'm speaking of Brown of the Remove!"

"Oh, I thought you were speaking of Brown, the green-grocer!" said Gosling calmly. And he resumed his pipe.

The juniors gazed at him speechlessly for some moments. They had often pulled Gosling's leg, but that he should venture to pull their leg was a little too much. At that moment Gosling was very near to being rolled off the bench upon the cobbles of the yard.

"Look here, Gossy, you ass," said Wharton, "we're looking for Brown, of the Remove! The Head wants him! Have you seen him?"

"Wot I says is this 'ere—"

"Where is he?"

"Well, if the 'Ead wants him, I s'pose I'd better tell you," said Gosling, in a leisurely way. "He's in this 'ere shed."

"What on earth is he doing there?"

"P'r'aps he's using my tools. P'r'aps he ain't. P'r'aps he's a decent young gent as knows that a small wage don't go far without any extras. P'r'aps you'd better ask him."

Harry Wharton tried the door of the tool-shed, but it was fast. He tapped on the outside.

"Brown! Are you there, Brown?"

"Yes, rather!"

"The Head wants to see you."

"Tell him to wait."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Yes; I'm likely to. You'd better buck up."

"Right! I'll be along in a few minutes."

Wharton, Linley, and Nugent walked away, wondering a little. Tom Brown had not shown any particular liking for the use of tools, and had not frequented the tool-shed much. What he was up to now, with the door locked, they could not imagine.

"I suppose he's got something on," Nugent remarked. "Blessed if I can make out what it is! One thing's certain, he won't tell us unless he chooses. He can be as close as an oyster when he likes."

The juniors were gone from the yard before the door of the tool-shed opened. When it opened, Tom Brown looked out, with a grin upon his good-looking, sunny face.

"They're gone, Gossy?"

Gosling grinned over his pipe.

"Yes, Master Brown."

"They didn't catch on—eh?"

"I never said a word, Master Brown."

"You're as good as gold, Gossy. I suppose I'd better buzz off if the Head wants me, though I'm blessed if I know what he wants me for!"

And Tom Brown hurried away, leaving Gosling to lock the door of the shed. And a few minutes later the New Zealander presented himself in the Head's study.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

A Chance for Tom Brown.

DR. LOCKE was seated in his study, with a letter in his hand—doubtless the same letter which Mark Linley had noticed. His brows were wrinkled just a little. He nodded to Brown as the latter came in, and stood respectfully waiting.

"Ahem, Brown! I—er—sent for you," he remarked.

"Yes, sir."

"You are aware that there is a school for young ladies near us—Cliff House, over at Pegg Bay?" the Head remarked. "I—er—believe you have met some of the pupils of Cliff House."

"Yes, sir; I have met Miss Hazeldene, and Miss Trevlyn, and some of the others," said Tom wonderingly.

His idea had been that he was called into the Head's study to answer for some fault or other, and he was prepared for a wiggling or a caning; but the reference to the pupils of Cliff House amazed him.

"Ah—er—yes! You have met Miss Primrose?"

"Yes, sir. I met her in Friardale Lane, when I was with Wharton one day, and was introduced," said Tom.

"Ah, yes! You seem to have made a good impression upon Miss Primrose."

"Yes, sir," said Tom, wondering how the few words he had spoken on that occasion could have produced any impression at all upon the head-mistress of Cliff House.

"Yes," said the Head. "And Miss Primrose has written to me. She thinks that, as you are from a distant Colony, you will know a great deal that it would be useful to others to learn, and—in short, she suggests that you should impart some of this information to the pupils of Cliff House, in an informal way, of course."

Tom could only stare.

The idea is that you should visit Cliff House, and give a sort of informal lecture to the pupils," said the Head. "If you were in the Sixth there would, of course, be nothing out of the way in that. But I cannot help fearing that a junior in the Lower Fourth is not likely to make a success."

Tom was silent. He was too surprised to speak.

"Miss Primrose is an acquaintance of mine, and I esteem her very much, and wish to meet her wishes in every way," said the Head. "If you feel inclined to oblige her, Brown, I should be very glad."

"Oh, certainly, sir!"

"You could look up any information you possess on the subject of New Zealand, its products, and so forth," said the Head. "You will naturally know a great deal already, and you can look up the subject, as I said. A short lecture would not be a task beyond your powers, if you undertake it seriously."

"Yes, sir."

"You will be permitted to take over a few friends with you, to support you," said Dr. Locke. "Are you willing to do so?"

Tom drew a deep breath.

"Quite willing, sir."

"You think you are equal to the task?"

"I'm willing to try to do my best, sir."

"Very good! That is all that can be expected."

"When is the lecture to take place, sir?"

"Miss Primrose suggests to-morrow afternoon. I shall excuse you and your companions from lessons for a time in the afternoon, to allow of the visit to Cliff House."

Tom Brown's eyes danced. Whether the lecture was a success or not, the holiday would be a certainty, and there would be tea at Cliff House with Marjorie & Co. The suggestion had surprised him at first, but now he was inclined to think that Miss Penelope Primrose was a very sensible old lady.

"Then you will do your best to give a little lecture that will do you and your Form credit," said the Head. "Whom would you like to take with you?"

"Wharton, sir, and Nugent and Linley and Cherry and Inky—I mean Hurree Singh—and Wun Lung, and—"

The Head smiled.

THE MAGNET—91.

NEXT WEEK: "THE MAGNET" LIBRARY RETURNS TO USUAL SIZE AND PRICE: ^{ONE}HALFPENNY.

"Come, Brown! You do not want to take half the Remove, surely?"

Tom coloured.

"How many shall I take, sir?"

"Suppose you say three or four?"

"Very well, sir. Wharton, Cherry, Nugent, and Inky."

"Ahem! Very well. I will speak to their Form-master. You will leave Greyfriars to-morrow afternoon instead of going into afternoon lessons as usual. I will write to Miss Primrose to that effect."

"Thank you, sir!"

And Tom Brown left the study.

Tom Brown was a good worker, and he stood high in the Form, but the prospect of an extra half-holiday appealed to him quite as much as to any other lad. He was in high spirits, and he had no doubts about the lecture. He would be able to work up some sort of a thing, he said to himself optimistically. The other fellows would help him, and if he couldn't think of any exact information about New Zealand he could shove in some Australian geography or some Tasmanian botany, and fill up that way.

In his glee he went down the passage in a cake-walk, and ran into Mr. Quelch as he turned the corner. The Remove-master was coming to the Head's study, and he was distinctly surprised when a gleeful junior cake-walked into him in the passage.

Mr. Quelch halted, and so did Tom Brown.

"Brown!"

"Ye-es, sir!" gasped Tom.

"What does this unseemly nonsense mean?"

"If you please, sir, I—I'm going to give a lecture," stammered Tom. "I—I was feeling pleased, sir, at—at being able to impart information to young people, sir."

Mr. Quelch stared at him.

"What are you talking about, Brown?"

"I'm going to give a lecture, sir—"

"A what?"

"A lecture, sir," said Tom, somewhat disconcerted by Mr. Quelch's stare. "A lecture to New Zealand, sir, about the girls—I—I mean a lecture to the girls about New Zealand. Miss Primrose has asked the Head, sir."

"Oh!" said Mr. Quelch, very much surprised.

And he walked on, apparently forgetting that the New Zealand junior had cake-walked into him. Tom Brown hurried off. He ran all the way to No. 1 Study, kicked open the door, and rushed in.

"Hallo, you chaps! News!" he exclaimed.

A deep groan was the only response.

Billy Bunter was extended in the armchair with a face like chalk. Bunter had been very sick, and he was now groaning as if he were very close to the end.

Wharton and Nugent, still grinning, were trying to comfort him.

"I don't see why you should object to rats so much," said Harry. "You will eat almost anything, you know."

"Ow!"

"They ate rats in the siege of Paris, and were jolly glad to get them," went on Nugent. "Imagine yourself besieged in Greyfriars by the Germans, and then it will be all right."

"Ow!"

"The ow-fulness of the esteemed Bunter is terrific," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh sympathetically. "Perhaps he would feel better if I were to thump him backfully."

"Yow!"

"A good patfulness on his esteemed back might revive him buckupfully."

"Yow! Lemme alone!"

"Certainly, but—"

"I—I think I should feel much better if I had something to eat," groaned Bunter. "Perhaps a rabbit-pie and some ham and fried potatoes—Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Brown. "He's getting better. But what's the matter with him?"

"He's been scoffing one of Wun Lung's ratty stews."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at!" grunted Bunter. "It was awful! I think that horrid heathen ought to be suffocated! Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I feel absolutely done in. I think I shall probably expire unless I have something nice and substantial to eat."

"Shall I ask Wun Lung if there's any of his stew left?"

"Ow, you beast!"

"I say, I've got news!" said Tom Brown. "I'm going to give a lecture at Cliff House to-morrow afternoon—honest Injun! Miss Primrose has asked the Head to let me give the pupils a lecture on New Zealand."

"My only hat!"

"Well, it was a bit of a surprise to me, but it will be all right. It means a half-holiday and a tea at Cliff House."

"Jolly good! Some fellows have all the luck!"



"Yes," said Bunter; "Bob Cherry was upon me like a tiger-cat, with a poker in his hand, and I only just escaped with my life!"

"I'm to take four fellows with me if I like, and I've selected you chaps and Cherry."

Billy Bunter sat up in the armchair.

"Did you say five chaps, Brown?"

"No, I didn't; I said four."

"I suppose you mean me to come?"

"I suppose I don't, Bunter. As a matter of fact, I'd forgotten your existence while I was speaking to the Head; and, anyway, he gave me permission for only four fellows to go. He said three or four, but I put it at four."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Besides, you're ill; you couldn't come."

"I—I say, you know, I ought to go," growled Bunter, showing remarkable signs of recovery now. "Miss Primrose always stands a jolly good tea, you know; and, besides, there's Marjorie."

"What about Marjorie?"

"Well, you know, she'll be disappointed if I don't go. You know what she thinks about me, you fellows."

"I don't know," said Wharton. "I can guess, of course. She probably thinks you are a fat, nasty, conceited toad!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"And you sha'n't come to Cliff House!" said Harry wrathfully. "So shut up on that subject."

"But, I say, you fellows—"

"Here, let's get out!" said Wharton. "I can't stand Bunter in big doses."

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And the juniors left the study, leaving Billy Bunter blinking after them in intense indignation.

"Blessed if I'm going to stand this continual jealousy and heckling!" muttered the fat junior. "It's not my fault if the girls like me. I suppose it's a way I have about me, and they can't help it. It's absolutely rotten that I should be persecuted like this because I can't help being a fascinating chap."

And Bunter snorted with indignation.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Getting Ready.

TOM BROWN'S coming lecture was soon a general topic among the juniors. He received many kind offers from the fellows to come over to Cliff House with him to help him out, but he gratefully declined them. He explained that he was only allowed to take four supporters, and he had already selected them—an explanation which caused a great deal of grumbling.

Bulstrode and Hazeldene, his study mates, both thought that they ought to go. Bulstrode had never been a civil study mate, and had never recognised any duty on his part towards the Maori. He suddenly discovered now, however, that a chap was bound to think of a fellow in the same study, but his discovery of this made no difference to Tom Brown.

NEXT
WEEK:

"BUNTER. THE DETECTIVE."

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton
& Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

Tom did not intend to take the bully of the Remove to Cliff House.

Hazeldene had a better claim, because he was Marjorie's brother, and he put it very strongly to Brown. But Brown could only say that five would not go into four by the greatest arithmetical effort.

The Famous Four, of course, were all glad to go. They were willing to lend Tom a hand in getting up the lecture, too. Bob Cherry offered to write it for him, and make it up out of his own head, and Bob rather prided himself on his powers in that line.

After prep. in the evening—Billy Bunter being gone forth in search of someone who would stand him a feed—the juniors met in No. 1 Study to settle the matter. Bob made his offer in a truly generous spirit.

"I'm pretty strong on that sort of thing," he remarked. "There was that speech I made to welcome Quelch, you know."

"Yes, there was that," agreed Brown gravely.

"I think it was pretty effective."

"The effectiveness was terrific," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"But that was partly due to the delivery," said Nugent gravely. "The way Bob rolled it out was what made it really tell."

Bob Cherry glared at Nugent.

"If you are going to be funny——" he began.

"Not a bit of it! It's you that was funny."

"Look here——"

"Well, never mind the speech," said Harry Wharton, hastening to interrupt the argument. "The question now is about the lecture."

"Exactly!" assented Tom Brown. "I think I shall have to write it out first. Bob can give me expert advice as I go along."

Bob looked suspiciously at the New Zealander, but Tom Brown's face was quite serious.

"Oh, all right!" he said.

"I shall have to work in some local information," said Tom. "The worst of it is that I lived only in one place at a time, you know, and I don't know any more of the other places than you chaps know of Connemara or Blair Athol."

"Get it out of a book."

"I suppose so. Of course, I know a lot——"

"Of course!" grinned Nugent.

"Don't be an ass! I mean, I know a lot about the place, as I was born there. I can tell you all about Taranaki—hot springs, and so forth, and Maori manners and customs, only I shall have to get chunks out of a book. Anybody got a book on the subject?"

"There's bound to be one in the school library."

"Then buzz off and get it, there's a good chap!"

Nugent left the study, and was gone a quarter of an hour. That time was filled up by the juniors with a warm discussion on the respective merits of the Association and the Rugby game.

Tom Brown was a keen player of Rugby, though he had picked up the other game at Greyfriars, but he always maintained the superiority of the game he had played from childhood, and he was always ready to argue on the subject.

Nugent returned with the book at last, and then the juniors put their heads together to make up the lecture.

"Better shove in some volcanoes," said Bob Cherry. "What about cannibals?"

"Old cannibal customs—look at C in the index."

"Good!"

"Here it is—Cannibalism."

"Any of your people cannibals, Brown?" asked Nugent innocently.

"You ass!"

"Well, I was only asking a question," said Nugent. "I've heard that cannibalism isn't quite abolished yet in the South Sea Islands."

"Oh, don't be funny! Let's get on with the washing!"

The New Zealand junior began to write. The others looked through the book, and suggested items, and the lecture progressed satisfactorily—satisfactorily to the juniors, at all events.

They were very busy when the door opened, and Billy Bunter came in.

Bunter was looking discontented.

He had recovered from the shock of his feed in Wun Lung's study, and he was feeling ravenously hungry. There was only a light supper in prospect before bedtime, and

Bunter felt that he needed something substantial. But provisions were "off" in No. 1 Study, and funds were low.

Bunter blinked at the five juniors sitting round the table.

"Any of you fellows lend me five bob?"

No reply.

"Any of you fellows lend me half-a-crown?"

Silence.

"Anybody lend me a bob?"

Nugent pointed to the door. Bunter followed the direction of his finger, and then looked back at Nugent.

"What do you mean, Nugent?"

"There's the door!"

"I know it is."

"Well, get on the other side of it, close it, and don't open it again," said Nugent. "We're busy. Do you understand?"

"Look here——"

"Oh, buzz off!"

"I suppose a chap can stay in his own study if he likes?" said Billy Bunter resentfully. "I'm hungry! I believe you chaps want me to be ill?"

"We only want you to shut up."

"I sha'n't shut up! I shall have one of my attacks of sleep-walking again if I don't have a substantial feed before I go to bed! I've got a delicate constitution, and I really only keep it going by taking constant nourishment! If anybody here will lend me a bob——"

"I'll lend you a boot if you don't clear out or shut up!"

"Am I coming to Cliff House to-morrow?"

"No."

"Look here, I want to come——"

"Oh, do buzz off, kid!"

"I suppose you call this chummy?" said Billy Bunter, glaring at the chums of No. 1 Study through his spectacles.

"Buzz off!"

"I think you're a set of rotters!"

"Travel along!"

"I've a jolly good mind to change out of this study!"

"My hat! I'll stand you a big feed if you do!"

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"Do go and be quiet—we're busy!"

Billy Bunter went out of the study and slammed the door. The juniors chuckled and went on with the great work of preparing the lecture.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

A Feed for Bunter!

BULSTRODE swung into the junior common-room, and bestowed a general scowl upon the fellows there. Bulstrode was in a bad temper. He very much wanted to go to Cliff House with the lecture-party, but there was evidently no chance of his going, and the Remove bully was annoyed accordingly. He would have given a great deal to "mess up" the affair altogether, but Bulstrode was not particularly bright in thinking out schemes, and nothing that was practicable occurred to his mind.

He was not in a humour to be bothered by anybody just then, and when Billy Bunter came up to him with an insinuating air, Bulstrode favoured him with a savage scowl. But the Owl of the Remove was too short-sighted to see it, and he went on in a confident tone.

"I say, Bulstrode, I've got a scheme——"

"Oh, shut up!" grunted Bulstrode.

"I say, you know——"

"Leave me alone, confound you!"

"But——"

Bulstrode reached out and grasped the Owl of the Remove by the collar. He twisted him round, and was about to bestow a terrific kick upon him—a kick that would have rolled the fat junior half-way across the room—when a foot was interposed.

The foot belonged to Mark Linley.

"Stop it!" said the Lancashire lad.

Bulstrode gave him a savage look.

"Mind your own business!"

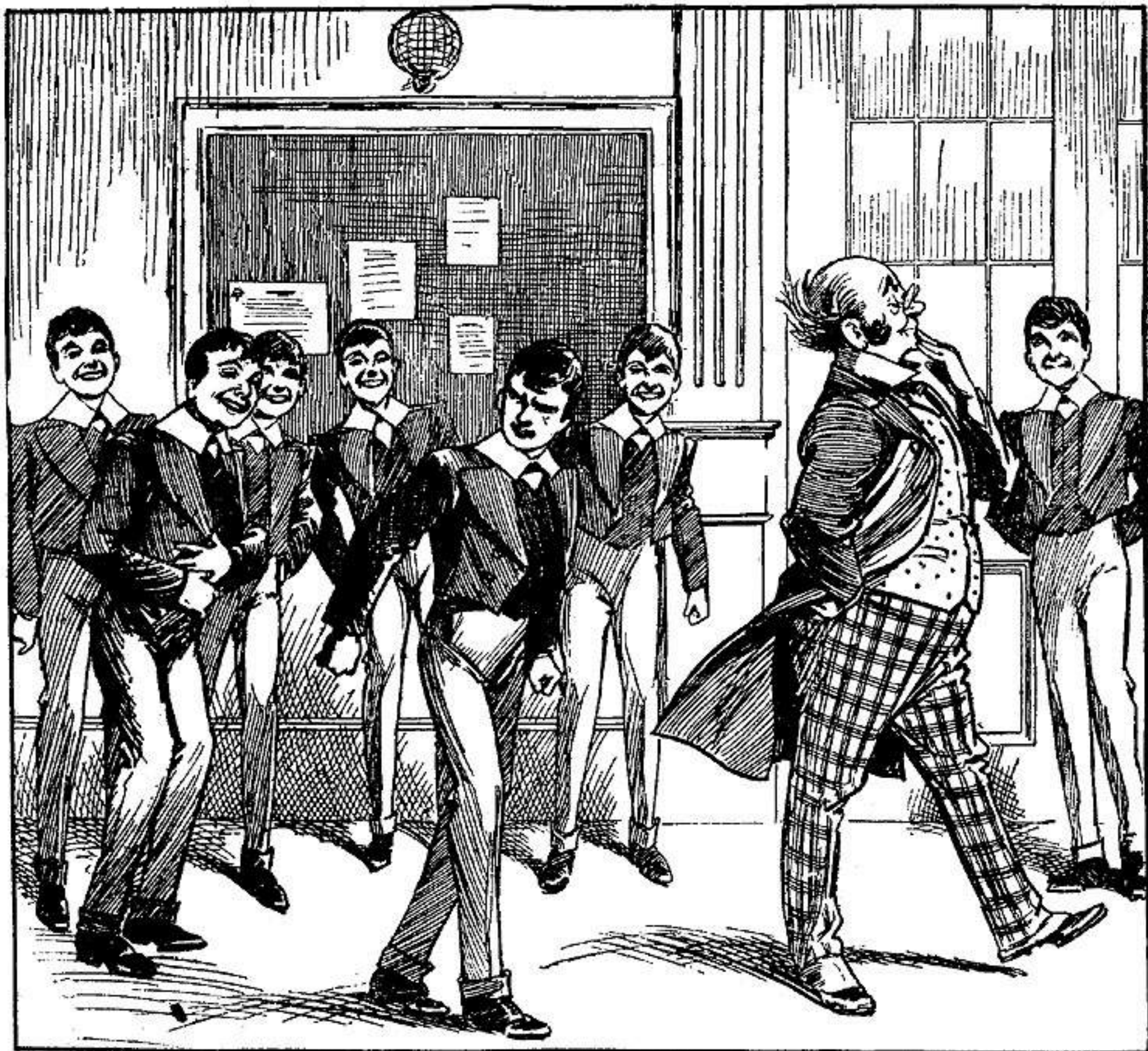
"Let the kid alone."

"I'll do as I like."

"You won't," said Mark Linley.

Bulstrode looked him in the eyes for a moment, and then, releasing Bunter, gave a scoffing laugh and walked away. Bulstrode still bore the marks of his last encounter with the hard-hitting Lancashire lad, and he was not quite ready for another.

How do you like the "Magnet" Library at its present size?



"Pray follow me to my study, Bulstrode," said Mr. Chesham. And he stalked away, with Bulstrode, who cast a savage look at the grinning Removites, reluctantly following him.

Bunter blinked at Linley, and then followed Bulstrode.
 "You'd better let him alone, you young ass," said Linley.
 "You may get hurt."
 "Oh, that's all right!" said Bunter.
 Linley shrugged his shoulders and returned to his book. It was no business of his if the fat junior was determined to exasperate the already ill-tempered bully of the Remove. He would not interfere again.
 "I—I say, Bulstrode—"
 Bulstrode turned upon Bunter fiercely.
 "Hallo! You can't shut up, can't you?"
 "I—I want to speak to you, Bulstrode! It's about Cliff House," said Bunter hurriedly.
 Bulstrode's expression changed a little.
 "You were saying something about your rotten scheme," he growled.
 "Oh, no, this is another scheme!" said Bunter. "That isn't a rotten scheme, though. If you liked to enter into it I could save you pounds. You place the money in my hands, and I get you the fireworks at fifty per cent. reduction through my relation in the business—"
 "Oh, ring off!"
 "But that wasn't what I was going to say," said Bunter quickly. "I've got another scheme—"
 "Oh, hang your schemes!"
 "About Cliff House, you know. Do you know that the beasts are not going to take me with them? Wharton and Cherry are jealous about Marjorie, you know—"
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"Shut up, you little cad!"
 "Eh—what?"
 "If you jaw like that, I'll wring your beastly neck!" said Bulstrode. "Marjorie Hazeldene can't bear the sight of you—you get on her nerves!"
 "Oh, really, Bulstrode—"
 "Now, if you've got anything else to say, say it! I can't stand you, and I shall kick you out of the room in another minute!"
 "Well, look here. They won't take me to Cliff House, and they won't take you—"
 "I don't want to go."
 "Oh, I thought you did, as I heard you ask Brown! But never mind—look here! Wouldn't it be a ripping jape to mess up the lecture?"
 Bulstrode gave an eager start.
 "I've thought of that," he said. "Could it be worked?"
 "Oh, I can do these things!" said Bunter airily. "You can always trust a delicate matter to a fellow like me! You see, it's my ability that—"
 "Shut up!"
 "Oh, really—"
 "Look here, can it be worked? If it can, tell me how, and stop your gassing, you fat young idiot!" said Bulstrode savagely.
 "Well, they're writing out Brown's lecture, you know. He can't lecture for toffee, and they're making up a lot of piffle

out of a geography book, you know, and writing it down, and Brown is going to read it out."

"I see! Something like Bob Cherry's speech!" said Bulstrode, with a grin. "I hope it will end the same way!"

"You see, if I were on the spot I could work off some ventriloquism, as I did in the class-room, but I sha'n't be there, so—"

"Don't waste time telling me what you can't do. Tell me what you can do."

"Oh, really, Bulstrode—"

"Are you going to come to the point, porpoise?"

"Well, look here," said Bunter. "I can settle their blessed lecture—I've worked it out beautifully—but I'm so faint now from want of grub that I haven't the strength to explain. If you like to come and talk it over in the tuck-shop, I'll let you into the scheme."

Bulstrode glared at him. But there was a determined obstinacy in Bunter's face. When it was a question of eating, he could be as firm as anybody.

"Come on, then," grunted Bulstrode; and they went round to the school shop.

Mrs. Mimble was about to close, but she was quite ready to welcome another customer. Bunter alone would not have been very welcome, for the fat junior's impecuniosity was too well known, but Bulstrode was always flush with money, and Mrs. Mimble gave him a sweet smile.

"Now, then, gorge!" said Bulstrode.

"Oh, really—"

"Don't waste time, porpoise. But, mind, if you feed and then you haven't a scheme that will work, I'll make you wish you hadn't done me!"

"It's a jolly good scheme!" said Bunter. "Yes, pork-pies, Mrs. Mimble, please! Six! Ham-and-tongue next—may as well get them out now, as I'm a quick eater. Well, yes, if you can poach some eggs now, I'll have them for the third lot. Certainly, half a dozen of the patties—they're nice!" And Billy Bunter was soon busy.

Bunter had a prize hunger at that moment, and he simply revelled in the new supplies. Bulstrode was not mean with money, whatever his other faults might be, and he thought that it was worth a good deal to him to spoil the lecture at Cliff House.

He waited as patiently as he could while Bunter travelled through pork-pies, and steak-puddings, and poached eggs, and ham-and-tongue, and many other comestibles. But even then the Falstaff of Greyfriars was not finished. A variety of pies and cakes followed, the whole being washed down with lemonade and gingerbeer.

"I feel a bit better now!" said Bunter at last.

"Pig!" said Bulstrode.

"Look here, Bulstrode, if you don't want to stand me a feed you needn't, and I'll keep my scheme to myself!" said Bunter. "After all, it would be a bit risky for me, messing up the lecture!"

Bulstrode glared. Bunter had eaten so much that it was scarcely possible for him to eat more, and so it was easy for him to take a lofty tone about the feed.

"Are you looking for a licking, you fat porpoise?" asked Bulstrode. "You're going the right way to get one! What's the scheme?"

"Another gingerbeer, Mrs. Mimble!"

"Certainly, Master Bunter! Seven-and-eightpence, please!"

Bulstrode paid. Bunter finished the gingerbeer slowly, and then rose from his seat. He walked towards the door, as if absent-mindedly, and Bulstrode caught him roughly by the shoulder and swung him back.

"Oh! Ow! Hold on! If you shake me my glasses might fall off—and then you would have to pay for them, I can tell you, if they got broken!"

"What's the scheme?"

"I've been thinking about it, Bulstrode, and—and I've come to the conclusion that it would be a mean trick," said Bunter. "I'd rather not do it."

"You—you young sweep!"

"You follow my example," suggested Bunter. "Those fellows haven't treated me well, but I bear them no malice. Suppose you feel the same, and you will experience a great deal of satisfaction in future years when you think about it." And the virtuous Bunter made for the door again.

Bulstrode seized him, and jammed him down into a chair with a jam that made him gasp for breath.

"Now, you fat worm," he said, in concentrated tones, "I suppose that means that you were fooling me? I'll give you such a licking as you've never had in your life before!"

"Ow! Hold on! It's all right! I—I was only joking!"

"You'd better stop your little jokes, then, you rat! If you've got a scheme trot it out, before I lick you!" growled Bulstrode.

"If you please, young gentlemen, I should like to close my shop now. It must be near your bedtime, too."

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NEXT WEEK: "THE MAGNET" LIBRARY RETURNS TO USUAL SIZE AND PRICE: ONE HALFPENNY.

"Oh, all right! Come out into the Close, Bunter."

Billy Bunter was marched out, with Bulstrode's grip on his collar. Under the elms they halted in the shadow.

"Now, then, what's the wheeze?" demanded Bulstrode.

Bunter wriggled in his grasp.

"Well, you see, they've got the lecture written down on a double sheet of manuscript. Brown is going to take it in his pocket and read it out, instead of giving a lecture from memory. I think it was Nugent suggested that reading a paper was often done at geographical societies, and so on, and it would look just as well."

"But where do we come in?"

"Well, my idea was to write out another paper, just like that one, and substitute it for the lecture paper," said Bunter. "I could easily work it, you know—or you could manage changing the papers, as Brown is in your study. We could write some rot on the new paper, but beginning in the same way so that Brown wouldn't notice till he had fairly started to read. Then it would be messed up. He couldn't remember a word without his paper, I jolly well know that, and he would look an awful ass."

Bulstrode's eyes gleamed.

Billy Bunter's idea was to spoil the lecture, and make Tom Brown look an ass, as he expressed it, but Bulstrode had at once detected that he might effect something more than that.

"It's a jolly good scheme," Bunter went on. "It takes a fellow like me to think of these things, but—"

"That's enough!"

Bulstrode walked away, his brow wrinkled in thought, and that vindictive gleam still in his eyes.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bulstrode's Trick.

THE next morning Tom Brown and his comrades gave the finishing touches to the lecture. Bob Cherry pronounced it pretty good, and he gave that judgment with the air of an expert. Tom was satisfied, and he folded up the sheet of foolscap and put it in his pocket, and never thought of looking at it again till he should require it at Cliff House.

After dinner the juniors prepared for the walk over to Miss Primrose's School for Girls. They donned the cleanest of clean collars, and Bob Cherry spent some time in polishing his silk hat. Bob hated silk hats, but he felt that he must do justice to the occasion.

Tom Brown came in from punting a ball on the footer field to get ready. He went up to the dormitory for a wash, and Billy Bunter looked in while he was there. Brown's jacket lay on a bed, and Bunter's eyes glimmered behind his spectacles. The folded paper was in one pocket of that jacket.

The fat junior scuttled back into the passage. Bulstrode met him at the corner.

"Now's your chance, Bulstrode!" whispered Bunter.

"Here you are," said Bulstrode.

He drew a folded-up double sheet of foolscap from his pocket, and held it out to Bunter. Bunter promptly drew back.

"Oh, no! You're going to change the papers, Bulstrode."

"Fool! I—"

"Look here, I'm not going to risk it! You haven't got to face the fellows in No. 1 Study, and I have," said Bunter. "Besides, I don't know what you've written on that paper. You wouldn't show it to me."

"Mind your own business!"

"Well, I'm not going to change the papers—"

"Look here—"

"I'm off!"

Bulstrode made a clutch at the fat junior, and caught him by the ear.

"Now, then, you young cad—"

"Ow! Leggo! If you don't let me alone I'll yell to Tom Brown and tell him all about it!" said Bunter, in a shrill whisper.

Bulstrode, with a look of fury, released him. He was in Bunter's hands for the moment. Billy Bunter rubbed his scarlet ear, and scuttled off.

"Hallo, what's the trouble?" said Skinner, coming along the passage.

"Here, you help me, Skinny," said Bulstrode. "It's a jape on the Maori. I've written out some rot to change for the paper he's going to read at Cliff House. It's in his jacket pocket in the dorm. and he's taken his jacket off to wash. You change 'em—"

ANSWERS

"No fear!"
 "It's all right!" said Bulstrode irritably. "There's no risk. I'll keep his attention while you change the papers."
 "He's such a jolly hard bitter when his dander's up," said Skinner dubiously. "Blessed if I like the idea."
 "He won't even see you. I'll tackle him and get up a row, and it won't take you a minute. It will be a howling good jape," said Bulstrode persuasively.

"Oh, all right!"
 "Here's the paper."
 Skinner took the paper, and followed Bulstrode into the Remove dormitory. Tom Brown was splashing in the cold water at his washstand, and puffing and blowing. He glanced round with a streaming face as the two came in.

"Hallo!" said Bulstrode. "Off to Cliff House?"
 "Yes, in a few minutes."
 "I'd like to come."
 "Can't he did!"

"Well, you confounded worm, it's like your cheek to say so, anyway!" said Bulstrode. "I don't think Miss Primrose ought to admit a chap like you. I've a jolly good mind to give you a thick ear to take along with you!"

Tom Brown's eyes flashed.
 Why the Remove bully should choose that moment to fasten a quarrel upon him in this outrageous way he did not know, but he was not the kind of fellow to stand any nonsense.

"Come and give me one, then!" he exclaimed. "You will get two in return for it!"

"We'll jolly soon see about that!" exclaimed Bulstrode, rushing at him.

In a moment they were grappling and rolling on the floor of the dormitory.

Tom Brown was too busy for the next few minutes to have any eyes for Skinner. That youth sat on the bed where his jacket lay. To grope in the pockets and extract a folded paper occupied Skinner only a few seconds. He passed Bulstrode's paper into the pocket where the other one had been, and rose from the bed with a grin.

Tom Brown had seen nothing.
 "Here, what's all the row about?" exclaimed Skinner.

"Come along, Bulstrode! No good having a row now."
 Bulstrode did not answer. He was struggling furiously with the New Zealander, trying to get him under, but, as a matter of fact, he was getting the worst of it.

There was a sound of voices and footsteps in the passage. Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry looked into the dormitory.
 "Hallo, hallo, hallo! Aren't you ready, Brown? Why—what—"

Wharton and Cherry gazed for a moment in amazement at the struggling forms, and then they took a hand, so to speak. To speak more accurately, they took a foot—each taking one of Bulstrode's ankles, and dragging him violently away from Brown.

Tom Brown jumped up, gasping for breath.
 Bulstrode, dragged along the floor by his ankles, squirmed, and yelled, and threatened, but the chums of the Remove gave him the length of the dormitory and back again before they let him go.

Then Skinner helped him up. Bulstrode was dusty and dishevelled, and blazing with rage.

"Hold on!" muttered Skinner. "Don't be an ass! Wharton means business!"

"I don't care! I—"
 "Better hold on," said Harry Wharton, with a glint in his eyes. "You were a cowardly rotter to pick a quarrel with Brown just before he was starting for Cliff House, and you know it. If you don't get out of this dorm. in two seconds we'll fling you out!"

"I—"
 "Are you going?"
 "It's all right," whispered Skinner, dragging his friend away. "I've done the business. It's all serene!"

They left the dormitory.
 "What was it about, Browney?" asked Bob Cherry.
 Tom Brown shook his head, and went back to his washstand.

"Blessed if I know!" he said. "They suddenly came in, and Bulstrode picked a quarrel with me about going to Cliff House. I suppose he's wild because he can't go. Sorry to keep you fellows waiting. I'll be ready in a jiffy."

"Right you are!"
 Tom Brown was soon ready. The juniors went downstairs, where Nugent and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh were waiting for them. The Greyfriars Remove were going in to afternoon lessons, and many an envious glance was cast at the five as they left the house and strolled across the Close.

"We're in luck, and no mistake!" Harry Wharton remarked. "Miss Primrose is a brick! I only hope the lecture will be a big success."

"We'll do our best," grinned Tom Brown. "I don't suppose the girls will be very particular. They won't care much whether there are geysers or cannibals in Taranaki."

"Ha, ha! I suppose not!"
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NEXT
 WEEK:

"BUNTER, THE DETECTIVE."

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

"Anyway, the tea will be all right," said Nugent. "It's a giddy treat, and I think Miss Primrose and Tommy deserve a vote of thanks apiece."

"Hear, hear!"
 "The hear-hearfulness is terrific!"
 And the chums of Greyfriars, in the best of spirits, strode along the lane to Cliff House. Ere long the wide, blue sea burst upon their gaze as they came in sight of the bay, and a few minutes later they were at the gates of Cliff House.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Lecture.

"HOW kind of the dear doctor, and how very obliging of you, my dear boy!" said Miss Penelope Primrose as she greeted the New Zealand junior.

"Not at all, madam," said Tom Brown. "I am only too happy."

"It is very good of you to say so."
 "And my friends were only too happy to come and support me during the lecture," said Tom Brown.

"Yes, rather!"
 "The ratherfulness is terrific!"
 "I thank them all," said Miss Primrose. "It will be so interesting to hear about the natural phenomena of New Zealand from the lips of a native. I am sure all the girls will be delighted, and they will profit very greatly by the lecture."

"I was thinking of reading a paper out, ma'am—"
 "Quite so—quite so, my dear!" said Miss Primrose. "I am sure you must be tired after the walk from Greyfriars, so you shall rest and have some refreshment, and then I will prepare the large schoolroom for the lecture. Afterwards I hope you will stay and have tea with me."

"With very great pleasure, ma'am."
 The juniors grinned at the idea of being tired after the walk from Greyfriars, but they were by no means sorry to partake of tea and cake.

They were allowed a long rest, Miss Primrose coming in every now and then to see how they were getting on. On one occasion she found them playing leap-frog, and on another Tom Brown was showing how to do a punt with a hassock, and Miss Primrose had a narrow escape of getting the hassock.

But the head-mistress of Cliff House only smiled indulgently.

She understood that boys will be boys, and she was ready to make allowances for the exuberance of boyish spirits.

But the juniors from Greyfriars were very prim and orderly when the time came to go into the big schoolroom for the lecture.

Tom Brown, remembering the paper in his pocket, fumbled for it to make sure that it was still there. His fingers closed on the folded foolscap, and he was satisfied.

They entered the big room.

The pupils of Cliff House were seated in their places, and every eye was immediately turned upon the five juniors.

The boys turned a little pink.
 It was no light ordeal to face suddenly the concentrated gaze of thirty pairs of pretty eyes.

The boys kept their eyes on the floor, and Tom Brown, for the first time, felt a slight misgiving. He wondered how he would find the nerve to read out his paper on New Zealand under the fire of so many feminine eyes.

He had not thought of that before. If he allowed shyness to influence him—if he lost his nerve—all was lost.

Miss Locke, the second mistress of Cliff House, greeted the juniors courteously. Miss Locke was a Girton Girl, and a younger sister of the Head of Greyfriars. She did not think the lecture so good an idea as Miss Primrose thought it; but it was not her place to express an opinion on the subject, and she had not done so.

"My dears," said Miss Primrose, addressing the expectant girls, "this is Master Brown, of Yarawarki—"

"Taranaki, ma'am," said Tom Brown.

"Pray excuse my mistake. Of—of Tarasquawki, who has kindly consented to deliver a lecture, or rather to—er—to read a paper, on the history, topography, geography, geology, and manners and customs of New Zealand."

"My hat!" murmured Tom Brown. "Blessed if I think my lecture will come up to that. What do you think, Nugent?"

"It's all right. Make it as short as possible, and let's get to the tea scene," was Nugent's advice.

"I am sure you will all feel grateful to Master Brown for his kindness in this matter," said Miss Primrose.

"Hear, hear!" said Clara Trevelyn.

"Oh, Clara!" murmured Marjorie.

"Well, I suppose somebody had to say something," said Miss Clara.

"Master Brown, will you kindly take the desk?"

"Certainly, ma'am."

"Here are seats for your friends——"

Tom Brown gasped. Seats had been arranged for his chums to sit in a row facing him. It was a moral certainty that some of them would grin or make grimaces at him, and upset him in the middle of the lecture. Besides, Tom was beginning to feel decidedly nervous, and he didn't want to be left alone.

"Here, stand by me, for goodness' sake, you chaps," he whispered. "Don't desert a fellow like that."

Harry Wharton paused.

"But our seats are there——"

"Rats! Stay here! I'll fix it."

"If you will take your seats——"

"If you please, ma'am, I should prefer to deliver the lecture in the New Zealand style," said Tom Brown, diffidently.

"Yes, certainly. How——"

"The chaps can stand round me while I speak, and support me," exclaimed Tom Brown. "That—that is how I mean."

"Dear me, that is a remarkable custom; but certainly—certainly, if you wish," said Miss Primrose. "Pray stand where you are, my dear boys."

The dear boys did not look wholly pleased. They didn't want to stand upon their legs for half an hour. But there was no help for it now.

The girls were looking on with grave faces. But there were twinkles in many pretty eyes, and Tom Brown thought he caught a glimmer in Miss Clara's eyes, which made the blush deepen in his sunburnt cheeks.

He fumbled in his pocket for the paper, and brought it out.

There was silence in the school-room.

The girls naturally looked at the lecturer; but the lecturer was "ower young" to face such an ordeal.

When he raised his eyes they met the gaze of so many, and the general gaze seemed almost to burn a hole in him.

Tom Brown had plenty of nerve on the football field. He could make a run for a goal with as much dash as any three-quarter of his age on the Rugger field; and he could face anybody near his size with or without gloves. But under the gaze of the girls of Cliff House he found his self-possession deserting him.

"Buck up, old chap!" whispered Nugent. "They won't hurt you, you know!"

"Oh, bosh!" muttered Brown.

He mechanically unfolded the paper, but the writing on it swam before his eyes. He coughed to clear his throat, and coughed again, and then fell into a fit of coughing, and finished with a face as red as a poppy.

Miss Locke handed him a glass of water, and he mumbled thanks and took it, and swallowed some; but of course it went down the wrong way, and there was another fit of coughing. He stood the glass upon the desk with a trembling hand, and coughed. Naturally enough, he knocked the glass with his elbow and sent it flying, and it swamped the water over Miss Locke's dress.

Miss Locke bore it with a Spartan visage, but Tom suspected that she was not feeling as calm and equable as she looked.

He would have given untold wealth for the floor of the school-room to open at that moment and swallow him up.

But it was not likely to do so, and Tom heroically restrained a wild desire to bolt for it out of the nearest door.

He spread the paper out before him, and without venturing to look at his audience again, he began to read.

He felt a sensation of great thankfulness that he had thought of reading a paper instead of lecturing "off his own bat."

For, in his present state of mind, he certainly would not have remembered a single word of anything he had committed to memory.

As it was, he read out what was written on the paper mechanically, too confused for the words to convey any clear idea to his mind.

The first words electrified everybody but the reader himself:

"My dear kids——"

"My goodness!" murmured Miss Clara, "what a way of addressing us."

"It is very odd!" said Marjorie.

Most of the girls began to giggle.

The giggle reached the lecturer's ears; but he was fairly started now, and he went on blindly.

"My dear kids! I am very glad to be here on this

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occasion, because Miss Primrose will stand us a jolly good tea, and that is really what we have come for."

There was a shriek of laughter.

Tom Brown's chums stood petrified. Miss Locke's face went very hard. Miss Primrose seemed to be too astounded to think or speak.

The girls were almost in convulsions.

They had intended to be very good, but this unexpectedly frank announcement at the beginning of the lecture was too much for them.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, dear!"

"My goodness!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dear me!" murmured Miss Primrose, at last. "How very singular! Dear me!"

Tom Brown paused for a moment.

He realised that there was something wrong with the lecture, but his brain was in a whirl. Wharton trod on his toe.

"Don't begin to play the giddy ox now, Brown," he whispered. "Why don't you read out the lecture as we wrote it down?"

"I—I am," gasped Brown, in a great flurry. "That's what's written here."

"Rats! You're off your rocker! Get on with it!"

"But—but I tell you——"

"Oh, get on with the washing!"

Thus adjured, Tom Brown "got on with the washing," with an effect that the juniors had been far from anticipating when they set out for Greyfriars.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Quite a Success.

THE laughter was hushed as Tom Brown resumed.

The girls could see that there was something amiss, but they thought that confusion had caused the New Zealand junior to stammer out what was really in his mind instead of reading what was written on the paper.

"Give the poor fellow a chance," muttered Miss Clara.

And the girls became as grave as they could.

Tom Brown hacked at his throat to clear it, though, as a matter of fact, it did not require clearing. Then he plunged on.

"I will preface my remarks about New Zealand with the statement that it is a rotten place, and that I was jolly glad to get out of it——"

"My hat!" muttered Wharton. "He's crazy!"

"Right off his rocker!"

"The off-fulness of his esteemed rocker is terrific."

Tom Brown broke off, and stared at the paper.

Even in the whirl of his mind he could realise that something was wrong here, and that some accident must have happened to his paper.

But he had to go on somehow, and he missed out the next few paragraphs, and hoped that it would come right later.

"Since I have been in England I have had as many feeds as possible; but I am always ready for another, and so I was glad to accept Miss Primrose's invitation—only I hope the tea won't be as weak as usual this afternoon—ow!"

The "ow" was caused by Wharton's heel coming down on the reader's toe.

"Shut up, you ass!" muttered Harry wrathfully.

"I—I—I——"

"What are you reading out that piffle for?"

"It's on the paper."

"It's not! You're dreaming. I wrote the paper out myself for you, and do you think I should put down stuff like that?"

"Well, it's here!"

"Dear me," said Miss Primrose, "this is not exactly what I anticipated. Please cease laughing, my dear girls."

"Certainly, Miss Primrose. Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'd better go on," muttered Tom desperately. "I dare say it will come right."

"You'd better chuck it."

But Tom Brown was already going on.

"I shall give you a short lecture, ladies and gentlemen, because I'm in a hurry to get to the tea, and if old Primrose——"

Tom Brown broke off—fortunately. Bulstrode had not been particular what he wrote, and there was worse to come.

"My hat!" muttered Tom Brown, staring dazedly at the paper. "My only hat! How did that get on the paper? My only summer hat!"

"Ring off, you utter ass!" whispered Wharton fiercely.

He jerked the paper out of Tom Brown's hand.

Miss Locke was on her feet now, her face very cold and hard.

"I think this had better cease," she said. "If this is your idea of a joke, Brown, I must say you have a very peculiar sense of humour."

"I—I—I—"

"Why, this isn't the paper!" exclaimed Wharton, staring at the sheet. "It's—it's been changed!"

"Phew!"

"That accounts."

"The accountfulness is terrific."

Tom Brown took back the paper from Wharton, and gazed at it in amazement. He could see it now—the paper had been changed.

"But—but it was in my pocket all the time!" he exclaimed. "How—how on earth could the other paper have got changed for this?"

"It was a jape, I suppose."

Tom Brown gritted his teeth.

"I wish I were within hitting distance of the japer!" he muttered. "I'd take his japing out of him for a bit!"

"Dear me!" said Miss Primrose.

Harry Wharton turned to her quickly.

"Pray excuse Brown, Miss Primrose. It's a joke of some rotter—some fellow, I mean. Brown's paper has been taken away, and this one substituted for it, and Brown never knew the difference till now."

"Dear me!"

"You will not think that he meant to read out this rot—this rubbish, of course?"

"Dear me! It was a very thoughtless trick to play."

"Yes; it was a mean trick, too!"

"Then, if Brown has lost his paper, he will not be able to deliver the lecture," said Miss Primrose. "I am very disappointed. But I suppose it cannot be helped."

"Yes, it can!" exclaimed Tom Brown desperately. "I'll do it out of my own head!"

"Not through your hat, please!" murmured Nugent.

"Dry up! I'll manage the thing! It's all right, Miss Primrose. If you will allow me, I'll give the lecture, all the same."

Tom Brown was on his mettle now, and his shyness rolled off him like a cloak. He meant business, if only to disappoint the japer who had tried to spoil the lecture.

"Certainly!" said Miss Primrose.

"Good!" muttered Wharton. "Go ahead, old fellow!"

"The go-aheadfulness is terrific."

Tom Brown took his courage in both hands, so to speak, and went ahead. He raised his eyes to the audience, and faced them boldly, and started.

"Ladies—"

"Hear, hear!" murmured Miss Clara.

"Ladies, I have great pleasure in addressing you for a few minutes upon the subject of my native country—"

So far, Tom recalled the original speech.

From that point he had to depend upon his imagination. But he was, as we have said, on his mettle. He faced the lecture as he might have faced a charge on the footer-field. What he remembered of the lecture was mingled with a great deal he imagined for the occasion. Maori manners and customs were invented on the spot, along with statistics of population of the most extraordinary sort. In his excited frame of mind Tom was not particular to a million or so.

The lecture was interesting.

Exactly what connection it had with the real facts nobody knew, and least of all Tom Brown, of Taranaki.

But it went down all right, and that, after all, was the great thing.

The lecture was a success. Tom Brown had snatched victory from the jaws of defeat.

When it was concluded, Miss Primrose thanked him very much, and the girls clapped their hands, and the New Zealand junior was the hero of the hour.

"Well, you did that jolly well!" said Nugent, as they quitted the school-room. "But are there really cannibals in Taranaki?"

"Phew! Did I say there were?"

"Yes; you did."

"Blessed if I knew what I was saying, then!"

"What about that eruption of a volcano, and the lava flowing down the mountain in a stream a mile and a quarter wide?" asked Wharton.

"My only hat! I didn't say so, surely!"

"You jolly well did!"

"Oh, dear, I wonder why!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Never mind, it was a jolly good lecture!" said Bob Cherry, laughing. "And now I'm ready for tea, you chaps. This way!"

Tea was ready, and Marjorie & Co. took it upon themselves to look after the Greyfriars juniors, and they did it very well.

"I was so interested," said Marjorie, as she filled Tom's cup for the third time. "What a splendid sight it must have been, the earthquake, and the whole mountain rolling into the sea!"

Tom Brown turned crimson.

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"What earthquake?" he asked.

"Why, the one you told us about!"

Tom Brown grinned feebly.

"You—you mustn't take it too seriously," he murmured.

"As—as a matter of fact, I—I hardly knew what I was talking about."

Marjorie smiled.

"Well, do you know, I thought that was the case," she said. "Never mind, it was a very good lecture."

And all were agreed that it was, indeed, a very good lecture, and Tom Brown and his friends were pretty well satisfied, upon the whole, as they took their homeward way to Greyfriars.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Paying the Piper!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

Billy Bunter loomed up in the dusk as the chums of the Remove came in at the gates of Greyfriars.

"I say, you fellows, did the lecture go off all right?"

Tom Brown uttered an exclamation.

"My hat! Bunter, of course!"

"Ow!" gasped Billy Bunter, as the New Zealand junior seized him by the collar. "Ow, ow! Don't shake me like that! You might make my glasses fall off, and if they got broken, you'd jolly well have to pay for them! Ow!"

"You changed that paper, didn't you?"

"Ow! No!"

Tom Brown ceased to shake him.

"Honour bright?"

"I hope you don't think I would prevaricate, Brown?" said Billy Bunter, blinking at him with an air of great dignity.

"I don't think you would do anything else!" growled Brown.

"Oh, really—"

"It was like one of Bunter's dodges," said Harry Wharton.

"Well, I didn't do it!" said Bunter. "I haven't the faintest idea what was on the second paper, and I didn't know for sure that it would work."

"Why, you young sweep, you've given yourself away!" exclaimed Nugent. "How did you know anything about the second paper?"

"I—I didn't! Brown just said that—that—"

The New Zealander tightened his grip upon Billy Bunter, and pinned him up against the gate. His frowning brow loomed up terrifically before the startled eyes of the Owl of the Remove.

"Look here," he said sternly, "I see you know all about it. If you didn't change the papers, who did?"

"Ow! How should I know? Make him leggo, Wharton!"

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"Not much, till you've told the truth."

"I—I can't—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "He can't tell the truth! Bunter has got his own character down fine for once!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I mean, I'm sincerely sorry; but—but I can't give Bulstrode and Skinner away, or they would lick me."

"Bulstrode and Skinner!" ejaculated Nugent.

"I—I— Oh, really, I—I'm not going to mention any names! You see—"

Tom Brown released the fat junior, and left him gasping. The chums walked on, and there was a frown on the New Zealander's face.

"So that was why Bulstrode picked that row with me in the dorm," he said. "He did it while Skinner was changing the papers in my pocket. It's clear enough now. It was only a jape, I suppose, but it might have got us into trouble at Cliff House, and it's the sort of jape I don't like."

"The troublefulness might have been terrific. I think that the bumpfulness of the honourable rotters would be the proper caperfulness."

"Just what I was thinking," remarked Nugent.

"Hallo," said a voice, as Skinner came in sight, "how did the lecture go off?"

The next moment Skinner was gasping and struggling as five pairs of hands seized him, and he was whirled off his feet.

"Here—hallo—hallo! Hold on! Watcher at? What? Eh? Chuck it!" roared Skinner. "Have you gone off your rockers? Hold on!"

"Bump him!"

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"Hold on! Drop it! I——"

Skinner was bumped, and bumped again. Then the avengers, grinning, marched on, leaving Skinner gasping on the ground in a state of utter bewilderment.

They entered the School House, and went up to the Remove quarters, and Tom Brown stopped at the door of his study, and looked in.

Bulstrode was there, and he looked round, with a sneering smile, at the sight of the New Zealander.

His expression changed a little, however, as Brown came in, and Wharton, Cherry, Nugent and Hurree Singh followed him.

He started to his feet in some alarm.

"Hallo, what do you fellows want?" he demanded.

"Nothing!"

"Then get out!"

"It isn't a question of what we want, but of what you want," explained Tom Brown. "It may have been a good joke to change those papers in my pocket. But it was a caddish trick to shove in a disrespectful reference to Miss Primrose, and it might have got me into trouble."

"I don't know what you're talking about!"

"Cheese it, Bulstrode! We know all about it!"

The Remove bully turned red. Bully he might be, but he was no coward as a rule, and he was not wont to take refuge in falsehood.

"Well, I did jape you, if you want to know!" he exclaimed. "It was a jolly good jape, too, and I hope you got turned out of Cliff House!"

"Well, we didn't get turned out. We made it all right, and we've had a ripping tea, and a good time generally," said Wharton. "If it had turned out as badly as all that, Bulstrode, it would have led to some rough times for you."

"Rats!"

"And, as it is, you're not going to escape scot free," said Wharton. "Bump him!"

Bulstrode started back.

But there was no escape for him. He made a rush for the door, but the juniors closed round him, and five pairs of hands fastened upon him.

The bully of the Remove struggled furiously. But, burly as he was, he had no chance, and he was dragged back, and bumped.

Bump, bump, bump!

Bulstrode roared and struggled, without avail. He was bumped, and bumped again, till the breath was bumped out of him.

"Now then," said Tom Brown, "are you sorry?"

It was the usual formula. But Bulstrode was in no mood for fun. He struggled and kicked savagely.

"Are you sorry?"

"No!" roared Bulstrode.

"Bump him! Now, are you sorry?"

"No, hang you!"

"Bump him again!"

And he was promptly bumped once more.

"Ow! Yow! Yah!"

"Are you sorry?"

"No—yes!"

"Good! Are you awfully sorry?"

"Yes!" gasped Bulstrode, who felt that he couldn't stand any more bumping. "Yes!"

"Are you awfully, fearfully sorry?"

"Ye-e-e-es!"

"Drop him!"

And the Remove bully was dropped on the floor.

"If he's sorry, it's all right," grinned Bob Cherry.

"Your apology is accepted, Bulstrode, but don't you be a naughty boy again, or we shall really bump you next time!"

And the Removites crowded out of the study, and slammed the door. Bulstrode picked himself up, gasping. He had not been really hurt, but he had certainly been very roughly handled, and he was out of breath, and very dusty and dishevelled.

He was not in a state of mind to be safely interviewed by anyone, and it must have been Billy Bunter's evil star that led him to Bulstrode's study just then. The door opened, and the Owl of the Remove blinked in.

"I say, is that you, Bulstrode?" he said. "Good! I want to speak to you. Those chaps have come back, and they're on the warpath. They want me to tell them who changed the papers, but, of course I won't. I'm too honourable. I say, you know, I'm awfully hungry. Are you coming down to the tuckshop?"

"Come in a minute, Bunter."

"Certainly! I—ow!—you treacherous beast, leggo!"

"So you gave me away, did you?" hissed Bulstrode, as he grasped the Owl of the Remove. "Then you can jolly well take a licking for it!"

And he began to box Billy Bunter's ears ferociously.

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The fat junior yelled till the Remove passage rang from end to end. But Bulstrode did not desist. His smacks came forcibly on every part of Bunter's stout person, and the fat junior writhed and wriggled.

"Ow—ow! Rescue! Help! Murder! Fire! Ow!"

Billy Bunter wrenched himself loose at last, and made a break for the door. Bulstrode made a dash after him. Bunter was first, but the Remove bully had time to take a flying kick at him as he ran out.

Bunter gave a yell, and pitched forward on his hands and knees.

He was up again in a second, however, and, racing down the passage for his life; and Bulstrode turned back into his study, feeling considerably better.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Something Wrong with the Pie!

"BLESSED if I know what the little game is!" said Frank Nugent, at tea-time, a day or two later, in No. 1 Study in the Remove.

Harry Wharton looked up from chipping his second egg.

"What little game?" he demanded. "No. 13 Study up to something again?"

"Oh, no! It's Tom Brown."

"What's the matter with Mutton?"

"It's some little game," said Nugent. "I suppose it must be a jape of some sort. He's got something going in the tool-shed. Gosling's in the secret, for he keeps everybody else out of the tool-shed. I suppose Brown tips him."

"Most likely," said Wharton. "I remember Brown was busy there on the day before the Cliff House lecture. He's making something or other, perhaps."

"Then why doesn't he let a chap see it?"

"The whyfulness is terrific."

"I say, you fellows——"

"It's some little game," said Nugent, with conviction. "I asked Gosling to lend me a saw to-day, just to go into the shed. He lent me the saw, but he fetched it himself, and wouldn't let me go in."

"Brown is squaring him, of course."

"I suppose he is; but what's it all about?"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Oh, shut up, Bunter! We know you're hungry."

"I wasn't going to say that, Wharton."

"Oh, have you got a new record on at last?"

"Oh, really, Wharton! I mean, I think I could tell you something about Brown's little game. It's something up against this study. I'll undertake to find out if you like. You know my abilities as a Boy Scout."

"Yes, we know 'em, Bunter. You young ass!"

"The ass-fulness of the esteemed Bunter is terrific!"

"Well, I don't think you ought to let a new-comer get ahead of this study," said Billy Bunter, blinking at Wharton. "However, there is another and more important matter to settle. I suppose you know that we're celebrating the Fifth on Saturday this week."

"Go hon!"

"To-morrow's Saturday, and you chaps haven't laid in any stock of fireworks yet. Of course, there's going to be a bonfire in the Close, and we shall want a lot of fireworks. What about my scheme of getting them at a fifty per cent. reduction, through my relation in the business?"

"Rotten!"

"Oh, really, you fellows! I can save you pounds! You raise a sum by subscription, and place it in my hands, and you——"

"Never see it again?"

"I don't mean that. You get fireworks at half-price, through my influence. You don't get a chance like this every day. If you were at all businesslike, you would jump at it."

"We must be awfully unbusinesslike, then, for we're not going to do any jumping," grinned Nugent. "Put on another record."

"But look here, I save you pounds. Suppose you have a fiver in my hands——"

"Ha, ha, ha! Where are we to get the fiver, you young ass?"

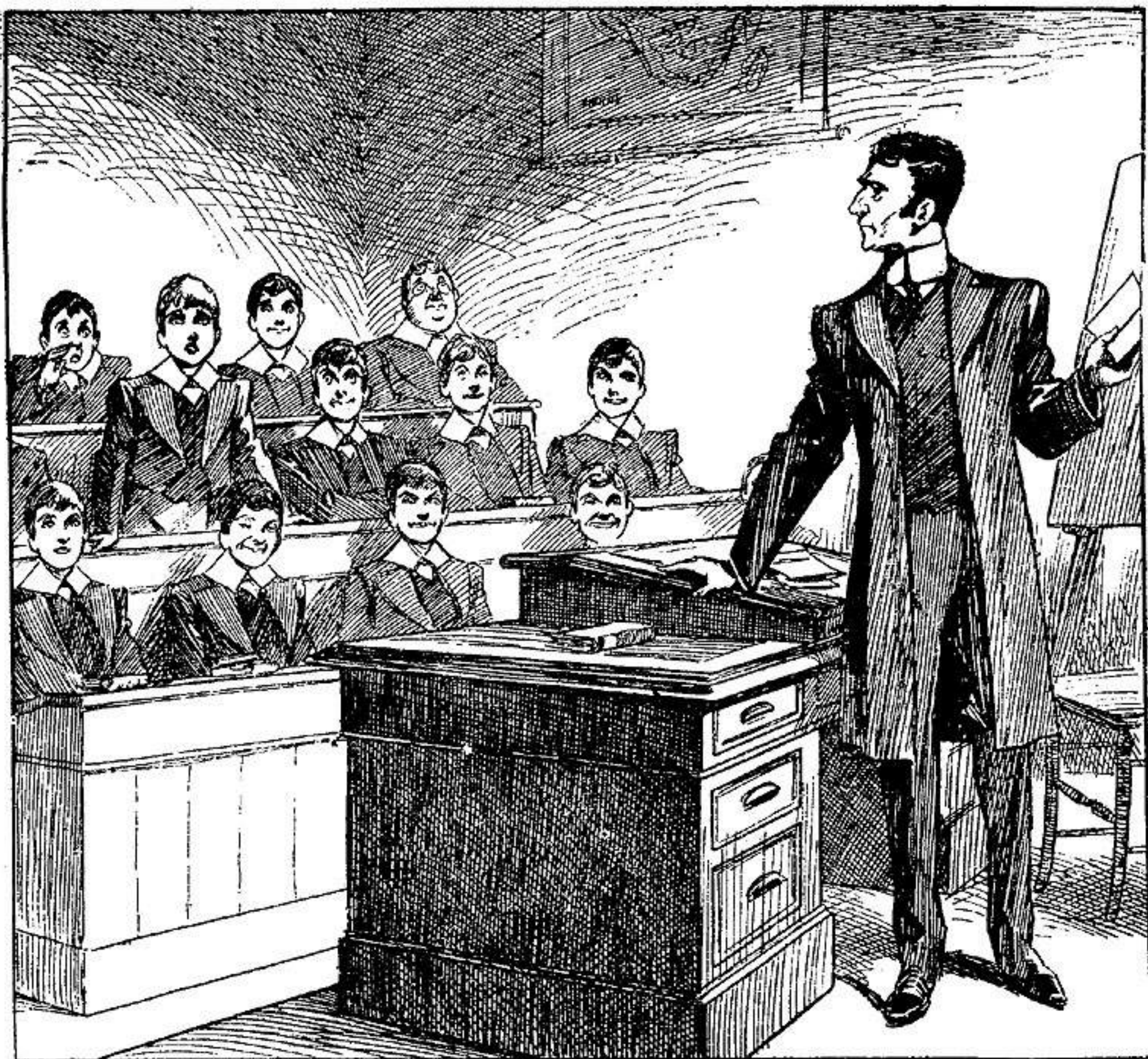
"I don't think you ought to be mean when I'm trying to do you a favour. But suppose we say five shillings, then? You place five shillings in my hands——"

"And you take it for a walk to Mrs. Mimble's——"

"If you doubt my honesty, Nugent, this discussion had better cease," said Bunter, with a great deal of dignity.

"A jolly sight better!" agreed Nugent. "Pass the marmalade."

"It's not a chance to be lost——"



"Under the auspicious circumstances of your return——" began Bob Cherry. Mr. Quelch stared. "Are you joking, Cherry?" he asked sternly.

"Oh, ring off, old chap! Your scheme is beginning to get on my nerves," said Wharton. "As a matter of fact, we've raised ten bob for fireworks, and we're going to spend it at Mrs. Mimble's—not in grub for a young porpoise, though. When you fellows have finished tea, we may as well get along. Mrs. Mimble will be doing a roaring trade to-night."

Mrs. Mimble was indeed doing a good trade.

The boys had the Head's permission to have a bonfire in the Close on Saturday night, and with the usual desire of energetic youth to celebrate any occasion by making a row, they were investing most of their spare cash in fireworks.

The Fifth of November always brought a little harvest to Mrs. Mimble, and the present occasion was no exception to the rule.

In the school shop the usual display of "tuck" was half-hidden by arrays of fireworks of all sizes and colours and all sorts and conditions.

There were a crowd of purchasers, and the shop was very full, and a placid smile of contentment sat upon the features of Mrs. Mimble. She greeted Harry Wharton & Co. with the utmost sweetness.

"What can I do for you, Master Wharton?"

"Fireworks," said Harry, with a smile.

The chums of the Remove proceeded to select their purchases. Billy Bunter blinked at them discontentedly. His scheme, by which he could save them pounds—according

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to his own account—was ruthlessly and contemptuously passed over and neglected. It was enough to make a fellow, conscious of his own cleverness, discontented.

Tom Brown gave the fat junior a slap on the back.

"Anything wrong, Bunter?"

"Ow! Don't break my back, you ass! Yes, those dummies are chucking their money away. I could save them pounds if they would let me."

"Well, it's awfully generous of you to take it to heart like this."

"Well, I am a generous chap, Brown. Look here, you haven't treated me well, but I never bear malice. I'm willing to save you pounds if you like. I suppose you're going to lay out some tin in fireworks."

"What-ho!"

"If you like to place it in my hands, I can get the stuff at half price, through my influence. I've a relation in the line——"

"More rats! But I'll tell you what. You know those old clothes of yours—those old load check duds that Nugent said ought to be buried alive."

"They're jolly good clothes——"

"Well, will you swap them for a half-crown?"

"Make it five bob."

"All right," said Tom, who was never given to haggling over money. "They're not worth it, but here you are. Jacket, trousers, and waistcoat, mind."

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"Yes, you can have the lot. They're going at a big bargain," said Bunter, with a sigh. "But I always like doing a fellow a good turn. But I say, what do you want them for?"

"That's my business!"

And Tom Brown left the tuckshop. Billy Bunter looked after him inquisitively. He was intensely curious, and he always liked to know everything that was going on. He was strongly inclined to follow Brown, but there were the five shillings in his hand, and there was Mrs. Mimble's counter with an array of goodly comestibles upon it. Bunter turned towards the counter.

He did not buy any fireworks. He depended upon being able to handle those purchased by others on bonfire night. He selected several very tasty dishes, and sat down at a little table to enjoy himself.

"My hat," said Nugent, "Bunter's going strong. What bank have you been robbing, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Nugent! I've sold some of my clothes, at a great sacrifice. It comes rough on me, but what am I to do, when the fellows in my own study don't care whether I starve or not?"

"Blessed if I can see how it's our business whether you starve or not," said Nugent. "That's a ripping pie. I suppose you're standing a study feed with that pie?"

"Nothing of the sort. I should be very glad to do so, but there is barely enough for me, and I have to think of my health."

And Bunter started on the pie.

It was a big meat pie, with a nicely-browned crust that looked very tempting. Bunter took a big slice out of the crust, and a liberal helping of the savoury interior, and began. Skinner strolled up to the table, with a repeating cracker in his hand, which he had just purchased.

"Did you call me, Bunter?" he asked.

Billy Bunter blinked at him over his steaming plate.

"No, I didn't, Skinner."

"Ah, I thought perhaps you wanted me to help you with that pie."

"I don't want any help, thank you."

"My hat, Mrs. Mimble makes those pies to be sold in six portions!" said Skinner. "You don't mean to say that you're going to wolf the lot?"

"I have to keep myself going by constant nourishment, Skinner. I never get enough to eat in my own study, either."

"I wouldn't mind wiring in if you want me to."

"Thanks! I don't want you to."

Skinner grinned. He made a sign to Hazeldene, who was standing behind Bunter, and showed him the jumping cracker in his hand. Hazeldene understood, and grinned. He was to divert Bunter's attention for a few moments, while Skinner played the little joke that had occurred to his brilliant mind.

"Hallo, did you drop a half-crown, Bunter?" exclaimed Hazeldene.

"Yes," said Bunter, turning round promptly. "Where is it?"

Billy Bunter squeezed down and blinked under his chair. Skinner lifted the cracker to the gas-jet on the wall, and lighted the tip of the fuse, and poked the cracker inside the pie, through the opening Bunter had left in the crust.

There was a general chuckle from the fellows who saw him. Bunter straightened up in his chair and blinked indignantly at Hazeldene.

"There isn't any half-crown under the chair," he grunted.

"Ha, ha! I never said there was."

Billy Bunter grunted again, and resumed operations on his plate. It was nearly cleared now, and he was ready for a second helping.

Skinner and Hazeldene cleared back from the table. The cracker was fizzing away inside the pie, and it might explode at any moment now.

"Sounds as if somebody were lighting fireworks here," said Bunter. "Better not play the giddy ox with fireworks indoors, you fellows."

He thrust the knife into the crust of the pie.

Crack!

"Ow! Lor!"

Crack, crack, crack!

Bunter jumped up as if electrified. The repeating cracker was cracking away merrily, and the pie-crust flew in all directions, accompanied by spouts of gravy.

Crack, crack, crack!

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter jumped away from the table.

"Ow! The pie's exploding! That utterly stupid woman has been mixing gunpowder in my pie! Ow! Yow! I must have eaten some! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"Dear me!" gasped Mrs. Mimble.

Crack, crack!

"Yow! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter staggered against the counter with an expression of almost idiotic bewilderment upon his face. The cracker, with a final crack-ack, finished its performances by jumping out of the wrecked pie, and then Billy saw what was the matter.

"Skinner, you beast——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the yells of laughter from the juniors drowned all the indignant remarks of the Owl of the Remove.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Another Guy!

THERE was a great deal of suppressed excitement in the Greyfriars Remove on Saturday morning.

That evening the Guy Fawkes celebrations were to take place, and most of the fellows had made some preparations for a high old time, with the exception of the grave and reverend seigneurs of the Sixth.

The Sixth affected to look with lofty indulgence upon bonfire celebrations; but as a matter of fact, most of them enjoyed the noise and the shouting as much as the juniors.

The Remove always "went strong" on the occasion of a celebration of any kind, and on the Fifth of November they were not likely to be found wanting.

The stock of fireworks laid in by the juniors was enough to start a shop with, and if there was not a deafening noise on Saturday night, it would not be the fault of the Remove.

Several "guys" had been constructed, and though they were not things of beauty or joys for ever, they were likely to be joys for that night, when they blazed up in funeral pyres.

"I'm sorry the affair to-night will be messed up, you fellows," Billy Bunter remarked thoughtfully, when the Remove came out after morning lessons.

"What's that?" said Bob Cherry. "Do you mean it's going to rain? The weather's as fine as anything."

"Oh, no; I wasn't thinking of the rain. I was thinking what a splendid show of fireworks there would have been if the fellows had taken advantage of my scheme to get them at a fifty per cent. reduction, through my relation in the business."

"Oh, crumbs! Can't you bury your scheme?" said Nugent wrathfully. "Blessed if we ever hear about anything else!"

"Well, I could have saved you pounds——"

"Br-r-r-r!"

It was too late for the scheme now. Most of the available cash of the juniors had been expended in fireworks, and Mrs. Mimble was very nearly sold out.

The early dusk of the November night was eagerly awaited, and when it came, it found the Greyfriars juniors ready.

Tom Brown met the chums of No. 1 in the passage as they came out after tea. There was a cheerful grin on the face of the New Zealander.

"I want to speak to you chaps," he remarked. "I suppose you've noticed that I've been making something the past few days in the tool-shed?"

"Yes, rather! What's the little game?"

"Come along and see."

"Good egg!"

The chums were curious to see the secret, whatever it was, and they willingly followed Tom to the tool-shed. It occurred to them now for the first time that it probably had something to do with the bonfire celebrations.

They reached the tool-shed, and Brown pushed open the door. It was very dark within, and the New Zealander struck a match and lighted a candle.

He held up the candle, and a form loomed up in the flickering light.

"My hat!" ejaculated Wharton. "Bunter!"

It was Billy Bunter—not the real Bunter, but a remarkably lifelike image of him. The fat form, the fat little legs, the round fat face were all there, and the face, painted upon a rounded cardboard mask, had really been done with great skill. A huge pair of spectacles adorned the face, and gave the finishing touch to the resemblance. The figure was clad in the check suit which Bunter had been wearing a few weeks before, and which was known all over Greyfriars. Many times he had been recommended to bury that suit, or to kill it, and it was even whispered that he had given it up on a hint from the Form-master.

"My hat!" repeated Wharton. "It's—it's ripping! It

looks like Bunter's twin! Blessed if I should know them apart if I met them!"

"I say, you fellows——"

Nugent pulled the fat junior into the shed.

"Hallo, Bunter! Come in and be introduced to your twin."

Bunter blinked at the figure through his big spectacles.

"Oh, really, you fellows! You don't mean to say that that's anything like me!" he exclaimed.

"Ha, ha! It's your double!"

"Look here——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So that's what Brown was doing all the time," growled Bunter. "I warned you fellows that it was something up against our study. You'd better smash that thing up and give Brown a jolly good licking."

"No fear! It's good fun."

"But I say, you fellows——"

"Look here, Bunter, you can join in the procession if you like," said Tom Brown generously. "That will show the chaps that we're not really burning you; though, of course, you deserve melting down."

"Oh, really, Brown——"

"Let's get it out into the Close," said Brown. "We'll march it round first, and then stick it on the bonfire."

"Good egg!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The figure was carried out of the tool-shed, and there was a fresh yell of laughter from every fellow who saw it. A crowd of Removites were soon gathered round it. Billy Bunter blinked at the scene in great indignation.

Bunter's face and form lent themselves only too easily to caricature; in fact, caricature was hardly necessary in his case to produce a comic effect.

Tom Brown dragged an old cane-chair out of the shed, and the figure was solemnly mounted upon it, and borne high towards the Close.

"Beasts!" murmured Bunter. "Fancy pretending that I look anything like that! It's because they're jealous of my good looks, I suppose."

He followed the procession with a discontented brow.

But Bunter's objections to this reproduction of himself were not likely to count with the merry Removites. They were entering joyously into the joke, and the figure was greeted with laughter and cheers wherever it appeared.

In a spot of the Close safe from the buildings and trees, a huge bonfire had been piled up by the Removites. The Upper Fourth had another bonfire at a distance, but it had to be admitted that the Remove pyre was the stateliest of the two. Firewood and shavings mingled with old casks and broken-down chairs and defunct articles of furniture, in making the Remove pyre tower high.

The fire was not yet lighted, but fireworks were going off in all directions already. Most of the juniors were impatient to begin.

There was a roar as the procession halted with the figure of Bunter.

"Here's another guy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Bunter!"

Billy Bunter's eyes gleamed behind his spectacles. He drew back into the shadow of the nearest tree, and watched the proceedings. An idea had come into his mind for getting his own back, and he was biding his time.

The chair was fastened in the centre of the pyre, and the fuel piled round it and the figure it bore.

"Now light up!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Good-bye, Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat!" ejaculated Skinner, coming up. "That isn't Bunter you've got there, is it?"

"Ha, ha! No; it's Bunter's double!"

"Blessed if I should know the difference."

"Bunter's about here somewhere. He ought to have a hand in this. Bunter! Bunter! Where are you, Bunter?"

Billy Bunter kept cover.

"He doesn't like his twin being consigned to such a cruel death," grinned Nugent. "Never mind; shove a match to it."

The pile was lighted.

The lower chunks of fuel had been smeared with paraffin, or resin, and they quickly caught, and a pyramid of flame shot skyward.

For a moment the figure of Bunter the Second, on top of the pyre, was hidden by a rush of flame and smoke.

Then the wood crackled and burned, and the smoke cleared a little, and the figure emerged partly into view, though still clouded by smoke. As the pyre stirred and trembled in the blaze, the chair moved, and the figure moved with it. It was so lifelike that many of the juniors gazed at it open-mouthed.

Suddenly a voice was heard, apparently proceeding from the heart of the fire, and it sent a thrill to every heart.

"Elp!"

Wharton gave a jump.

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NEXT
TUESDAY,

The "Magnet"

ONE
HALFPENNY.

LIBRARY.

"I'm burning! Rescue!"

Faces went ghastly pale.

"My only hat!" muttered Bulstrode. "You've done it now! That's the real Bunter you've got there."

From the fire came a deep groan.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Bonfire Night.

HARRY WHARTON and his chums stood petrified for a moment. Wharton was quick to recover himself, however.

"It's all rot!" he exclaimed. "I fastened it on the chair myself. It's the dummy!"

"Murder! Fire!"

"Hark at it!" said Skinner. "You've got the real chap there! Pull him out!"

"Don't be an ass! I tell you——"

"Pull him out!"

"But——"

"Rescue! Fire! Murder!"

The bound figure in the chair was swaying in the flames. Smoke and blaze licked round it, and the swaying of the figure bore a ghastly resemblance to the struggles of a doomed wretch trying to escape.

"Rescue! I'm burning! Fire!"

"I know what it is!" exclaimed Wharton, in sudden relief. "That young bounder's hidden about here somewhere, and it's his giddy ventriloquism."

"Why, of course it is!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, with a deep breath of relief. "Blessed if I didn't begin to think for a moment that we were burning the wrong dummy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rescue! Fire! Murder!"

"What's on earth's that?" exclaimed Carberry, of the Sixth, stopping as he passed the bonfire. "What does that mean?"

"Elp! Murder!"

The prefect stared at the blazing bonfire in amazement.

"You young idiots! You don't mean to say you're playing such a trick as tying up somebody in a bonfire."

"It's all right, Carberry. Wo——"

"Murder!"

"Why, it's Bunter!" Carberry stared at the figure in the fire in amazement and horror for a moment. Then a blaze of spiteful satisfaction came over his face. Surely he had caught Wharton at last, playing a dangerous trick that would result in his expulsion from Greyfriars.

"You see——"

"I'm burning! 'Elp!"

Bunter could not sound the aspirate with his ventriloquial voice; but Carberry did not notice that.

"You mad young villains!" he gasped. "Why, he's actually burning!"

"I tell you——"

"You'll be sacked for this."

"But I tell you——"

Carberry did not stay to listen. He dashed into the bonfire, scattering it right and left, to the rescue of the supposed sufferer.

The juniors gave a shout of wrath as they saw their pyre kicked to pieces. But the humour of the matter struck them at once.

Carberry was playing the heroic rescuer, and getting pretty severely burnt, too; and the utter absurdity of it made the juniors yell again, with laughter.

Bob Cherry clasped Tom Brown in his arms and almost wept.

"Touchin' sight, ain't it?" he sobbed. "Heroic rescue! Facing the flames! Medal of the Humane Society! And all that! Touchin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Carberry!"

"Have him out!"

"Carberry to the rescue! Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter came out from behind the tree. He was sniggering away. Carberry was the most unpopular prefect at Greyfriars, and his motives even now were rather to get the Removites into trouble than to rescue the supposed victim of their brutality.

Bunter, his good-humour completely restored, blinked at Carberry in the firelight, and wondered what the prefect would say when he saw him.

It did not take Carberry long to find out his mistake.

As soon as he reached the scorching figure in the pyre, a touch was sufficient to show him that it was made of lath and padding.

He sprang back from the bonfire with a savage brow.

His clothes were scorched, his hair singed, his hands burnt, and he was in a towering rage.

"You young hounds!" he yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—"

"Ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "It wasn't our fault you bucked into the bonfire. We tried to stop you. Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—"

The prefect was about to hurl himself upon them; but the juniors lined up to receive him. They had certainly tried to stop Carberry from making an ass of himself, and he had refused to listen to them.

They were not inclined to have his temper wreaked upon them in consequence; and Carberry, after a look at them, decided that it would be better not.

He swung away savagely, and a yell of laughter from the Removites rang in his ears as he departed.

"Ha, ha, ha!" gurgled Bunter. "That was funny!"

Bob Cherry gripped the fat junior by the back of the neck.

"Ow! Wow! Leggo!"

"You young sweep! You gave us all a start for a moment."

"He, he, he!"

"Shove him into the fire!" said Tom Brown seriously.

"I should like to see him melt!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here! Hold on! Really! Stop! Chuck it! Ow!"

"Well, no more of your little games," said Bob Cherry, releasing the fat junior, who promptly gave the bonfire a wider berth. "Don't get too near the fire, Bunter, or you'll find yourself running into tallow before you know where you are."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Pile up that wood again, now that Carberry has done the heroic rescuer act."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fuel was quickly piled up round the smoking figure of Billy Bunter's double, and the bonfire blazed away merrily again.

The roar of the flames mingled with the cracking of squibs and crackers, the streaming of rockets and Roman candles.

Higher and higher grew the flames round the doomed figure of Bunter the Second. Billy Bunter blinked at his double in the fire. The spectacles cracked in the heat, and finally the figure itself blazed up, and fell into the fire with a crash that sent up pyramids of sparks.

"Good-bye, Bunter!" shouted Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"Ha, ha, ha! Good-bye, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter stalked away; and in the midst of the bonfire the remnants of Bunter the Second were quickly consumed.

It had been a merry evening, and the juniors were likely to "remember the Fifth of November," as the song has it. Carberry was likely to remember it, too, for it was some days before the scorching disappeared from his hands and the singeing from his eyebrows.

But everybody but Carberry was satisfied; and, as Bob Cherry remarked, that was good enough, and the Remove agreed with him.

THE END.

(Another long, complete tale of Harry Wharton and Co. next Tuesday, entitled: "Bunter, the Detective," by Frank Richards. Please order your copy of "The Magnet" Library in advance. Price One Halfpenny.)



A Splendid Tale of Life in the British Army.

A BRIEF RESUME OF THE EARLIER CHAPTERS.

Ronald Chenys is forced to leave Sandhurst through the treachery of his stepbrother 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. The unscrupulous Bagot, however, gets caught in his own toils, and is publicly degraded to the ranks. Foxey Williams meets his death mysteriously in a burning barn. In the shooting match for the Fairly Cup, between B and F Companies, two old soldiers, Mouldy Mills and Hookey Walker, of B Company, contrive by means of an ingenious trick to cause B to win. As the two have concealed themselves on the range, they fear to leave in daylight, and by the time the sun sank to rest they were ready to eat their boots. "Never mind; think of the dubs we've got to collect, Mouldy," said Hookey. "There's two-pun-two-and-threepence-halfpenny a-comin'g to me out of them fat heads of F. After that you can stand me two goes of sausage and mashed, which is all the interest I shall charge you for the use of my colossal intellect."

(Now go on with the story.)

An Appalling Surprise.

Mouldy sniffed and stumbled along by the side of his comrade. They mounted the barrack wall at last, and clambered along to a point where descent could be made. One of the slush-tubs stood at the corner of the shed, and offered a convenient stepping-place to the ground.

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Mouldy, being more sound of limb, if less sure of sight, led the way. He negotiated the shed roof safely, but miscalculated the exact position of the rim of the slush-tub.

Hookey, clinging in the darkness overhead, heard a suspicious sound, which was rather a splosh than a splash, followed by a horrified gasp, and a lot of violent language.

"I've done it!" spluttered Mouldy, who had soused up to his armpits in a fearful mixture of kitchen slops, cabbage-ends, old meat bones, and tea-leaves.

"Sh, you juggins! Take cover! There's somebody coming!" hissed Hookey suddenly from the roof, and suited the action to the word by stretching himself out flat against the wall above.

For the unfortunate Mouldy the process of concealment was not so pleasant, though equally simple. Really, all he had to do was to duck deeper into the hog-wash, in which he was already immersed.

To attempt to get out of the tub now would lead to certain discovery, for there was no doubt that someone was in the immediate vicinity.

In view of the delicate nature of the mission on which they had been engaged, and the fact that both had their air-guns still concealed in their trousers-legs, discovery was to be avoided at all costs.

Hoping against hope that the prowler would not chance

that way, Mouldy held his breath, and his nose, too, ready for the plunge.

His luck was out, however. The footsteps drew closer. The man, whoever it was, was just about to turn the corner. There was nothing for it but to dive. He took one mighty breath and ducked.

Gussie Smythe, restless under a guilty conscience, was mooning round the most unfrequented parts of the barrack square, when a suspicious flopping sound—such as a pike makes in reedy shallows—turned his attention to a big cask standing under the lee of the kitchen out-house near by.

Had he been a second earlier he might have seen Mouldy's head disappear as a dabchick dives under a lily pad.

Gussie was interested. He thought of rats and suchlike things, and went forward and stood over the smelly mixture, holding his nose. It seemed to be heaving and stirring, as if some whirlpool was in its midst. After a few seconds bubbles began to rise, and then above the surface something popped up black and shiny, like the conning-tower of a miniature submarine.

If Gussie was staggered, Mouldy was positively paralysed when he saw who it was he had taken such heroic measures to dodge.

In two seconds Mouldy was the maddest man in Woolchester, not excluding the local lunatic asylum.

Shooting like a jack-in-the-box out of the tub in which he was crouching, he grabbed Gussie by the ears.

Gussie backed like a frightened horse, the tub toppled and overturned with a crash, tipping Mouldy and all the rest of its miscellaneous contents into Gussie's lap.

Gussie let out a scream of terror and disgust, but still Mouldy's thirst for revenge was not satiated. He seized the unfortunate Augustus by the neck and one of his legs, and mopped him up and down in the awful mixture, until the sound of approaching footsteps warned him that it was time to fly.

Meanwhile Hookey, under cover of the din of strife, had clambered from the roof and made good his retreat. Slipping like a shadow round the barrack square, he was soon safe amid the crowd in the canteen.

His entry was the signal for a rush of his creditors to get near him. Hookey was pleased to find them so eager to settle their little accounts.

Then it dawned upon him that all the outstretched hands were empty.

"Here, what's the game?" he demanded hotly. "Who are you getting at?"

"Come on, Hookey; no welshing!" shouted half a dozen. "Pay out! Two bob you owe me! Where's your pal Mouldy? We want him, too?"

Hookey looked as blank as a sheet of paper.

"Who won, then?" he demanded faintly.

"Chuck it! No hank!" snarled somebody threateningly.

And Hookey was promptly pinned against the counter.

"Didn't 'B' win, after all?" he persisted, his brain all in a whirl.

"'F' Company won, of course, and you know it!" sneered the peppery creditor. "They'd six reds left, and wiped the blues clean out inside of three minutes! And now, are you going to part up, you old fraud, or have we got to turn you upside down to get our money?"

Private Hookey Walker was so utterly flabbergasted to find that he and Mouldy had been gaily sniping the balloon targets of their own side, thus bringing about their defeat, he could only stand and gasp like a codfish.

His beautiful scheme had miscarried, and, instead of collecting his ill-gotten gains to the tune of "two pun two-an'-threepence-a'-penny," as he had fondly hoped, he found himself surrounded by a clamouring mob of creditors, demanding various sums totalling up to something well over three pounds.

As he only had fifteen shillings left of all his winnings over the great boxing contest, it was plain that the majority would have to whistle for their cash. No one seemed particularly eager for this pastime, and, amid shouts of "Welsher!" a rush was made to turn Hookey upside down and shake him.

The result was a gorgeous row. The "B" men in the canteen rallied to their comrade's rescue, and "F" Company promptly turned a phalanx, and drove them back. The rest of the Tommies meantime climbed on to the tables, and yelled encouragement to both sides.

The sergeant and corporal on canteen duty were powerless to quell the riot, and by the time the picquet had tumbled out and doubled to the scene of carnage there was a score of black eyes and damaged noses, while Hookey looked as though he had been fighting several rounds with a motor-bus.

They carried him to the guard-room by legs and arms, and a dozen others were haled off, too, to cool their heels in durance vile.

To Hookey's joy, the first man his swollen eyes lit upon in the prisoners' room was the unfortunate Gussie, who had been raked out of the odorous pool from the overturned

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pig-tub, and taken gingerly off to the cells by order of the unsympathetic barrack provost-sergeant.

There he sat, looking like a half-drowned rat fresh out of a sewer; and, as the guard-room was particularly full of prisoners that night, Hookey had to share his cell.

To tax poor Gussie openly within hearing of their comrades with his criminal carelessness was impossible. Moreover, Gussie was quite ignorant of having made a mistake at all.

The arrangement, as he remembered it, was that if the "B" Company team had to fire at the blue balloons, he was to wave a white handkerchief; if the red, he was to signal with his cap. This was wrong, of course. It was exactly the other way about.

So Hookey glared at Gussie with lips drawn back and his teeth bared, as if he was about to devour him whole.

At intervals of a minute he gurgled hoarsely "Liar!" and other encouraging epithets, and whispered blood-curdling threats of vengeance, which made Gussie's scalp crawl with horror and his backbone squirm and wriggle as if it were a cold and particularly active eel.

"Here, what d'yer mean? What 'ave I done now?" he gasped, catching at his breath.

But Hookey only mopped the crimson drops from his nose on what had once been a handkerchief, and went on glaring and grinding his teeth. He kept this up for two solid hours, until Gussie was just upon the point of shrieking for help, when he remembered he was in the cell, so he curled himself up on the plank bed, and went to sleep.

Meantime, Mouldy, after cleaning himself as best he could under the standpipe, crept off to the barrack-room, where he rung out his clothes, and went to bed.

He also had heard the stunning news, and thought it best to make himself as scarce as possible until things cooled down a little.

Next morning Hookey and the rest of the battered warriors were "turned off" with varying sentences of imprisonment and "C.B." (confined to barracks).

Gussie escaped with only a light dose of the latter punishment, in view of the fact that neither he nor anybody else seemed quite to know what he had been up to, though it was evident from his beplastered state that he had been up to something.

When the shades of darkness had once more fallen, however, Mouldy requested the pleasure of his company in a secluded corner of the barracks.

Gussie complied readily enough. He knew that he had somehow or other got himself into hot water with the two old soldiers over the shooting match, and he naturally expected that Mouldy was now going to enlighten him as to the exact nature of his misdoings.

This was originally Mouldy's intention, until he remembered that any explanation, to be adequate, must necessitate undesirable revelations as to their goings on.

On the principle, therefore, that the least said is the soonest mended, he halted the unsuspecting Gussie in a dark corner, and, without offering a word, smote him suddenly and violently on the nose. Then he turned on his heel to make off.

Gussie, whatever else he might be, was a lad of spirit, and he promptly leaped upon Mouldy like a panther.

Borne forwards by the impetus of the assault, Mouldy caught his toe in a grating, and came to earth with a crash.

As a drowning man remembers in a flash the incidents of the life he is leaving, so all the indignities, all the "leg-pulling" he had suffered at Mouldy's hands came back to Gussie with an overwhelming rush.

He wove his fingers in Mouldy's scanty locks, and, with each bitter memory, bumped his nose deeper in the muddy gravel. When Mouldy was at his last gasp, Gussie rose and fled.

This was as near as he ever got to the solution of what, to him, was a most mysterious affair. Mouldy decided to postpone his revenge until he had an opportunity of talking things over with his pal. By the time Hookey was a free man once more, the blood of both had cooled, and they decided to say no more, lest worse should befall.

Meantime, the news of Foxey's mysterious end had travelled far. The story of the fire, and the description of the missing Pushoffsky—for whose arrest the police held a warrant—had been in every paper in the land.

Slaney, at Sandhurst, was bewildered, and not a little dismayed. Evidently his partner in blackmail had gone one step too far, and someone had lashed out at last, blind to all consequences.

"Well, Foxey was always a bit of a fool, anyway," he said to himself. "He got his teeth in too far, and didn't know when to take 'em out—that was about it. But who is this hulkin' foreigner they're arter? How did he come to be mixed up in the biz?"

Slaney turned pale under his sallow skin. All sorts of possibilities began to occur to him. Perhaps this was a desperate counter-attack on Mr. Chenys' part—a policy of setting a thief to throttle a thief. If so, where did he come in?

Slaney shivered, but by-and-by he recovered a little, and began to convince himself that such a vendetta was highly improbable, if not impossible, in these times. Nevertheless, he decided to go slow for the present in the matter of further demands for hush-money from Ian. The next day a letter arrived for him with a London postmark. Slaney turned it over and over in his fingers. The envelope was that of Mordecai & Evans, but the address was written in a straggling scrawl instead of the usual clerkly handwriting.

He noted this carefully, for his cunning brain was ever on the alert to pounce on stray straws to show which way the wind was blowing.

In his time he had been instrumental in introducing a very fair amount of business to the moneylenders. At least half a dozen impecunious cadets had been decoyed by him and enmeshed in their toils, but sport had been poor of late.

All the commission due to him for the three brace of dupes had been paid up, hence he was wondering what this unexpected communication might refer to.

After turning the possibilities all ways in his mind, he broke the seal and read the signature—John Mordecai.

"Should like to see you when you can make it convenient to call."

Slaney pondered the brief message very carefully, and arrived at three conclusions.

First, that the matter was sufficiently important for the principal partner to write to him himself; next, that, therefore, it was likely to be of a confidential nature; and, lastly, that it was worth his while to waste no time in finding out what was at the bottom of it all.

A day's leave, as it happened, was due to him. He promptly put in for a pass to London, and the following morning found him attired in a neat suit of mufti halted before an old-fashioned doorway, in Gervais Street, on the side of which was a small brass plate bearing the simple legend, "Mordecai & Evans."

A long passage, dark and heavily panelled, confronted him. It was the decoy-pipe, in which many a client with "ducks and drakes" propensities had entered timidly, only to find himself snared in the trap beyond.

Slaney, however, being one of the decoy-ducks, had no qualms of fear.

In the Moneylender's Tolls—Slaney Meets his Match—Awaiting Orders.

Mr. Mordecai was in, but he kept Slaney waiting twenty minutes, nevertheless, before he rang for him to be ushered into his private office.

"You're prompt," he said, with just the suspicion of a sneer, as he surveyed the soldier from under his heavy eyelids. He also was cunning, after Slaney's own kind, and he wanted to check at the outset any impression the latter might be cherishing that either he or the business in hand was of more than casual importance to the firm.

"Well, you asked me to come, didn't you?" growled Slaney, rather taken aback.

"Oh, quite so! I merely remark the fact. But the matter I wished to speak about was not urgent. In fact, it has quite escaped my memory for the moment. Oh, yes!" he added, stifling a yawn and affecting to consult a reminder-tablet on his desk. "It refers to a client of ours—Mr. Ian Chenys—to whom, if I remember correctly, you introduced us."

"Quite right," answered Slaney. "I put him on to you, if that's what you mean!"

"Yes, I mean that," replied Mr. Mordecai calmly. "He was a cadet at Sandhurst, and is now an officer in some line regiment."

"The Wessex, second battalion—my own!" jerked Slaney. Mr. Mordecai nodded his chin.

"I have been in communication with him lately over a further trifling loan. I understand that he had an elder brother once, and he died."

"Correct," said Slaney briefly.

"Was found drowned, and was buried at Norwood Cemetery," pursued Mr. Mordecai.

"Right!"

"And that, therefore, Mr. Ian Chenys is direct heir to the Chenys estates."

"I leave that to you," said Slaney. "Anyway, his brother's dead. Mr. Chenys attended the inquest himself."

THE MAGNET—91.

NEXT WEEK:

"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY RETURNS TO USUAL SIZE AND PRICE: ONE HALFPENNY.

They brought in 'misadventure,' but some of us know better. It was suicide!"

"Quite sure?" asked Mr. Mordecai.

"Sure as eggs!"

"Then you would be surprised to hear that Mr. Ronald Chenys is now alive and well?"

"What?" cried Slaney, springing up in surprise, and toppling his chair over with a crash.

"You didn't know it?"

"Know it? Great Scotland yard, no! Alive, you say? Where?"

"At Woolchester—Wessex Regiment—second battalion—your own!" replied Mr. Mordecai, mimicking Slaney's answer of a moment or two before.

"Alive! All this time!" blurted out Slaney, quite oblivious to the fact that it was his own private affairs he was revealing. "And Foxey knew it, the hound! I guess he did! I thought there was something on the crook somewhere. He's been working that lay on his own, and never told me, the thieving blackleg!"

"Highly probable, I should say," agreed Mr. Mordecai, with a smile.

"How do you know?" demanded Slaney fiercely.

"I don't know; only what you have been telling me in the last few moments."

"Hang it, I've told you nothing!" said Slaney, falling back in a fluster, and ready to bite out his own tongue with annoyance.

"Oh, yes you have, and most interesting, too, believe me!"

Slaney glanced at him, and picked up his chair.

"What makes you think Ronald Chenys is alive?" he demanded, after a pause.

"Saw him with my little eye, like the fly in cock-robin," replied the moneylender, with a saturnine grin.

"Well, you seem cheery enough over it!" Slaney snarled.

"How about you? If he's alive, and the estates don't go to Mr. Ian—and I'll take jolly good care they don't, unless it's made worth while to keep my mouth shut—then you look like whistling for your money."

"You've got a hold over him," said the moneylender, as if he stated a fact rather than asked a question.

"You bet!"

"And you've made good use of it?"

"That's my business."

"And mine. That's what I wanted to see you about," said the moneylender. "By the way, have you got that note I sent you?" he inquired casually.

Slaney had, and he laid it upon the desk. To his surprise and indignation, Mr. Mordecai tore it up into strips and flung it on the fire.

"Here, what the dickens do you mean by that!" the soldier burst out in a rage.

"I'll tell you," answered the moneylender coolly. "I mean by that you and I have got to come to terms. The firm of Mordecai & Evans has got something over one, and under ten, thousand pounds on the Chenys' apple-cart, and we can't afford you going and upsetting it."

"Oh, indeed!" snarled Slaney, who began to see that he held a whip hand here. "And what's going to prevent me doing what I jolly well like in the matter?"

"I am," answered Mr. Mordecai, whose face had suddenly hardened to a mask of steel.

"Hark who's speaking!" said Slaney, with a forced guffaw. "P'r'aps you'll tell me how you're goin' to set about it?"

"Certainly!" assented the moneylender. "You see this bell? I touch it, and send for a policeman. Then I give you in charge for attempted blackmail, backed by threats of death!"

"Threats—blackmail!" gasped Slaney. "Who have I threatened?"

"Me!"

"You lie!"

"Possibly, but you're the only one who'll know that. Besides, I am not your only victim. Remember Mr. Chenys, who'll come forward if I ask him."

"This is a trap!" stuttered Slaney, glaring round as though looking for some means of escape; he made a sudden dive for the door, but the lock clicked just as his hand was about to clutch the handle. He shook it, but the door was fast. He turned to see Mr. Mordecai smiling under his drooping eyelids. "You lying hound!" cried Slaney, coming back to the centre of the room. "You say that I came in here to blackmail you and to use threats? Prove it, I defy you!"

For answer, Mr. Mordecai touched an electric bell-push at the side of his desk, and a third, hard-visaged man appeared instantly from a recess, the door of which Slaney

had not noticed, for the simple reason that it was concealed by the panel lining the walls of the office.

"Ah, Chevins," said Mr. Mordecai pleasantly, "you heard all that this man said?"

"Yes, sir," answered the man, who might have been a confidential clerk.

"You heard his demand for five hundred pounds, backed by a threat to shoot me where I sat if I did not comply at once?"

"I did, sir!"

Slaney gasped in helpless amazement.

"Where is the pistol he was ready to use?" asked Mr. Mordecai.

Without a word the man opened the drawer in a second-desk, and produced a cheap revolver of Belgian manufacture, which he laid at the moneylender's elbow.

"You see, we have everything complete for such emergencies as these," said Mr. Mordecai, turning to Slaney with a leering smile. "Is it to be war between us, for if so I always make a point of hitting first?"

"You scoundrel!" was all Slaney could bring himself to say.

"All right, Mr. Chevins, I think you may retire," said the moneylender easily. "My client will give no further trouble, I am sure, only remain within call."

"Right, sir!"

The moneylender allowed two minutes to pass in silence while Slaney collected his dazed senses. Then he cocked a cold, inquiring eye at the soldier.

"Do we work in 'Co.'?" he asked sharply.

"I suppose so!" growled Slaney.

"Very well. Then in future you take your orders from me, and if I find you moving one step forward or backward on your own account, look out for trouble swift and sure."

Slaney said nothing, but glared into his hat.

Let him once get out of that infernal den, he would see whether this was not a game that two could play at.

Mr. Mordecai's orders, which he delivered tersely and with an increasing harshness, which showed that he meant every word he said, were briefly these: That Slaney was to go back to Sandhurst, and wait until he got the word to put in his application to return to duty with his battalion. After that he would receive further instructions in due course.

The soldier took his dismissal, and turned to go, without even his usual request for expenses. Mr. Mordecai called him back with a grim smile at this evidence of demoralisation and defeat, and tossed him a five-pound note.

With this still crumpled in his hand, Slaney jostled his way along Gervase Street, dazed with anger and fear. He found himself almost under the wheels of a van before he came to his wits, and after that he proceeded more steadily in the direction of St. George's Barracks.

It was his intention to find out from Colour-sergeant Duffy whether a man corresponding to Ronald's description had enlisted there, for the Wessex Regiment, about the time of the Sandhurst affair.

The wily old colour-sergeant, however, was proof to all his blandishments. Once in a while, when a comrade had passed through London, he had been able to get news of the strapping recruit he remembered so well. The good news that he had received his first stripe already, had not surprised him in the least.

But Duffy knew Slaney of old, and he knew that he was still at Sandhurst. Ronald, too, he remembered, had admitted to being an ex-cadet, and he resolved that, so far as he was concerned, this secret—if secret it still was—should never be divulged.

So Slaney got nothing out of Duffy, and went back to Sandhurst on an early train, too savage and sick with the world and himself to stomach the delights of a night out at a music-hall, which had been once the most important part of his holiday programme.

Mr. Mordecai sat deep in thought for ten minutes after the door had closed on Slaney.

The news that the soldier had a blackmailing grip of his own on his client, Ian Chenys, was disquieting. Yet he might have expected it, knowing the type of blackguard Slaney was.

Not that he was bothering his head on Ian's behalf. It was only his business to see that the firm of Mordecai & Evans got the first squeeze.

"He talked of another man—Foxey. I seem to know that name," mused the moneylender, and he touched the bell again. The same clerk entered who had stepped previously into the room from the secret recess.

"Ah, Chevins, bring me my private book of newspaper cuttings," he said casually.

A bulky volume was laid on the desk before him, and, turning over the pages most recently filled with scraps, he found an account of the inquest on Private Williams, at Woolchester.

"Ah, here it is! Foxey was mentioned by one of the witnesses as the nickname of the deceased. And he was

THE MAGNET—91.

NEXT
WEEK:

"BUNTER, THE DETECTIVE."

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

Mr. Ian Chenys' servant, too. That's queer. I must read this again."

Mr. Mordecai read the cutting many times, and at last swept the heavy volume on to the floor.

"Phew!" he whistled, pursing up his thick lips. "This looks like developing into a dickens of a mess, and that scoundrel was nearer to the mark than he knew when he said I should whistle for my money. I'll have to get on to this at once."

Returned to Duty—Combined Manœuvres—Garrisoning Eastguard Fort.

Not long after the battle of the balloons, two men of B Company returned to duty. One was Alf Sheppard, who, through Foxey's foul treachery, had been so nearly lynched after Ronald's boxing match with the Navy champion, and the other, Private Bagot, late sergeant of No. 4 Section.

Alf, who was as white and thin as a lath, after his many weeks in hospital, received a hearty welcome from all his comrades in the regiment.

That they were bitterly sorry for their share of the unjust punishment which had nearly crippled him for life, was no news to him; for on days when visitors were allowed to the wards, Ronald and George, to say nothing of odd sympathisers, had made a point of calling, whenever possible, and heartening the patient up.

Ronald and the two ex-hooligans had grown to be the best of friends in consequence. When first bereft of his chum, George had taken to steady, sullen drinking among the most undesirable set in the canteen, but as he and Ronald were brought closer together, the gentleman ranker's influence began to get a gentle hold of him.

Though he scarcely knew how or why, he found himself shunning his canteen companions and spending quiet evenings in the recreation-room instead.

Seeing the good that could be worked in the heart and brain of this young rough of the slums, Ronald set to work quietly to interest him in books and clean ideals. He spoke as he boxed, straight from the shoulder, for he hated cant, as only a soldier learns to hate it.

If Ronald ever opened his lips to his comrades on the subject of religion, he was quite unconscious of the fact. There were mission services held by enthusiastic laymen from the town for the especial benefit of Tommy Atkins, but Ronald never attended them. Yet he had the reputation for being one of the most sincerely religious men in the battalion, though none would have been more surprised than he if anyone had told him of the fact.

Tommy Atkins hears the death-drum roll too often in camp and barrack to deride the man who salutes his Maker on bended knee.

So when Ronald knelt by his bed cot at night, the rest said nothing, but looked the other way, perhaps, and tried to stifle waking consciences, or slanged themselves that they had not the pluck to do the same.

Thus, Ronald, without realising it, held a great influence for good over a great deal of what was supposed to be the toughest section in the toughest company of a regiment which had a reputation not by any means blameless.

He took some trouble, however, over his two former enemies, Alf and George, and when they began to talk of attending school, and working for promotion, he threw himself heart and soul into their plans.

Bagot, however, was a harder nut to crack. The fit into which he had fallen after his attempt to shoot Ronald in the barrack-room, was the first phase of a desperate illness, which the doctors prophesied could end in but two ways—death, or insanity.

A life of hard drinking, and a former sunstroke in India, had apparently set the man's brain tottering at last to a fall.

But Bagot, who had the constitution of a bull, cheated them all, and after a few weeks, left the ward, shaken to the marrow, but to all outward signs in possession of his full senses.

To the credit of No. 4 Section, not a word had leaked out as to the terrible crime of which he had been guilty. This was but a sample of the regard Ronald had come to be held by his comrades. He had asked them to keep silence, and that was enough.

Whether Bagot himself remembered what had happened, none could tell. Ronald was careful, neither by look nor word, to suggest that he had any reason to mistrust the man. He went out of his way, in fact, to be friendly, and to spare him any of the rougher fatigue work, which would be particularly bitter to a man who had fallen from sergeant's rank.

Bagot, however, received these overtures in gloomy sullenness, doing his work doggedly yet well, and brooding alone when the day was over.

"I say, Chester," said Tony, one evening, as they passed out, leaving Bagot seated on his bed-cot, staring heavily at the sunset sky, "I don't like the look of that chap. I believe he'll break out and run amok one day, and then—well, I should look out for yourself if I were you."

"Oh, that's all right!" laughed Ronald, although the same thought had been lurking in his own mind the last day or two. He's a bit queer in his ways, perhaps; but you've got to remember that he's only just pulled through a stiff illness. Besides, the poor chap may well be down in the mouth. To lose stripes, and two-thirds of your pension on the eve of completing your 'twenty-one' is enough to make any man sick at heart. I'm only sorry that I was partly instrumental in it all."

"It was entirely his own fault. You've got nothing to blame yourself for. The man did his level best to do you the worst turn he could, and I must say I'm surprised that you find it so easy to forgive and forget. I'm hanged if I could!"

"Oh, yes, you would, Tony!" replied Ronald. "Anyway, the man was not responsible for his actions at the moment, and that excuses him. By the way, I hear we are ordered to take part in the combined manœuvres at Plymport next week. That ought to be good fun, and a change. I must say I'm getting a bit sick of barracks."

"So am I. By Jove, you mean the Naval manœuvres?" said Tony.

"Yes; I hear we and the other infantry regiments are going to help man the forts, while the torpedo destroyers try to run in and attack the harbour."

"Hooray!" cried Tony. "What forts are we to occupy?"

"I don't quite know; but Sergeant Kedge heard a rumour that we were detailed for one of the two bandbox forts lying out in the Sound. If so, I suppose they'll put half a battalion in each."

"What, five hundred men in those things? Why, they don't look as though they could hold fifty besides the gunners!"

"Ah, we shall see!" laughed Ronald. "Distance is deceptive, especially on the water. Anyway, I know for a fact that their war complement of infantry alone is six hundred. It doesn't sound very exciting to be cooped up there with a crowd like that for a whole week, but, still, I've no doubt it won't be bad fun."

"Bad fun? I should rather think not?" said Tony enthusiastically.

Rumour, in this case, was no fickle jade. The Wessex were detailed to garrison the Chequer and Eastguard Forts, which, as any Plymport man will tell you, stand out in the Sound, approaching the harbour like two squat pill-boxes, painted chessboard fashion.

As soon as the steamer conveying the infantry garrison ranged close into the spider-logged landing-stages, built on the outside of the forts, it became evident to Ronald and his comrades, who had never before seen them at close quarters, that these isolated sea citadels were really of enormous size and strength.

Being circular, round-topped, and armoured with steel plates, an enemy's shells would, for the most part, glance off without doing much damage.

The reason for the chess-board fashion with which they were painted, was now obvious, for many of the black squares, but not all, were embrasures; and to distinguish which were gunports and which were not at long range, would be extremely difficult.

The right half battalion, including B Company, were destined for Eastguard Fort, and when the steamer had disembarked the left half at Chequer Fort, it continued on its way.

It did not take more than a few minutes to land the five hundred troops, and the men were marched up the long gangway leading up the side of the fort from the landing-stage, to a yawning cavity high above the sea, which was the fort gate.

In time of war this gangway could be destroyed at once. A monster steel-faced plug, some twenty feet deep—which is the thickness of the wall—would then be run forward on rails by hydraulic machinery into the aperture, and the fortress sealed.

The interior of the fort was a revelation to Ronald, and to every other thinking man. A double tier of modern and powerful guns frowned seaward from the masked embrasures, while at every point of vantage were mounted waspish little quickfirers by the score, covering the approach to the harbour.

Round their mighty pieces the garrison artillerymen were busy getting ready for the outbreak of the mimic war.

It was soon evident that, apart from the fact that it was going to be a night and day vigil for this garrison, there was to be precious little comfort for the men during their seven days' sojourn.

In open recesses in the galleries, through which the sea wind hummed and whistled, were groups of barrack-beds, mess-tables, racks and shelves, and to these the men were told off in squads.

It was scarcely better than living in an open railway-arch, and so utterly dark, draughty and depressing were their new quarters, that as soon as kits were stowed, orders read out, and permission given to "break off," there was a general rush for the open air and sunlight.

Leaving the majority to besiege the tiny canteen, Ronald and Tony made their way to the circular parapet on the summit of the fort, there to feast their eyes on the vast expanse of blue water surrounding them on every side.

"By jingo," said Tony "who ever would think to look at these apparently tinpot affairs from the shore, that they were such mighty defences? Why, they must be impregnable!"

"I've heard it said that they are victualled to withstand a two years' siege," answered Ronald; "and as for water, each fort has its well bored down through the bottom of the sea itself."

"A two years' siege?" exclaimed Tony, with a whistle.

"And do you mean to say that somewhere underneath us is stored ammunition enough for all these guns to be kept blazing away for two whole years? Supposing it was to blow up?"

"Ah, supposing!" laughed Ronald, and turned, to find Bagot was standing almost at his elbow.

Evidently he had been as much surprised as Tony by what Ronald had said; but there was a gleam of cunning rather than of dismay in his brooding eyes. Finding Ronald's gaze upon him, the ex-sergeant turned and disappeared in the crowd of Tommies now gathered on the ramparts.

"By the way," said Tony, "what time is war declared?"

"Midnight to-night," answered Ronald, still watching Bagot's retreating figure. Like a sea fog, clammy and chill, there had come creeping about his heart an unaccountable feeling of dread.

At midnight the garrison of Eastguard Fort stood to arms. Behind, and on either side of the Sound, as the clocks struck twelve, a dozen powerful searchlights darted their white beams from the various batteries; for war had been declared.

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(Another instalment of this fine serial next Tuesday.)

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"BUNTER, THE DETECTIVE."

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The Editor



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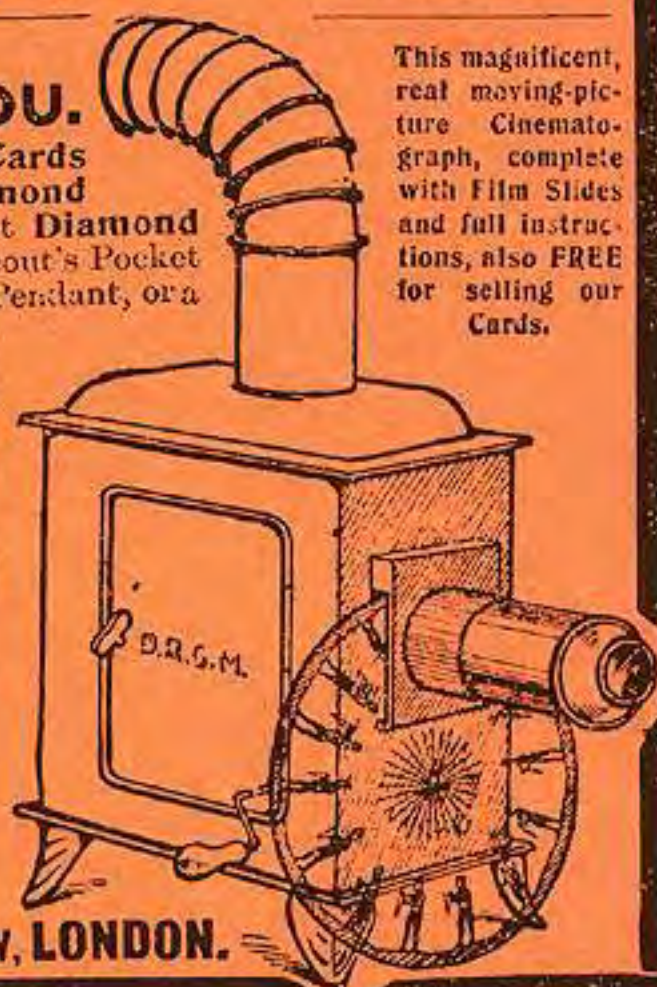
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