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VOL. 4.



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Billy Bunter's Resolutions

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School Tale of
The Boys of Greyfriars.

BY

FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Tom Brown's Disturbing Notice.

"MY only hat!" gasped Tom Brown. "The cheeky, fat bounder deserves to be well bumped!"

Tom Brown, the New Zealand junior in the Remove Form at Greyfriars School, was standing in front of the large notice-board, which was a large green-baize-covered affair fixed on the right-hand wall of the spacious entrance-hall.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Mark Linley, who was standing next to Tom Brown. "Fancy Billy Bunter thinking that he can play Rugby!"

"It doesn't seem to have caught on much, does it?"

Mark Linley turned in surprise.

"Why, you only put the notice up about twenty minutes ago," he said.

"Nearly half an hour."

"Yes; but everybody's out."

Tom Brown once more read through the copper-plate written notice which he had put up.

It read as follows:

"It is proposed to have a game of Rugby on Wednesday afternoon, with a view to popularising the sport at Greyfriars. Will all those wishing to play, kindly write their names below?"

T. BROWN.

M. LINLEY.

"P.S.—Will Fourth-Formers be very careful to write neatly? No Third Form fags need apply.—T.B."

The only name that had been attached up to now had been written in pencil, and Tom Brown read it out again and again.

"Billy Bunter!" he muttered finally. "Shall we scratch it out?"

"N-no."

"Well, let us put our own names down."

"My only Aunt Matilda! Why, of course, considering the whole idea belongs to us two, we should have our names on top."

"Are we going to have that fat porpoise's name off, then?" said Tom Brown, pulling a stump of pencil from his pocket.

"Better leave it there, as we've asked for names; but if he plays Rugby, he'll get half killed."

The New Zealand junior reached up to his notice, and wrote his own name neatly under that of Billy Bunter's.

"Here you are," he said, handing the pencil to Mark Linley. "Shove your name up!"

"Right-ho!"

And the Lancashire junior inscribed his name under that of Tom Brown's.

The two Removites both stepped back a pace or two, and glanced critically at the notice.

"I think that when——"

"Hallo!" interrupted Mark Linley. "Here they come!"

A confused shuffling of feet and a loud murmur of voices came floating down the long corridor, and Tom Brown and Mark Linley stepped out to intercept the crowd of juniors which the noise announced.

Marching along, leading the procession, were three juniors arm in arm.

The boy in the centre was very handsome, and had dark, curly hair. The two juniors on either side of him resembled him only inasmuch as they were of the same sturdy build.

The junior walking between the two others was Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove Form at Greyfriars, and he gave Tom Brown a pleasant laugh of recognition as they approached.

"Hallo, you slackers!" he said. "Why haven't you been out with us? We've had some good practice potting into goal."

"Not half, my lads," assented Bob Cherry, releasing himself from Harry Wharton's right arm. "We're not going to lose any matches this year."

Frank Nugent, the junior on Wharton's left, strolled up to the notice-board.

"Hallo," he said, "something fresh! What is it? Is there going to be a debate on school-masters and their—Why, what's this?"

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry peered over Nugent's shoulder, and the crowd of juniors who now came flocking along were soon in a confused mass before Tom Brown's notice.

"What is it?"

"Read it out!"

"Brown's getting up a Rugger match!"

"Shut up, yapping, you kids," shouted Frank Nugent, who was being well crushed, "and listen!"

After a moment or two there was sufficient silence for Nugent's voice to be heard, and as each word of the notice was slowly read out, the crowd of juniors—and there were a few Upper Fourth-Formers—gazed at one another in astonishment.

"H-hem! Rugger!" sneered Dabney, of the Upper Fourth. "What d'we want to fool about with a rotten game like that, when we can all play soccer?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Dabney squeezed himself round in the crowd and grabbed hold of Bob Cherry, who had greeted his remark with a roar of laughter.

"What are you grinning at, fathead?" he shouted.

"Why, you said that we can all play soccer!"

"Well—"

More and more juniors had been attracted to the notice-board, and the crush was now so terrific that Bob Cherry and Dabney were separated, thus accounting for the Fourth-Former's threat being interrupted.

"I shall play!" shouted Bulstrode, the bully of the Remove, who had naturally fought his way well up to the notice.

"Shove your name down, then."

A pencil was handed over to Bulstrode, and the bully scrawled his name down under Mark Linley's.

"Who is that on top?"

"Bunter!"

"Fancy that fat cormorant playing Rugby?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton, Nugent, Cherry, and Hazeldene added their names in turn to the list.

Temple, who was Dabney's study-mate, was next persuaded to add his name, and Dabney soon followed suit.

"You'd better shove your name down, Inky, hadn't you?" said Harry Wharton, turning to the dark-complexioned-looking junior on his right.

It was Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur, and the Hindu junior replied in the wonderful English he had not acquired at Greyfriars.

"The betterfulness is terrific," he said.

"Well, buck up, you duffer!"

Hurree Singh was pushed away from the board just as Bob Cherry handed him a pencil, and two juniors tiptoed up to the notice.

"Buck up, Russell."

As soon as Russell had scrawled his name, Lacy stepped forward and did likewise.

"Out of the way, you cheeky kids!" ordered Cherry.

Hurree Singh was pushed forward once more; but the Nabob of Bhanipur only gazed at the notice with a puzzled look on his dark features.

"Go on, buck up, Inky!"

"T-the—"

"Hurry up, you duffer!"

"The fullupfulness is terrific," murmured the nabob.

"There is no room for my august signature."

"Shove it in one of the corners!" shouted Bob Cherry.

"The esteemed Lacy has done that."

Tom Brown, who had thought it advisable for Mark Linley and himself to remain on the outskirts of the crowd, now pushed his way through to the notice-board.

"Full up, is it?" he shouted excitedly.

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"Yes, rather!"

"Good! Let's have it, and Linley and I will make out the teams."

Bob Cherry stared in astonishment at the New Zealander.

"You and Linley will what?" he shouted.

"Make out the teams, of course! We're about the only two who can play Rugger, so you kids will want a lesson or two. Hand it down, Wharton!"

"Not yet, old son."

Tom Brown looked at the Remove captain, and then at Nugent, for he had intercepted a meaning wink between the two.

"W-what do you mean?" he said.

Harry Wharton gave the New Zealander a winning smile.

"Oh, only that we want a few more names," he explained. "There are about twenty-five so far, and Inky has not signed yet."

"It wants another sheet of paper, doesn't it, Dabney?"

Temple and Dabney, the two leaders of the Upper Fourth Form, looked somewhat puzzled as Frank Nugent turned to them and addressed him thus.

The Upper Fourth-Formers had to go very warily when Harry Wharton & Co. were about, as there was great rivalry between the two Forms.

"It does want another sheet of paper, doesn't it, Dabney?" repeated Frank Nugent, without the vestige of a smile on his countenance.

"It looks like it, fathead."

"Yes, I think it does, don't you, Wharton?"

"It seems to me as though that were the case. What do you say, Cherry?"

Bob grinned.

"Yes, I think you're right," he said.

"What game are you kids up to?" muttered Dabney, as the crowd of juniors in the rear pressed him and Temple up closer to Harry Wharton & Co.

"Game?" said Harry Wharton. "What game are we up to, Frank?"

"I don't know. Do you know what game we're up to, Bob?"

"No, only that we want another sheet of paper for the Rugger list."

"Oh, yes, of course!" said Harry Wharton seriously.

Temple and Dabney glared at the Removites.

"The back of this notice will do, won't it?" suggested Frank Nugent. "It's only got a lot of rot on it about a meeting of the Upper Fourth kids."

Nugent pulled out the drawing-pin which had secured the notice, and reversed it.

"Leave that alone, you cheeky boulder!" roared Dabney suddenly. "It's my notice for a meeting of the Upper Fourth football team."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shove your name on it, Inky!" shouted Nugent, just making his voice heard above the fearful uproar.

Hurree Singh struggled forward with the pencil in his hand.

"Has the esteemed Nugent pinned the paper up?"

"Yes, rather."

Temple and Dabney, their faces red with indignation at this insult, made a violent effort to clutch hold of Hurree Singh before he could sign his name.

"Keep these kids back," ordered Harry Wharton, throwing his arms round Temple's neck.

"Buck up, Remove."

Temple and Dabney struggled hard; but Harry Wharton & Co. kept them away from the notice while Hurree Singh wrote his name hurriedly at the top on the reversed Upper Fourth notice.

"Have you signed yet, Wun Lung?" shouted Hazeldene,

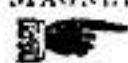
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turning excitedly to the young Chinese junior, who had been shot violently forward from the crowd of eager juniors.

"Me no signee yet," replied Wun Lung, with a bland smile.

"Well, buck up, then."

Temple and Dabney were now being reinforced by the Upper Fourth-Formers present, and Harry Wharton & Co. had a hard job to keep them away from the notice while Wun Lung signed.

"Any more?" shouted Bob Cherry.

"Yes, rather!"

"Let me have a game! I'm hot at Rugby!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. were pushed with their two captives violently against the wall.

"Take it down," gasped Frank Nugent to Brown, "or they'll grab hold of it!"

The New Zealander pulled the two pieces of paper from the board, and folding them hurriedly, crammed them into his pocket.

"Rescue, Upper Fourth!"

"Come on, Remove!"

Tom Brown's notice was practically forgotten, and all the two factions were fighting for now was for the honour of keeping their Form flag flying.

"Rescue, Upper Fourth!"

Dabney broke away from Wharton and Cherry's grasp, and flung his arms about excitedly.

"Come on!"

"Ow!"

Tom Brown, now that his precious notice was safely tucked away in his pocket, made a true Rugbylike tackle at the escaped Upper Fourth-Former, and the two went to the ground with a crash.

"Jolly good, Brownie; hold him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The whole excited crowd had now taken sides, and the scene before the notice-board was one of confusion when Mr. Quelch, the Remove Form-master, came striding down the corridor with a look of bewilderment on his stern face.

"Rescue, Upper Fourth!"

"Comet on; wipe the floor with 'em, Remove!"

Harry Wharton & Co. redoubled their efforts, and, rushing forward in a body, swept the Upper Fourth-Formers off their feet.

"Give them——"

"Boys!"

Mr. Quelch surveyed the scene with a look of absolute astonishment, and he stamped his foot violently as he had to repeat his command for order.

"Boys!" he shouted.

"My only hat! It's old Quelchy!"

"Cave!"

Sooner—much sooner—than it takes to tell, the silence was so oppressive that a pin could have been heard to drop.

"Wharton! Cherry!" rapped out Mr. Quelch. "Why, good gracious me, it seems as if the whole of my unruly Form have lost their senses, and gone raving mad!"

"W-we——"

"Silence!" interrupted Mr. Quelch, as Bulstrode commenced an explanation. "Every boy who has been a party of this uproarious scene will stay in on Wednesday afternoon, and write out five hundred lines!"

Those juniors who had been on the floor now rose slowly to their feet, and stared sheepishly at one another as Mr. Quelch drew a notebook from his pocket, and wrote down each boy's name.

He snapped it to at last, and surveyed the juniors for a moment in silence before he turned on his heel and strode off.

"My—only—aunt!" muttered Harry Wharton. "It's all the fault of you rotten Upper Fourth-Formers!"

Dabney stepped forward a pace, and then stopped.

"Why—why, you cheeky young Remove brats, didn't you commence it? Didn't you——"

"Oh, shut up!"

"Didn't you—hey? Didn't you?" spluttered Dabney.

"Dry up!" said Bob Cherry peremptorily. "It can't be helped now whose fault it is!"

"Wednesday afternoon!" muttered Tom Brown. "And everyone whose name is on the list to play in the game of Rugger is kept in!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's nothing to laugh at, duffer!" said Frank Nugent, turning to Mark Linley, who had suddenly burst into a roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the joke? Being kept in all Wednesday afternoon isn't anything to grin about, is it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, shut up cackling!"

"B-bunter's name is on the list, don't you see?"

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"Why—why, of course, that fat boulder is the only one who isn't here!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on!" laughed Harry Wharton. "Let's come and tell the porpoise he can captain the teams."

And Harry Wharton & Co. broke away from the crowd of juniors, and walked off to Study No. 1.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter's List of Resolutions.

BANG! Bang!

Billy Bunter, the fat junior of the Remove at Greyfriars, looked up from his work, and blinked through his big spectacles at the study door.

Bang! Crash! Bang!

Bunter's face was very fat, and it puckered up into a kicking and demands for the door of Study No. 1 to be opened.

"You can't come in, Wharton!" he shouted. "I'm very busy just now!"

And Billy Bunter added another neatly-written line in the little notebook before him.

"Y-you frabjous ass!" roared Bob Cherry's voice from the passage. "Open the door at once!"

Scratch, scratch, scratch!

Billy Bunter made another entry in his little notebook.

Crash! Bang, bang!

The fat junior stopped his ears, and gazed at the door blankly. The chums of the Remove seemed to be determined to come into the study, but now that he had kept them waiting so long, Bunter was rather afraid to let them in.

Crash!

Harry Wharton & Co. kicked and rattled the door, until it seemed as though it would come away at the hinges.

"Open the door!"

Thump, thump! Bang, bang!

Billy Bunter was beginning to get thoroughly unnerved, and he rose from his chair, and walked over to the door, which was being vigorously rattled.

"Really, Wharton," he said, as there was a pause, "I think you might leave a chap in peace for a few moments without nearly kicking the place down!"

"Open the door!"

Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, and Hurree Singh roared out the demand as one man, and Billy Bunter shook all over.

"Oh course, Wharton, this has only been a—a—a—a little fun, you know!"

"Open the door!"

Thump! Bang! Thump!

"I—I sha'n't open it——"

"What!" roared Bob Cherry, on the other side of the door. "You fat, overfed porpoise, you won't let us come into our own study? You won't open it——"

"Unless you promise something!" interrupted Billy Bunter.

"Oh-h!"

"You chaps can come in if you promise not to lay a hand on me!" There was a short pause, and then Billy Bunter raised his voice again. "I heard you, Cherry!" he said.

"What do you mean, you worm?"

"I heard you whisper to Wharton that you could make the promise as I hadn't mentioned anything about laying a boot on to me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I sha'n't let you chaps in," shouted Bunter, "until you all promise not to touch me!"

"Open the door!"

"Not until you have made the promise, Wharton!"

"R-right-ho!" growled the Remove captain. "Open the door!"

Billy Bunter opened it, and the four juniors strode in, with angry frowns on their faces.

"You—you fat lubber!" muttered Bob Cherry, facing the trembling Billy. "I'll give you such a bumping for this!"

"B-b-but y-you p-p-p-promised——"

"Oh, shut up, you duffer!" laughed Harry Wharton. "You needn't think that we're going to touch you! But why on earth did you want the whole of this study to yourself?"

"I—I've been making out a list for the New Year."

"What! A list of feeds you intend to have?"

Billy Bunter blinked through his big spectacles, as though his feelings had been hurt by Wharton's reference to his stowing capacity, and that it was necessary for him to make out a list for the satisfying of such an appetite.

"Really, Wharton," he grumbled, "I don't think——"

"No; we know that," interrupted Harry Wharton. "But what's this list you've been making out?"

Billy Bunter pulled the notebook he had been writing in out of his pocket.

"It's a list of resolutions," he explained—"my resolves for the New Year, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's no laughing matter," continued Bunter. "I really believe that if a chap makes out a list of resolves, and keeps them continually before him, he is more likely to stick to them."

"What! Stick them on to him with gum?"

"No; I didn't mean that, Cherry. Now, look here, as an instance. My first resolution is to put down jealousy in the Remove, or in the whole of Greyfriars, if you like. During the whole of 1909 I've noticed that you chaps in particular show a lot of jealousy when we're out with Marjorie & Co. or any other of the girl-pupils of Cliff House. Of course, a decent-looking chap like me always causes—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Always causes a certain amount of jealousy among—"

"Shut up, you duffer!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter was talking to the chums of Study No. 1 in all seriousness, and the only effect his strange conversation seemed to have on them was that they simply rolled about the room, roaring with laughter.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Wharton. "You'll be the death of me, you will, Billy!"

"There's no getting away from the fact that you chaps are fearfully jealous of me, is there?" asked the fat junior.

"No, of course, not," replied Cherry. "When a really ripping, fine, strapping chap like you is about the average fellow can consider himself out of it—absolutely out of it!"

"In fact," added Nugent, "he can consider himself diddled to the wide!"

Billy Bunter looked very pleased with himself as his study mates made this frank admission, and he turned over a leaf of his notebook.

"A chap can't help creating jealousy when he is really handsome," he said; "but, nevertheless, I intend to put it down!"

"Hear, hear!" applauded Frank Nugent.

"The hear, hearfulness is terrific!" assented Hurreo Singh.

"Let's have the next on the list!" said Bob Cherry. "I haven't laughed for nearly a minute."

Billy Bunter ignored Cherry's remarks, and proceeded to read his next resolution.

"I have resolved to be captain of the Remove before the end of the term," he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, my only Aunt Matilda!" gasped Harry Wharton. "Do you really mean it, Billy?"

"Of course I do!" replied the fat junior, with some little degree of resentment at Wharton's incredulity. "I think the way the Remove was captained during 1909 was—was—cr—well, I candidly believe I could captain the Form better than the way you have, Wharton!"

"Y-you fat geyser! I'll bump you!"

"You mustn't be jealous, Wharton!"

"W-why, you—you—"

"I know that it's a fact a lot of the fellows think it's time the Remove had a new captain—somebody with more enterprise than you have shown lately!"

Harry Wharton reached out for the inkpot.

"Who thinks it's time there was a new captain," he said.

"I've been investigating," replied Billy Bunter, "and by exerting my wonderful detective powers, I have found a number of chaps ready to back me up."

"Oh-h?"

"Yes," continued the fat junior. "Bulstrode and Skinner have promised me a decent feed if—"

"So you've been to Bulstrode, have you," interrupted Harry Wharton, "with your suggestions of usurping me?"

"Usurping what?"

"Oh, let the duffer go on!" laughed Frank Nugent. "We needn't be afraid of a bully like Bulstrode and his cronies."

"No, rather not!"

"The rather notfulness is terrific."

"Go on, then, you fat porpoise," laughed Harry Wharton, "and let us have your next resolution."

Billy Bunter cleared his throat.

"I've resolved not to borrow any money this—"

"What?" shouted the juniors.

"I sha'n't come to you chaps for any more money."

"Hurrah!" shouted Bob Cherry.

Bunter blinked at the four juniors in astonishment.

"Of course," continued Billy, "why I've made that

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resolution is because I have resolved to earn at least three pounds a week from the G.F.A.F.M.M.A.H."

Harry Wharton & Co. stared at the fat junior in bewilderment as he rattled the letters off.

"The G.F. what, what A.H.?" gasped Bob Cherry.

"The General Friendly Association for Making Money at Home."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, it's only your jealousy again that makes you laugh. If you knew how easy it is to earn three pounds a week by colouring birthday-greeting cards, you'd soon lend me the ten bob deposit the G.F.A.F.M.M.A.H. want me to send them."

"Ha, ha, ha! You duffer!"

"Really, Wharton, ten bob isn't much, considering they'll pay you three pounds a week."

"Shut up, Billy! We've heard of those kind of people before. 'Send ten bob, and we'll set you up for life.' You leave 'em alone, you fat duffer."

"Well," said Bunter, after a pause, "my next resolution is—"

"That you've made up your mind not to bore us," interrupted Bob Cherry.

"A jolly good resolution, too," said Frank Nugent, giving Billy Bunter a resounding thwack on his broad back.

"Ow!"

"A ripping resolution, Billy!" agreed Harry Wharton, with a grin, and following Nugent's example by giving his praise in a practical fashion

"Ow!" roared Bunter.

"Jolly good, isn't it, chaps?"

"Not half!"

"Ow!"

"Best resolution I've ever heard of, I think."

"Ow!"

"The resolution is terrific, my serene fat friend."

"Ow!" shouted Billy Bunter, as the four juniors crowded round him, and thumped him on the back.

"Jolly good!"

"Ow! Leave off!"

Slap! Thump! Slap!

Billy made a dash for the study door, and clutched hold of the handle excitedly.

"Yah!" he shouted defiantly, as he found he was not pursued. "It's all beastly jealousy, that's—"

"Buzz off!"

"Just because you think you're going to lose your job as captain of the Remove, you—"

"Get outside, you duffer!"

"You think—"

"Br-r-r-r!"

Harry Wharton, stamping both feet on the floor, made as though he would chase Bunter, and the fat junior did not think twice which would be the wisest action; but he flung the door open wildly, and sprang out into the corridor with a yell of fear.

The next moment there was a terrific thump, as he went crashing into somebody who was about to enter Study No. 1.

"Ow!"

Billy Bunter and Tom Brown went rolling over and over, and Harry Wharton rushed to the door in alarm.

"My only hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Who is it?"

Bunter and his victim sat up gazing at one another with a dazed expression as the four juniors poked their heads out of the door.

"Y-you fat, overfed, gourmandising fathhead!" roared Tom Brown.

Billy Bunter groped about for his spectacles, which had fallen off at the awful impact.

"Really, Brown!"

The New Zealand junior rose to his feet painfully.

"This great, fat lubber belonging to your study," he growled, turning to Harry Wharton & Co., "is always dashing into somebody. Why in the dickens don't you get rid of him?"

"You may have it if you'll take it away at once."

Tom Brown grinned.

"Not as a gift," he said.

Billy Bunter had now adjusted his spectacles, and he blinked up at the juniors indignantly as he was thus discussed.

"I think you ought to apologise, Brown," he said, clambering up from his sitting position.

The New Zealand junior turned round in astonishment.

"Apologise?" he shouted. "Me apologise to you?"

"Yes."

"What have I got to apologise for, you fat lubber?"

"For eavesdropping."

"Eaves what?"

"Really, Brown, you know you had your ear to the key-



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hole, so I think you ought to apologise now that you have been found out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. burst into a roar of laughter, but Tom Brown stepped up to the fat junior with a ferocious look on his face.

"Do you think I was eavesdropping—eh?" he said, catching hold of Bunter by the ear.

"I think—Ow!"

"Do you think I ought to apologise, you fat porpoise?"

"Ow! Leggo!"

"D'you think that I—"

"Dunno! Leggo!" howled Billy Bunter.

Tom Brown pushed the fat Removite from him with an exclamation of disgust.

"Get away!" he said. "I came along to congratulate you, but I'm hanged if I will now."

"Congratulate me?" exclaimed Bunter, with a puzzled look on his fat countenance.

"Yes."

Tom Brown followed Harry Wharton into Study No. 1, and Bunter followed him.

"What have I to be congratulated for," he said.

"Not much, goodness knows," said Bob Cherry, "but I suppose old Brownie means about your being captain of the Rugby teams."

"Captain?" gasped Billy Bunter.

"Yes," said Tom Brown; "you can captain the Rugger on Wednesday afternoon, if you like."

"Me?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter's look of incredulity was so extraordinary that the five juniors burst into a roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha! You ought to be able to skipper a Rugby fifteen jolly well, Billy."

"He'll look ripping in the scrum."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fat junior of Greyfriars blinked through his big spectacles at Bob Cherry, who had collapsed into the arm-chair.

"Of course, this is only rotten jealousy on your part."

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes, naturally."

"In spite of my resolution, I don't see what I can do in this case," grumbled Billy.

"Hallo, what resolution's this?"

Harry Wharton explained to Tom Brown the object-lesson which Billy Bunter intended to set at Greyfriars, and the New Zealand junior turned to Billy with a grin on his face.

"Well, you've made your first step now," he said; "you're captain of something."

"Yes, rather! I'm jolly good at Rugby. My tackling is awfully good."

"Oh-h!"

"Yes. If I had been in Wharton's place last year, I should have started Rugby in the Remove Form. The other chaps would be sure to take it up."

"Yes, I suppose they would."

"Of course, a keen captain makes a lot of difference," continued Billy. "One thing I shall do, and that will be to have some practice scrumming."

"Oh-h!"

"I think that—"

"Wouldn't it be a good idea if you found out who can play on Wednesday?" interrupted Harry Wharton.

"I—I suppose it would," said Billy. "I'll just trot down to the notice-board and get the list."

"You needn't trouble," laughed Tom Brown.

"Oh, but if I've got to captain the team, you know, I'm willing to take a little trouble over it."

"But I've got it here."

"Really, Brown, I think you should have handed it over to me at once."

"I'll tell you whose playing. Just jot it down, will you?"

Billy Bunter drew his little notebook which contained his list of resolutions, and sat down at the table.

"Yell them out, Brown," he said.

"Right-ho! Shove it down. Billy Bunter!"

The fat junior wrote his own name down very neatly in ink, and blinked up at Brown, who was grinning like a Cheshire cat.

"Go on!" he said.

"Have you got 'Billy Bunter' down?"

"Yes, of course."

"Good!" laughed Tom Brown, and then turned to Harry Wharton & Co., and added: "Coming down to the tuck-shop?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes, rather!"

"B-but y-you—"

"Oh, dry up, Bunt!" interrupted Bob Cherry. "We'll leave you to make out your Rugby team."

"B-but—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Frank Nugent. "Hope you have a good game, Billy."

Tom Brown strolled across to the door, and Harry

Wharton & Co. followed him, with broad grins on their faces.

"Really, you chaps," said Billy, in bewilderment, "are you going to allow your jealousy to—"

"Hope you have a really good game of Rugger, Billy," interrupted Frank Nugent, as he turned at the door. "If you want any help on the selection committee, just let me know, won't you?"

And the door of Study No. 1 was banged violently to, as Billy Bunter rose to his feet, with a ferocious look on his fat countenance.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Photographing the Rugby Enthusiasts.

"HE looks as though he'll eat you; but go and ask him."

Harry Wharton smiled as Bob Cherry spoke, and looked down the long dinner-table at Mr. Quelch, who was sitting at the head.

"Shall I?" said Harry Wharton uncertainly.

"Yes, don't funk it—"

"Cherry!" shouted Mr. Quelch, rapping his knuckles on the hard table. "Stop talking."

"Yes, sir."

As soon as Bob replied to the Form-master's accusation, Harry Wharton rose to his feet.

"It was my fault, sir," he said, "I was just about to ask you a question."

Mr. Quelch looked somewhat astonished.

"Well, Wharton, go on," he said.

"I-I-I was—er—that is we—"

"You may get on with your dinner, Wharton," interrupted Mr. Quelch, somewhat sharply.

Harry Wharton blushed a brilliant hue, but remained standing.

"I—I was going to ask you, sir," he explained deliberately, "if you would give us permission to change into our football togs—er—I mean, clothes, as soon as we have finished dinner."

"Into your football clothes?"

"Yes, sir."

"B-but it is not a half-holiday to-day, Wharton."

"No, sir," assented Harry Wharton; "but we—that is, the Remove—thought we might put in an hour's practice at Rugby before class commences."

"At Rugby?" muttered Mr. Quelch. "Let me see, that is that rough game wherein each player makes a savage attack on the person with the ball, isn't it?"

Tom Brown stuffed his handkerchief up to his mouth to suppress the fit of laughter which shook him inwardly.

"It's not really a rough game, sir," replied Harry Wharton.

"If you will promise me to play gently with one another," said the Form-master, after a pause, "I will give you permission to leave the table at once."

"Thank you, sir; I promise you we will be very careful."

Bob Cherry gave Harry Wharton's sleeve a tug.

"I don't think!" he muttered.

Mr. Quelch looked at his watch.

"You have exactly one hour and ten minutes before the afternoon's lessons are resumed," he said. "Mind you are all in your places to time."

"Right, sir."

"Rather."

A murmur of assent went up, and the next moment the Removites rose from their chairs with one exception.

Billy Bunter was the exception.

The fat junior of Greyfriars blinked through his big spectacles at Frank Nugent.

"Don't you chaps start the game until I'm on the ground," he said; "I sha'n't be long."

"Come on, now, you fat cormorant!"

"Really, Nugent, I'm not quite ready. Just pass me that pudding-dish, will you?"

"You—you—"

"And the sugar at the same time, please."

"I—I'll—"

"You know I don't believe in rushing through a meal—especially at midday. Buck up and pass that pudding!"

But Frank Nugent was gone, as were the rest of the Remove Form.

Billy Bunter reached across the table, and got possession of the pudding Nugent had refused to pass.

"Billy!"

Dabney had risen from the Upper Fourth-Form table under some pretext or another, and he sat down in the chair next to Bunter, who was attacking his fourth helping of pudding.

"Billy!" repeated Dabney.

"Y-y-u-u-m-m—"

"You fat bounder!" muttered the Fourth-Former. "You greedy cormorant!"

Billy Bunter ceased his munching, and blinked round at Dabney indignantly.

"Really, Dabney—"

"Well, why don't you keep your eyes open, you duffer?"

"What is it?"

Dabney drew his chair closer, and winked at Temple, who was watching him from the Upper Fourth dinner-table.

"Oh, it's nothing much!" he said. "I was only going to ask you why old Quelch had let his table slip out so soon."

"Ah!"

Billy Bunter looked at Dabney knowingly.

"What are you bleating like that for, fathead?"

"Oh, nothing!" replied Billy. "But you would like to know, wouldn't you?"

The fat junior's demeanour puzzled Dabney, as it was intended to, and the chair was drawn still closer.

"I suppose they've got a punishment to work off?" he suggested.

"Oh, no!"

"Well, what is it?"

Billy drummed his fat fingers on the table, and blinked at Dabney.

"Will you stand me a feed if I tell you," he said. "Mind you, I ought not to tell you; but as they wouldn't wait for me it will pay them out."

The Upper Fourth-Former's curiosity was now thoroughly aroused, and he answered readily enough.

"Yes, right-ho!" he said. "You greedy, fat bounder, I'll stand you a feed after this afternoon's class!"

"Sure?"

"Yes, of course I am!" replied Dabney.

"Well, they've gone to have a practice game of Rugby before class, and—"

"What!" shouted Dabney. "Is that all? Do you mean to say that's all they've gone out for, you fat cormorant?"

"Don't forget you've promised to stand me a feed."

"Y-you—"

"Of course, I always take a chap at his word."

Dabney grasped Bunter by the ear, and the fat junior let out a terrified squeal.

"Ow!"

"D'you think I'm going to stand you a feed for a rotten bit of news like that?"

"Ow! Leggo!"

"Go on!" growled the disappointed Upper Fourth-Former. "Get out of the place!"

"Really, Dabney, I—"

"Buzz off!"

Billy Bunter did not like the look on Dabney's face, and he pushed his chair back hurriedly.

"Bunk!"

And Billy walked out as hurriedly as he could.

He made his way up to Study No. 1, and met the Removites coming along the corridor, they having changed into their football clothes.

"Buck up, Billy!" shouted Harry Wharton. "Don't forget you're captaining the team to-morrow afternoon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Have you selected the team out of that list I gave you?" laughed Tom Brown.

"I don't know what you chaps are cackling at," replied Billy, blinking at the crowd of juniors standing round him.

They all looked very fit, and the healthy glow on their cheeks was only rivalled by the red colouring of the Greyfriars College crest which was on their football vests.

"Well, buck up and get into your togs!" said Frank Nugent. "That is, if you're going to play."

"I—I don't think I'll play now," replied Billy. "I thought I'd come down and coach you—give you a few useful hints on Rugby, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And another idea I had in mind, too," continued Billy, in spite of the juniors' roar of delight, "was to 'snap' you."

"Snap us?"

"Yes, take a photograph."

"My only hat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "That's a jolly good wheeze, Bunter!"

"Really, Cherry, all my wheezes are good, only there's so much jealousy in the Form that—"

"Dry up, Bunter!"

"That—"

"Shut up!"

Billy scowled at the Removites around him, and turned to Bob Cherry.

"Of course, you don't mind me using your camera—that stand one you had for Christmas—do you, Cherry?"

"What!"

"I'm a jolly good photographer, you know, and I'll sell the prints at a bob each."

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"Sell them, you fat owl!"

"Of course, Cherry!"

"What, you are going to use my camera, and my plates, and print them on my paper, and mount them on my mounts, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry glared round at the juniors.

"You cackling fatheads!" he roared. "Don't you think this fat cormorant should be boiled for his cheek?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't you think—"

"No, we don't!" interrupted Bulstrode. "Let's get on with this game of rugger."

"Yes, come on!"

"I say, you chaps—"

"Say on, Macbeth!" laughed Nugent. "We're going."

"But what about the photograph?"

"Can't wait to talk it over, Billy."

"Really, Nugent, I— Here, come back!"

"Rats!"

And Billy blinked through his big spectacles as the crowd of Removites scrambled down the stairs at the end of the corridor.

"We haven't got a rugger ball," laughed Tom Brown, as they walked across the quad. in the direction of the field.

"Have to make do with this," said Harry Wharton, looking down at the football he carried in his hands.

"Br-r-r-r!" shivered the New Zealander. "How many are we?"

Wharton looked back at the stream of juniors following up in the rear.

"About fifteen, I should say," he said, after a pause.

"Then what about sides?"

"Well, as you're pretty good at rugger your side had better have seven and our side eight."

"Right-ho!"

The Removites had now reached the football-pitch, and the New Zealand junior gave a significant sniff as he eyed the Association goalposts.

"What's up with your face?" said Bob Cherry.

"Face?"

"Yes, what are you pulling your face about for?"

"Goalposts!"

"What do you mean, duffer?"

"Can't you see that they're soccer ones?"

"Jolly good job, too!" replied Bob Cherry stoutly. "I'm glad we don't play a rotten game like—"

"Shut up!" interrupted Harry Wharton, as he noted the angry gleam in Tom Brown's eyes.

"Yes, don't start rowing, you chaps," laughed Mark Linley. "But let's get on with it."

"I'll have Linley," said Bulstrode.

"What d'you mean?"

"Go on, Skinny!" said Bulstrode, ignoring Harry Wharton's question.

Skinner—Bulstrode's crony—grinned, and beckoned across to Frank Nugent.

"I'll have Nugent," he said.

"What do you mean?"

"I'll have Brown!" continued Bulstrode.

"I'll have Inky!"

"Look here—"

"Shut up, Wharton," interrupted the Remove bully. "I'll have Hazeldene."

"Russell!"

"Lacy!"

"Look here, fatheads!" said Harry. "You need not think that you're going to captain the sides."

"Rats! I'll have Wun Lung!"

"Stott!"

"Brown's going to captain one side, and I'm going to captain the other," said Harry Wharton, raising his voice.

"Bosh! I'm going to!"

"So am I!"

It looked as though there was going to be trouble, and it was only through the fortunate arrival at that moment of Billy Bunter that a diversion was caused.

The fat junior came staggering along with a large camera, already fixed up on a tripod, on his shoulder. In his right hand he carried a dark cloth.

"Are you chaps ready?" he gasped, standing the camera up, as the Removites looked at him in astonishment.

"Well, of all the cheeky bounders in this world, you take the currant cake!"

"Really, Cherry—"

"D'you mean to say you've taken that out of my cupboard without permission?"

"You shouldn't leave your keys about in the study, Cherry. I've often told you what a temptation it would be if a thief happened to get into the school. I notice that most of you chaps leave—"

"You howling duffer!"

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged glances.

"Rather ripping to have a good group photograph taken."

"Jolly nice."

"Besides, we could give Marjorie & Co. one."

"Not half!"

"And we could send one to Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's."

"Oh, you could send me to the Zoo, and—"

"Needn't trouble about that, Bulstrode," replied Bob Cherry. "The Zoo people have got you in real life."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ahem!" coughed Billy Bunter, who foresaw possibilities of making quite a large sum of money out of this latest idea of his.

"What's up, porpoise?"

"You chaps are wasting a lot of time, you know."

"Yes; for goodness' sake buck up and have your phiz's taken," growled Tom Brown, who was anxious to get on with the practice game of Rugby.

"Go on, then, Billy," laughed Harry Wharton. "Shove that rotten old camera up, and pull the trigger, for I'm jolly cold."

"B-but—"

"Get on with the washing."

"Really, Cherry," said Billy Bunter, "I was only going to suggest that you grouped properly between one of the goalposts. You wouldn't look so silly, then."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean—er—I mean you'd look more like a crowd of footballers."

"Come on, then, chaps."

Harry Wharton led the way to the goalposts furthest from the school buildings, and the rest of the juniors followed him, Billy Bunter bringing up the rear, carrying the camera on his shoulders.

"Rotten waste of time, I think," grumbled Tom Brown; "and I'm shivering with cold, so that I sha'n't be able to stick still for a time exposure."

"Rather nice to give the Cliff House girls a decent Remove group, though," said Harry Wharton.

"Yes, there is that. It'll give them something to laugh at. Look at Bulstrode's nose; it's blue with cold."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Me vely cold, too," said Wun Lung, squatting down in front of Hazeldene. "But me send photoglaph to my gualdians."

"What, don't you want them to send you any more pocket-money?"

Billy Bunter placed the camera, which was a large one, with very cheap fittings, before the Remove juniors, who had grouped themselves between the two uprights of the goalpost.

"Buck up, porpoise!" shivered Russell. "Don't take all night over it!"

Billy ignored the remark, and threw the dark cloth over his head to focus the group.

"W-why—"

As he looked through the focussing plate, he saw, to his surprise, that the group, as is natural with a photographic lens, were depicted on the frosted glass upside down.

"Don't fool about, you chaps!" he shouted.

"What are you talking about, you fat porpoise?"

"Oh, I know you're standing on your heads!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy flung the cloth from his head, and bobbed up indignantly.

"Of course, if you want to be taken upside down, it doesn't matter to me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter could not believe his own eyes as he blinked through his big spectacles at the laughing group of juniors.

"W-why, how did you do it?"

"Do what?" shrieked Bob Cherry.

"D-didn't you all stand on your heads?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy took his spectacles off, and wiped them with the dark cloth, and then readjusted them.

"Jolly well done, you chaps," he said.

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent looked at one another expressively, and Harry touched his forehead with his finger.

"Absolutely hopeless, I should say," he said.

"Right off," assented Frank Nugent.

"Very sad; but I always thought he would get grub on the brain eventually."

Billy Bunter blushed indignantly as he heard the comments of the group of juniors.

"How did you do it altogether so well?" he said.

"Altogether what?"

"Why, standing on your heads, and then jumping—"

"My only Aunt Matilda!" gasped Bob Cherry, his face gradually breaking into an extraordinary grin. "He doesn't know anything about a camera, that's as plain as eating pie."

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WEEK:

"NUGENT MINOR."

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"Really, Cherry—"

"Oh, shut up!" interrupted Bob. "Don't you know that the lens of a camera always throws the scene upside down on the focussing-glass?"

"D-does it?"

"Of course it does, you duffer!"

"Oh-h-h!"

Billy Bunter threw the cloth over his head without another word, and did his best to focus the group, in spite of the fact that they were all making violent attempts to circulate their blood more rapidly to repel the cold.

"Br-r-r-r-r!" shivered Bulstrode, as an extra cold blast of wind whistled through the goalposts.

"What are you doing, Cherry?" came Billy Bunter's smothered voice from beneath the dark cloth.

"What do you mean?"

"It's all right. You were only twisting your face about rather curiously."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't move, you chaps!" pleaded the photographer.

"Well, buck up!"

Billy Bunter fiddled about with the camera bellows for a few more moments, and then he emerged from the dark cloth with a broad grin on his fat face.

"What are you cackling at, porpoise?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Billy.

"What is it?" roared the juniors in chorus.

"Ha, ha! You do look funny!"

"Funny?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes!"

Three or four of the juniors made a movement as though they intended to make an assault on the fat junior; but they were pulled back by those more anxious to have a good group photograph.

"We'll bump him afterwards!" growled Bob Cherry, stamping his cold feet on the hard ground.

Billy Bunter continued to laugh inwardly as he opened the camera case and extracted the slide which contained the sensitive plate.

"Buck up, dummy!"

"Get on with the washing!"

But the photographer took his own time, and that very leisurely.

"We shall have about five minutes' practice if we're not frozen stiff by the time he's finished!" grumbled Tom Brown, turning to Harry Wharton, who was standing next to him.

"Our august fat friend must buck up terrifically," said Hurree Singh, who was squatting down in the front row.

"I sha'n't be a minute now, you chaps!" said Billy Bunter, slipping the slide into the back of the camera.

"Well, buck up, porpoise!"

At last the fat junior of Greyfriars appeared to be ready, and he faced the group critically.

"Don't look up so high, Russell."

"Where shall I rest my optic on, then?"

"Just look at me, and you—"

"Don't ask me to do that," interrupted Russell, with a broad grin.

Billy Bunter ignored the remark, although it was not lost on the group, which immediately broke into a grin.

"What are you doing, Bulstrode?"

"Nothing, fathead!" growled the Remove bully.

"Then why don't you open your left eye?"

The group, in a body, instantaneously turned to look at Bulstrode, who was standing in the back row, and the bully glared at them with one eye open.

"Y-you fatheaded porpoise!" he roared. "Can't you see I've got something in it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's more than you can say about your head."

"Well, are you ready, chaps?"

"Yes; buck up. I'm frozen!"

Billy Bunter stepped up to the camera, and prepared to withdraw the slide, so as to leave the plate exposed to take the picture when he squeezed the pneumatic bulb.

"Get on with it!" shouted Stott.

Billy Bunter blinked in astonishment as he found he was unable to draw out the slide, and in spite of the cold, he broke out into beads of perspiration as he was urged on by the impatient group.

"Pull it out, duffer!" growled Bob Cherry, after some five minutes.

"I—I—I c-c-can't!"

"What's that?" roared the juniors.

Billy tried hard, and at last Bob Cherry, being the owner of the camera, was persuaded to leave the group to set the matter right.

He at once saw what was wrong, and turned on Billy with a roar of rage.

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

"Y-you absolute pig-headed, fat-headed, overfed, empty-headed porpoise!" he shouted. "Didn't you read what I had written on this slide? Didn't you—"

"Really, Cherry—" gasped Bunter.

"Didn't you read it, you duffer?" repeated Bob.

"N-no, Cherry."

Bob pulled the slide out, with an exclamation of disgust, and thrust it before Bunter's eyes.

"Look!" he roared. "'This is broken!' D'you see that? Written in black letters to catch the eye for fatheads like you!"

The enraged group murmured angrily, and Billy Bunter looked around for a way of escape in case of emergency.

"W-what shall I do?" he stuttered, turning to Cherry.

"Shall he go and get the other slide out of my study, chaps?"

"Yes, rather," said Harry Wharton, "after hanging about all this time."

"Go on, then, you fat lubber!"

Billy faced the group of juniors who were all shivering with cold, and every one, excepting Hurree Singh, was the possessor of a nose blue with cold.

"Don't move, will you?" said Billy. "We don't want the fag of focussing you again, and—"

"No!" shouted the Removites. "Buzz off!"

"If you're not back jolly soon, you'll be slain!" added Bob Cherry, once more taking his place in the group.

Billy Bunter scuttled off, and the Rugby enthusiasts remained stationary in the cold, facing the camera.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Return of the Absentees.

"BUNTER!"

The fat junior turned sharply as he was going up the stairs to Study No. 1.

"Why are you not in class, Bunter?"

The Remove Form-master was standing at the foot of the stairs, and Bunter hesitated uncertainly.

"I—I was just—er—just—"

Mr. Quelch pulled out his watch, and waited for Bunter to proceed.

"You were just what?"

"I am going up to my study, sir, to fetch something," said Billy desperately.

"But do you know you should have been in your place in the class-room five minutes ago."

"F-five minutes?"

Billy Bunter came slowly down the stairs, and blinked at Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, Bunter," replied the Form-master, "you will take fifty lines for being late."

"B-but—"

"Silence!"

"I—I—I—"

"Get to your class-room, Bunter!" shouted Mr. Quelch.

"B-but, sir, they're all in—"

"Bunter!"

"Y-yes, sir?"

"Take another fifty lines, and if you're not in your place in one minute you will have another fifty."

The fat junior opened his mouth to explain, and then thought better of it.

"All right, sir," he said.

And Billy made his way hastily to the Remove Form-room.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A roar of laughter went up from the half-dozen Removites who had not ventured out to take part in the practice game, as Bunter entered the class-room.

"You're in for it, you fat beauty!"

"W-what do you mean?"

"Old Quelch's eating his hat with rage."

"Why?"

"Because everybody is late, of course."

"But he wouldn't listen to me when I tried to explain," said Bunter.

"Cave!"

"Sit down, Bunter, here he comes!"

Billy Bunter sat down in his place as Mr. Quelch came hurrying into the class-room.

"Have they come in yet?"

"No, sir."

The Remove Form-master muttered something under his breath, and looked down at his watch.

"Disgraceful!" he said. "I shall punish them most severely when they return!"

"S-sir!"

Billy Bunter stood up and blinked inquiringly at Mr. Quelch.

"Don't let me have to speak to you again, Bunter!"

"I—I—"

"Sit down!"

And the fat junior sat down, mumbling to himself. He had tried his best to explain away the absence of Harry Wharton & Co., but Mr. Quelch wouldn't listen to him.

"Why don't you shut up, porpoise?" whispered Widlake, who was sitting next to Bunter.

"Because I want to tell him where the others are,"

"He knows that they're playing rugger."

"But they aren't," said Billy, lowering his voice to a hoarse whisper, as he saw Mr. Quelch look in his direction.

"Well, where are they, fathead?"

"Waiting for me to snap them."

"Snap them!"

"Yes; they're grouped in one of the goalposts, and I came in just to—"

"Bunter!"

Billy kept his eyes on the desk.

"Bunter!" repeated the master of the Remove, in metallic tones. "You were talking to Widlake."

"Y-yes, sir."

"Then you will take another fifty lines, and you will show them up to me this evening."

Billy blushed with indignation; but a moment later he smiled to himself as he schemed in his mind a punishment on Mr. Quelch for the free manner in which he was doling out lines.

"I'll make him sit up," he muttered.

"What's that?" said Widlake.

"N-nothing; but you watch old Quelch!"

"Get your History books out!" said the Remove Form-master. "We will get on with the lesson, and deal with the absentees when they see fit to come in from their football practice."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A smothered chuckle came from the class-room door, and Mr. Quelch rose from his chair in astonishment.

Billy Bunter smiled to himself contentedly. He was getting his "own" back by means of his ventriloquism—a gift which the fat junior was almost perfect with.

"Go on, Bunter!" whispered Widlake. "I know it was you."

Mr. Quelch looked from one junior to another.

"Who laughed?" he said sharply.

The seven juniors looked up at Mr. Quelch in pretended surprise. They all guessed that Billy Bunter was the guilty one, and they were fervently hoping the fat junior would dare to go further than he had already gone.

"Ha, ha!" came the smothered voice again. "I think we're best out of it if they're going to have History."

Mr. Quelch turned crimson, and almost flew to the class-room door.

"I will—"

He flung the door open violently, and looked out into the passage.

"Boys!" he shouted. "What are you doing?"

"We are very sorry, sir," came Harry Wharton's voice, from the corridor, "but we have been waiting out in the football-ground to have our photographs taken."

Billy Bunter's face assumed a greenish hue as he heard Mr. Quelch carrying on the conversation with Harry Wharton.

"M-my h-hat!" he muttered.

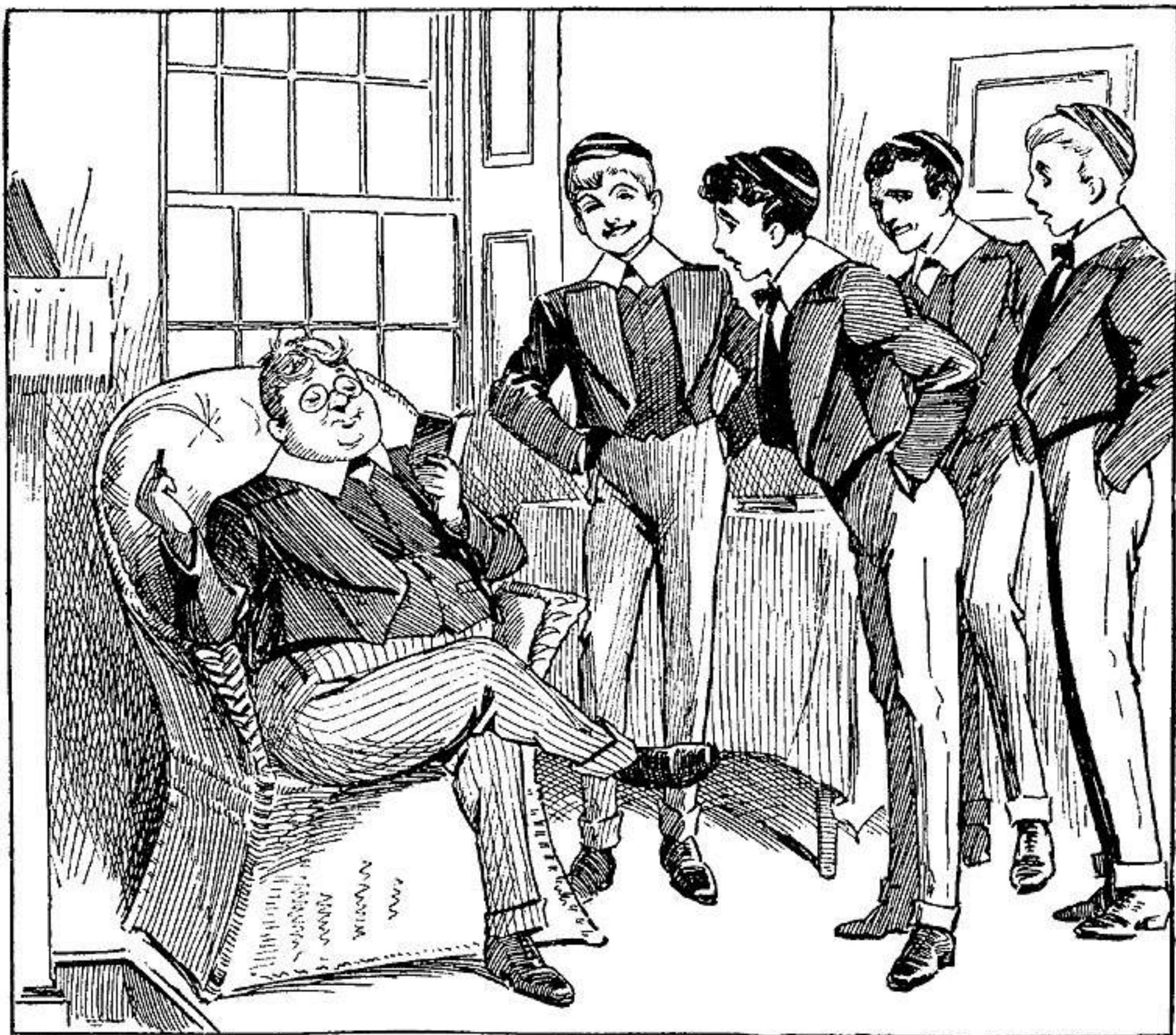
The Remove Form-master opened the door wider, and Harry Wharton & Co., still in their football clothes, and all looking perished with cold, came filing into the class-room.

"Now, then, Wharton!" said Mr. Quelch. "Why are you all so late?"

The juniors glared at Billy Bunter, and then looked up at Mr. Quelch, as though that would be sufficient explanation.

"Well, Wharton?"

Page iii. of the Cover!



"My next resolution," continued Billy Bunter, calmly, "is to be captain of the Remove before the end of the term!"

Harry stepped up to Mr. Quelch's desk.
"I am very sorry we are all so late, sir," he said, "but it was through a misunderstanding."

"Well?" snapped Mr. Quelch, as the captain of the Remove paused and looked round at the nondescript group of Rugby players.

"W-we were going to be photographed, sir," continued Harry, "a-and we have been standing in a group for nearly an hour."

Mr. Quelch rapped his fingers on the desk impatiently.
"This is very interesting, Wharton," he said, "but it is not an explanation!"

"B-but don't you see, sir, the camera was broken."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence, boys!"

In spite of his feeling so cold, Harry Wharton blushed crimson as the Removites burst into a roar of laughter, and he glared at Billy Bunter.

"T-the photographer had to go away and leave us, sir," he continued, as Mr. Quelch turned to him once more; "and we didn't think Bun-er—we didn't think we should be kept waiting long."

"That will do, Wharton," said the Form-master. "You will all take two hundred lines, and now we will have an explanation on the last piece of impertinence."

"Impertinence, sir?"

The Rugby enthusiasts looked up in astonishment, and Billy Bunter's eyes gleamed behind his big spectacles.

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"Yes, impertinence!" repeated Mr. Quelch, breathing hard. "One of you boys laughed and made some insulting remark through the keyhole of the door just now."

"Through the keyhole!"

"Yes," almost shouted Mr. Quelch, "and I am determined to know which boy it was!"

"B-but we hadn't reached the door when you looked out, sir," faltered Harry Wharton.

"One of you must have made an impertinent remark intended to reach—"

"Shut up!"

The Remove-master gave a start.

"Let the matter drop!"

The fifteen Rugby enthusiasts looked at one another in surprise as the voice appeared to come from one of them.

"Boy!" shouted Mr. Quelch. "Stand out!"

"Rather not!"

Mr. Quelch and the Removites instantly turned their eyes in the direction of Billy Bunter, whose fat face had gone crimson.

Billy Bunter's ventriloquial voice had failed him!

The "Rather not!" he had intended to throw from a different part of the class room; but he had failed, and the reply to Mr. Quelch's command broke the silence in his own natural voice.

"Bunter!"

"Y-yes, sir!"

"Did you say 'Rather not'?" shouted Mr. Quelch.

"Ye-e-e-es!"

"Have you been responsible for all these impertinent remarks?"

"N-no, sir—er—it was my ventriloquism."

Mr. Quelch sat down on his chair with a gasp.

"Your ventriloquism, was it, Bunter?" he said, after a pause, during which time the fat junior of the Remove wriggled about in his place uncomfortably.

"I-i-i-it was only fun, sir."

Mr. Quelch turned to Harry Wharton & Co., who were standing shivering in their scanty football clothes. In spite of the cold, however, Bulstrode and his cronies were grinning at one another. After Bunter had kept him waiting in the group for some fifteen minutes, Bulstrode had firmly made up his mind to give the fat junior a pretty severe 'ragging,' but now he was quite content to leave it to his angry Form-master.

"Wharton!"

The captain of the Remove stepped forward smartly as Mr. Quelch called his name out.

"Yes, sir."

"You may go up to the dormitory to change, and I leave it to you to maintain order. Let there be no noise whatever."

"Right, Mr. Quelch."

"The rest of you boys may go with Wharton; but mind you are not away longer than ten minutes."

The Removites made a wild rush for the door, and Bunter slipped out of his place to follow them.

"You will remain behind, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch, taking a switch from the drawer of his desk.

Billy shook all over, and blinked at Harry Wharton, who was the last to gain the door.

"Come here, Bunter!"

Harry Wharton smiled grimly as he closed the door with a bang. He waited in the passage for a moment or two.

Swish!

"Ow!"

Swish!

And the Remove captain hurried away to the dormitory as once more Billy Bunter's wild yell came as an echo to the strange "swishing" sound.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Number One Resolve Breaks Down.

"HALLO, you chaps!"

Billy Bunter put his head round the door of Study No. 1, and blinked at Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, Bob Cherry, and Hurree Singh, who were all sitting round a blazing fire.

"Hallo, you chaps!"

The chums of the Remove, all of whom were reading, neither moved nor answered, and Billy entered the study, and closed the door with a bang.

"Come in!"

"Really, Cherry, you must have known that I was in the room before the door slammed!"

Bob Cherry stared at the fat junior blankly for a moment, and then resumed his reading.

"I think you chaps ought to show more respect to a fellow who has made such a sacrifice as I have done to-day!"

The juniors exchanged glances, and then continued their reading.

"They say the bigger the sacrifice, the——"

"Shut up!" growled Frank Nugent.

"The shutupfulness must be terrific," murmured Hurree Singh, "or else the esteemed Bunter will be chucked out on his august neck."

"I was wondering if you would like me to get tea for you, Wharton?"

Harry Wharton folded the paper he was reading, and placed it on the mantelshelf.

"You've been what?" he said.

"Wondering——"

"So have we! Haven't we, chaps?"

"W-what do you mean, Wharton?" said Billy Bunter.

"We've been wondering whether we shall kill you outright, or torture you first, and then drop you out of the window."

"W-what makes you say that, Wharton?"

"Why, you fat porpoise," roared Bob Cherry, jumping up from his chair, "we want to know why you didn't come back and take the photograph this afternoon?"

"I-i-it wasn't my fault, Cherry," faltered Billy Bunter, stepping back to the study door.

"What's that! Not your fault?"

"N-no, Cherry. It was like this. I was just coming up here for the other plate-slide, when old Quelch made me go to the class-room. I tried to tell him that all you fat—er—that all you chaps were waiting to be snapped, but he wouldn't listen to me."

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"Wouldn't what?"

"He drove me to the class-room," continued Billy Bunter, "and I thought I might be able to use my marvellous ventriloquism to get you out of a scrape."

"You—you know the rest," said Bunter desperately, "and, under the circumstances, I think you chaps might show more consideration. If you knew how Quelch knocked me about, you wouldn't think it a laughing matter! If I hadn't a strong constitution, I——"

"Oh, dry up, Bunter!"

"I suppose you chaps are a bit jealous of my physique."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"You can put down grub fast enough," he said, "but we're not going to have you in here for tea to-day."

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"You can have it in Hall."

"Very well, you chaps," said the fat junior, more decisively than usual; "you can get your own tea."

Billy clutched hold of the door-handle, but did not turn it, for he expected Harry Wharton & Co. to haul him back.

"I'll get on frying those eggs, then—shall I?" said Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter let his hand fall from the door-handle.

"Yes, that's right, Bob," replied Frank Nugent. "I'll open the tin of sardines."

Bunter gave a slight jump.

"Get those sausages out of the cupboard, Inky!"

Hurree Singh opened the study cupboard, and withdrew a plate of sausages.

"Thanks, Inky."

"I say, you chaps——"

"Oh, haven't you gone yet, Bunter?"

"Really, Nugent, you've knocked up against me twice in the last two minutes!"

Billy Bunter blinked through his spectacles at the four chums, as they busied themselves about the tea-table.

"I'll cook the eggs if you like, Cherry."

"I don't like to trouble you, Billy."

"Oh, it's no trouble to a chap like me!" replied Bunter, with a smile. "You must know by now what a dab I am at cooking! You had better let me fry them!"

Bob Cherry grinned.

"But you see, I can't offer you any reward, Billy," he said.

"Reward?"

"Yes. If you cook them for me, there the matter must finish, and, of course you won't disturb us."

"O-of course not, Cherry."

"You will go out of the study as soon as you have cooked them?" persisted Bob, exchanging a wink with Frank Nugent.

"Y-yes, of course, if you——"

"Then that's understood!"

"But I suppose you——"

"Here you are, then, Bunter," interrupted Bob Cherry. "Buck up and cook 'em!"

"The buckupfulness is terrific."

Billy Bunter reached out and grasped hold of the frying-pan, which Cherry had already put on the fire.

The next moment he gave a mighty jump into the air.

"Ow!"

"What's wrong, you duffer?"

"Ow! Wow! I'm burnt!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You utter ass! Why did you catch hold of it without first of all finding out whether it was hot?"

"Ow!"

"Shut up, you howling dummy!"

Billy Bunter screwed himself up, with his damaged hand gripped between his two knees.

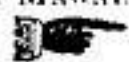
"I say, you fellows, fetch a doctor!"

"Don't be an idiot, Bunter!" laughed Frank Nugent. "It's entirely your own fault!"

"Look here——"

Calling in at the Crown Gun Works, 66, Great Charles Street, Birmingham, recently, we were pleased to notice an air of activity about the place which, unfortunately, is rather a rare thing at the present time among the bulk of Birmingham trades.

Here we saw the well-known "Dreadnought" sporting guns in course of manufacture, and although Mr. Frank Clark, the proprietor, employs none but the very highest skilled workmen, yet he insists upon personally finishing off every gun that his works turn out. Apart from these very high-class sporting guns, Mr. Clark is able to fulfil every possible want in the way of saloon guns, air-rifles, ammunition, etc., at prices to suit all. A copy of his catalogue (which is sent free on request) is not only interesting, but equally instructive, comprising as it does such a vast range of lines so dear to the heart of the sportsman.



SPECIAL DOUBLE NUMBER NEXT WEEK.

"Get on with the washing—er—I mean the cooking!"

"But—"

"Oh, dry up, Bunt!"

The fat Removite looked at his right hand as though he expected to find that he had lost a few fingers.

"It might have been jolly serious!" he muttered, as he was unable to find any mark from the burn.

"You might have been sensible if you'd been born with another head," laughed Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter ignored the remark, and busied himself with the cooking of the sausages, and there was soon a very savoury smell in the comfortable little study.

The fat Removite's eyes positively gleamed.

Tea in Hall did not appeal to Bunter. He preferred something on a bigger scale, and he would willingly cook every meal of the day if he could have more than one helping of everything.

F-f-i-z-z!

The sausages were done to a turn, and Billy looked round at the tea-table with a contented grin on his fat face.

"You want another knife and fork, Wharton?"

The captain of the Remove ran his eye over the white tablecloth.

"What do you mean?" he said. "I've laid the table for four."

"Yes, I know. You want to add another knife and fork—oh, and another cup and saucer!"

"What for, you dummy?"

"There are five of us altogether, Wharton."

"Four!"

"Five!"

"Nugent, Inky, Cherry, and myself!"

"And me, Wharton," added Billy Bunter, tossing the sausages on to a hot dish.

"You're not going to have tea in this study."

"Really, Wharton, you're surely not—"

"Thanks, Bunt!" interrupted Bob Cherry, coolly taking the dish of sausages out of Billy's hands. "Thanks, Bunt, very much! Been ripping of him, hasn't it, chaps?"

"Rather!"

Bob Cherry grasped the fat Removite by his hand.

"Good-bye, Billy!" he said. "I'm sorry we can't reward you for having been so ripping!"

"B-but—"

"Ta-ta! That's all right!" interrupted Bob, opening the study door. "Good-bye!"

Billy Bunter blinked through his big spectacles at the four grinning juniors.

"Surely you chaps aren't going to send a study-mate away when he's almost dying with hunger, are you? Surely—"

"That's all right, Bunt! Ta, ta!"

"You cads!" roared the fat junior. "I'm going to have some of those sausages, and eggs, and sardines, and—"

"Good-bye, Bunt!"

"I tell you—"

"Buck up and go!"

"But I tell you I'm going to have tea with you chaps!"

"You're certainly not, Billy," laughed Harry Wharton. "We talked the matter over before you came in, and we decided to punish you for fooling us about this afternoon over the photo business. If you're not taken in hand early—"

"B-but I'm quite faint!"

"It can't be helped."

"O-of course, you're only joking, Wharton!"

"Am I? Ta-ta!"

"Yes, come on, chaps!" said Bob Cherry, drawing his chair up to the well-laden table.

"Shut the door, Billy—there's a beast of a draught!"

"Yes, buck up my worthy fat friend!"

Billy closed the door, but remained on the study side of it. Frank Nugent looked up at him in surprise.

"Get out, Bunt!" he said.

"But I want some tea, Nugent."

"Can't have any."

"Just one sausage—"

"No!"

"And a couple of eggs, with—"

"No! Get out!"

"With two or three sardines."

"You aren't going to have any. It's your punishment."

"B-but what can I do?" stuttered Billy Bunter.

"Go down to Hall and have tea."

"I'll tell you what I will do," said the fat junior, after blinking indignantly at the four chums for some time.

"You'll go out on your neck in a minute, old son!"

"I'll tell you what I will do," repeated Billy Bunter. "If you chaps sub. together a tanner each, I will go and have tea in the tuckshop."

"Oh, but we can't do that!"

"Why? Is sixpence too much? I tell you—"

"It's not that, Billy. You could have made it a bob each if you had liked."

Bunter smiled expectantly.

"Well, what is it, Cherry?" he said.

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NEXT
WEEK:

"NUGENT MINOR."

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

Bob Cherry put down his knife and fork, and winked at Frank Nugent.

"Shall I tell you why it's so difficult for us to lend you any money, Billy?"

"B-but—"

"D'you want to know, or don't you?"

"Why, a couple of bob between you won't break you, will it?" spluttered Billy Bunter.

"Oh, no! We could make it five bob each if you hadn't made that resolve."

"Resolve?"

"Yes, you fat dummy!"

Billy Bunter mechanically pulled out the little notebook from his breast-pocket and opened it.

"W-why, really, you chaps," he muttered, "I forgot that I had made that one of my New Year's resolutions."

"That's all right, Bunt."

"Of course, that resolve doesn't apply now, because you're going to have your money returned as soon as the postman arrives with that postal-order I'm expecting."

"We've heard of that postal-order before."

"Really, Cherry, I don't know what you impute—"

"Shut up, you fat porpoise, and get out."

"Pass the eggs over, Frank!"

Billy eyed the feasters angrily now. He could see that the food was rapidly disappearing into Harry Wharton & Co.'s mouths, and he realised he would have to "buck up" if he was to join in with them.

"I say, Wharton—"

"Oh, dry up, you duffer!" roared the Remove captain. "And you had better get down to Hall pretty smartly if you want any grub!"

"Well, forward me two bob until my postal-order comes."

"Can't be did, we tell you—besides, you've made a resolve not to borrow any cash."

"B-but—"

"Get out!" roared Harry Wharton & Co.

"You cads, you! Yah!"

"Bunk!"

"Yah! You stingy—you mean cads!"

"Buzz off!" shouted Bob Cherry, thrusting his chair back, and clutching hold of a loaf of bread.

And Billy Bunter slammed the door to with a bang.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Another Resolution Failure.

"COME in, fathead!"

"Don't knock; walk right in!"

Billy Bunter turned the handle of Bulstrode's study door, and looked in in response to the more or less welcome invitation.

"Hallo, you fat boulder!"

"Really, Bulstrode, I—I thought I would just come along and have a chat, you know."

"Have a what?"

Billy Bunter entered the untidy-looking study, and closed the door. In spite of the room being in great disorder, the fat junior's eyes gleamed with pleasure as he noted the well-laden table which Bulstrode and his two cronies, Skinner and Stott, were sitting round.

"What do you want in here?" said Bulstrode, after a pause.

"N-nothing."

"Then you had better clear before we bump you for this afternoon's affair."

"Really, Bulstrode, I—"

"Shut up!"

"I have got an idea—"

"Go and drown it!"

Billy Bunter blinked at the Remove bully, and then put his hand on the door-handle.

"Very well, Bulstrode," he said. "You can have another year of Harry Wharton's rotten leadership."

"Why, what do you mean?"

Bulstrode pricked up his ears immediately when he heard Harry Wharton's name mentioned, and now he gazed curiously at Billy Bunter.

"What do you mean?" he repeated.

"Oh, nothing much. Only I thought you would like to lick Wharton. I know you hate him because—"

"Shut up!"

"Because he won't let you bully—"

"Dry up, fathead!"

Skinner and Stott grinned at one another as Bulstrode drew his chair back and rose to his feet.

"Let's give him a licking for his confounded cheek, Bulstrode," whispered Skinner.

"Leave him alone," replied Bulstrode. "Now, then, Bunty, what have you come here for?"

"I—I've got a jolly good wheeze."

"Well, we've heard of your rotten wheezes before," sneered Bulstrode.

"Really, you chaps, I think this latest one of mine will absolutely do Wharton in the eye."

"Do him in the eye?"

"Yes."

"Well, come again later," interjected Stott; "we want to get on with our tea now."

"I don't mind waiting, you know."

"Then squat on the window-ledge until we've finished."

Billy Bunter smiled to himself, and cleared his throat in the familiar way he had before ventriloquising.

"Let him have some tea!"

Bulstrode and Skinner turned in surprise to look at Stott, who was at the moment pouring himself out another cup of tea.

"What's that?" roared Bulstrode.

"I'm with Stott there. I vote Bunty stops to tea now he's here."

Bulstrode stared at Skinner in astonishment.

"What are you two young idiots gassing about?" he shouted. "Considering neither of you have brassed up a single penny towards this feed, I think——"

"Don't be stingy, Bulstrode," came Stott's voice.

The Remove bully glared from one to the other of the two incredulous juniors, and Billy Bunter smiled contentedly. His "wheeze" was working very satisfactorily.

"Do you two want a licking?" shouted Bulstrode excitedly.

"It—it's that——"

"D'you think you're going to dictate to me who is going to have tea in this study?" interrupted the Remove bully, glaring at Skinner and Stott, who for the moment seemed too flabbergasted to utter a word. "Speak, you idiots; d'you——"

"I'm for Bunty having tea in here."

It appeared to Bulstrode that Skinner spoke, and the next moment the bully had caught his crony roughly by the ear.

"Ow!"

"Come on, out you go!"

Billy Bunter opened the door in a flash, and the next instant Skinner went flying through it, to fall with a resounding bump on the hard floor of the corridor.

"Well played, Bulstrode!" murmured the fat youth.

The Remove bully scowled at Bunter, and then skipped round the study table after Stott.

"You're next!" he shouted.

"M-mo, Bulstrode! What for?"

"I'll show you. Come on!"

But Stott dodged the bully's long arm, and he raced for the door with a yell. Billy Bunter was standing with it wide open, and as soon as Stott was safely through he shut it to with a bang.

"J-jolly good, Bulstrode," he said, blinking through his big spectacles at the bully, who had sat himself down at the tea-table once more.

"What do you want?"

"It's about Wharton," replied Billy, sidling up to the chair which Stott had vacated.

"Sit down, you greedy cormorant. You'll find some tea left in the pot."

"That's awfully decent of you, Bulstrode. You know I've always said that you're——"

"Dry up!"

Billy Bunter reached across for the jam-pot, and did not utter another word until he had swallowed the last morsel of its contents.

"It'll be a good thing for you, Bulstrode, if you give me your support."

The Remove bully held his teacup half-way between the saucer and his lips.

"Support?" he muttered.

"Yes, Bulstrode."

"Why, what are you talking about, you dummy?"

Billy Bunter cleaned and readjusted his spectacles.

"I suppose I had better explain from the beginning," he said. "It won't take me long, and if you——"

"Get on with it, then."

The fat junior of Greyfriars pulled his little notebook from his breast-pocket, and handed it across to Bulstrode.

"If you will just look at the first page," he said, "I needn't explain so fully."

Bulstrode opened the book, and read in a whisper Billy Bunter's list of resolutions.

"Resolved to put down jealousy?"

"Yes, Bulstrode, I think——"

"Resolved not to borrow money?"

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"Yes."

"Resolved to earn three pounds a week from the G.F.A.M.M.A.H.?"

"Y-yes."

"Resolved to be captain of the Remove?" gasped Bulstrode.

"Y-y-yes!"

"You?" roared the Remove bully. "You captain of the Form? You?"

Bang!

Bulstrode brought his fist down with a crash on the tea-table, and Billy Bunter gave a leap into the air.

"Really, Bulstrode!"

"Y-you, you fat owl, captain of the Remove?" shouted the bully, raising his voice still higher.

"Yes, Bulstrode," faltered Billy Bunter. "Of course, I shall make it all right for you. If you will support me and vote for me, I'll promise—or—I'll promise you anything within reason. Of course, I sha'n't be so namby-pamby as Wharton, and——"

"Oh, shut up, you dummy!"

Tap, tap!

"Who is it?" shouted Bulstrode, as a double knock sounded on the study door.

"It's us, Bulstrode."

"Us?"

"Yes—Skinner and Stott. Can we come in again?"

"If you like; but you don't expect me to open the door for you, do you?"

Skinner popped his head round the corner of the door, and looked half apologetically at the Remove bully.

"W-we've got a suspicion, Bulstrode."

"I thought you had got something wrong with you."

Billy grinned, and attacked the few remaining pastries with renewed vigour. He had an idea that Skinner and Stott had been talking matters over, and that they had come to the conclusion that they had been ejected from the study through the trickery of his ventriloquism.

Skinner was pushed into the study by Stott, and the bully's two cronies closed the door.

"Well, what about your suspicion, dummy?"

"It's about when we didn't speak to you."

"Off your rocker?"

"No, Bulstrode."

"Then what on earth are you talking about the time when you didn't speak to me?"

"It was Bunter, not Skinner," said Stott desperately.

Skinner nodded his head.

"Yes, that's right," he assented. "It wasn't Stott, it was Bunter."

"My only hat, what are you gassing about?"

Billy rose to his feet with a satisfied sigh, as Bulstrode turned to his two cronies.

"Well, I must be going now," he said. "I'm sure it has been jolly ripping of you to invite me, Bulstrode, and——"

"Bulstrode didn't invite you, you fat bounder!" roared Skinner. "It was through your rotten ventriloquism."

"My only hat!" gasped the Remove bully.

"O-of c-course y-y-you don't believe these cads, Bulstrode?"

"So it was you, was it?"

"R-really, Bulstrode!"

"Pass me over that jam-tart, Skinner."

Billy Bunter made a dash for the door, and the next moment he went to the floor with a crash, as Stott placed his foot before him.

Bump!

"Ow!"

"Jolly good! Sit on the porpoise!"

The three bullies fell on to the fat junior of Greyfriars.

"Ow!"

"Hold him quiet!" shouted Bulstrode

"Lemme get up, you cads!"

Squelch!

Bulstrode rubbed the jam-tart well into Billy Bunter's face, and the fat junior simply yelled the place down.

"You've resolved to be captain of the Remove, have you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter squirmed and wriggled, but all to no avail.

"There's some treacle in the cupboard," panted Stott: "shall I get it?"

"Yes, rather!"

Stott clambered up from Bunter's chest, and opened the study cupboard. He looked into one of the two tins, and grinned.

"Here we are!"

"Come on, then, confound you!" roared Bulstrode.

Stott handed the tin of treacle to the bully, and the next moment Billy Bunter gave a smothered yell, as Bulstrode turned the tin upside down over his face.

"G-r-r-r-r!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Look at him," jeered Bulstrode, "the prospective and popular candidate for the captaincy of the Remove!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Send him back to his rotten No. 1 Study!"
 "Yes, rather."
 "G-r-r-r-r! Y-you—ow!—you cads!"
 Billy Bunter struggled to his feet, and the treacle-tin clattered to the floor.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Will you cross that resolve off, you fat porpoise?" sneered Bulstrode.
 "Ow! Yes, I will!" roared Bunter. "I don't want to be captain of a lot of cads like you, and —"
 "Shut up!"
 "Get out!"

The treacle was beginning to run down Billy's neck now, and his face was all covered with jam. He certainly looked an extraordinary sight as he groped his way to the door.
 "Open it for him!" shouted Skinner. "For goodness' sake, don't let him touch it!"

Stott flung the door open, and Billy went staggering out into the corridor.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Resolved to be captain of the Remove, have you?" shouted Bulstrode.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 Billy Bunter's resolves were getting broken, as Harry Wharton knew they would be when Billy first read him out the list; and now the fat junior, full of righteous indignation, made his way to the bath-room.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Tom Brown's Rugby Match is Played Off.

"YOU mean to say that Quelch has put the notice up?"
 "Yes, rather."

The crowd of Removites turned from the counter of the school tuckshop, and stared at Tom Brown in surprise.

"Absolutely let us off?" gasped Bob Cherry, leaning up against the counter.

"Yes; scot-free! It's up there as large as life!"

"My only hat!"

"Wonders will never cease!"

"Fancy him dropping the punishment altogether," said Harry Wharton. "That's what gets over me."

The New Zealand junior nodded.

"He says he has been unexpectedly called away from the school."

"Then we can play our game of rugger, after all," said Mark Linley. "Have you told those Upper Fourth rotters about it?"

Tom Brown grinned.

"No," he said. "There's about half a dozen of them, and they're sitting in their class-room as meek as lambs, waiting for Quelch."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter, who felt very homely in the school tuckshop, gave Frank Nugent's arm a tug.

"I say, Nugent!"

"Shut up, Billy! I can't be bothered on Wednesday afternoons, especially when I've had such a shock."

"But I've got a wheeze, Nugent."

"Dry up!"

"It's up against the Upper Fourth cads."

"Oh-h!"

"As Quelch has gone out, don't you think we might jape them?"

"But there's the game of Rugby, fathead!"

"The jape needn't take long; and after that you can lick them at football, so that—"

"My only Aunt Matilda, that's not bad!"

Billy Bunter smiled.

"I—I'll have some of those pastries, Nugent, please."

"What do you mean, you duffer?"

"Really, Nugent, you can surely stand me a mouthful or so until my postal order arrives?"

Frank Nugent put his hand into his trousers pocket.

"What about that three pound a week resolve of yours? Weren't you going to get a fortune from the A.S.S. something or another society?"

"Oh, you mean the G.F.A.M.M.A.H., Nugent!" said Billy.

"Well?"

"They keep on writing to me for ten shillings, so that they can send me the materials."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, I didn't know they would make it so difficult for me when I made the resolve, you know. I—"

"Oh, shut up, Bunt!" laughed Nugent, throwing a shilling on to the counter. "Here you are!"

"Thanks, Nugent! I'll pay you—"

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NEXT

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"NUGENT MINOR."

"Dry up!"

And Frank Nugent caught Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry excitedly by the arm.

"Come on," he said; "let's go and jape Temple and Dabney."

"W-what do you —"

"Jape! Score off them! Make them look a good many sizes in fools! Rag them!" shouted Frank Nugent. "Don't you understand what I mean when I say jape?"

"I should say I do now, you howling duffer!"

"Well, come along, then."

"B-but what are we going to do for a jape?" said Harry Wharton, pulling himself away from his study mate's frantic tugging.

"Anything, to score off them!"

"Yes; but what?"

"Well, you're captain of the Remove, and here are you looking around for wheezes."

Harry Wharton grinned, as the Removites clustered around him anxiously.

"My only Aunt Matilda!" he said, with a laugh. "I know what we can do."

"Well, out with it, old son!"

"We shall all have to pretend to be very busy," replied Harry, after a pause.

"As long as we only pretend to—"

"Shut up, Cherry!" howled the eager Removites.

"Well, get on with it," laughed Bob.

"This is the wheeze," continued the Remove captain. "We must go into the class-room with our coats off and sleeves rolled up, and tell them that they have got to help us move the desks into the next class-room."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course," continued Harry, "they'll think old Quelch has given the order, and—"

"Yes, yes!" roared the Removites. "Come on!"

Harry Wharton & Co. led the way out of the tuckshop, leaving Billy Bunter sitting on the high stool before the counter, with a contented smile on his fat features.

The Removites tiptoed down the long corridor; and when at last they stopped outside the Upper Fourth class-room, Harry Wharton whispered the order round to remove coats and roll sleeves.

"Ready chaps?" he said at last.

"Ha, ha!" they laughed. "Rather!"

Tap, tap!

Harry knocked at the class-room door, and opened it simultaneously. The crowd of juniors followed him in as quickly as they could.

"My only hat!" gasped Harry Wharton, as he looked round the empty class-room. "They've cleared!"

"Diddled!"

"Absolutely sold!"

Temple, Dabney & Co. had gone, and the Removites, standing in their shirt-sleeves, looked at one another meekly.

"Well, my only Aunt Matilda!" whistled Tom Brown. "I looked in here a few minutes ago, and they were all sitting as—"

"Yes; meek as lambs, I suppose you're going to say!" interrupted Hazeldene.

"A good jape ruined!" muttered Wharton.

"The ruin is terrific!" murmured Hurree Singh, unrolling his shirt-sleeves.

"I think—"

"Hallo! Listen! Here they come!"

A loud clattering of feet sounded in the corridor without, and the Removites waited silently.

"Hallo!" came Dabney's voice. "What're all these coats doing out here?"

The Removites looked at one another sheepishly.

"Ole clo!" laughed Temple. "But that fat bouncer said they had come along to our class-room."

"Yes; just boss in."

Harry Wharton blushed crimson.

"Come on, chaps," he said "quickly!"

He led the way out of the class-room just as the six Fourth-Formers reached the door, and the two parties gazed at one another in astonishment.

"Have you chaps changed into your footer togs?" gasped Nugent.

"Yes; of course!" replied Temple. "What on earth are you kids doing here in your shirt-sleeves?"

"I—I—I suppose we can be like this if we like, can't we?" stammered Harry Wharton.

Temple and Dabney grinned.

"Oh, I understand!" said the leader of the Upper Fourth after a pause. "You mistook it for a lunatic asylum!"

The Removites put on their coats without a word.

"We—we will go and change into our football togs now," said Harry Wharton, "and we will take it out of you kids in a game of rugger."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Upper Fourth juniors, beginning to see that a jape had evidently misfired.

"We'll pay you out!" shouted Tom Brown fiercely.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Harry Wharton & Co. led the Removites up to the dormitory. Not a word was spoken until they had all gathered once more on the football field.

Tom Brown's ambition was realised.

A game of Rugby was played at Greyfriars. As far as the game of Rugby football goes, it was not altogether a success, for Tom Brown, Mark Linley, and Hurreo Singh were the only juniors who had any real idea of the game.

However, Tom Brown was pleased, and his wonderful

tackling made the rest of the players open their eyes in admiration.

The six players belonging to the Upper Fourth did their best, but against Tom Brown and Mark Linley they were hopelessly beaten, and when at last the game was finished Harry Wharton felt decidedly better.

"Jolly good, Brownie!" he said, slapping the New Zealander a resounding thwack on the back.

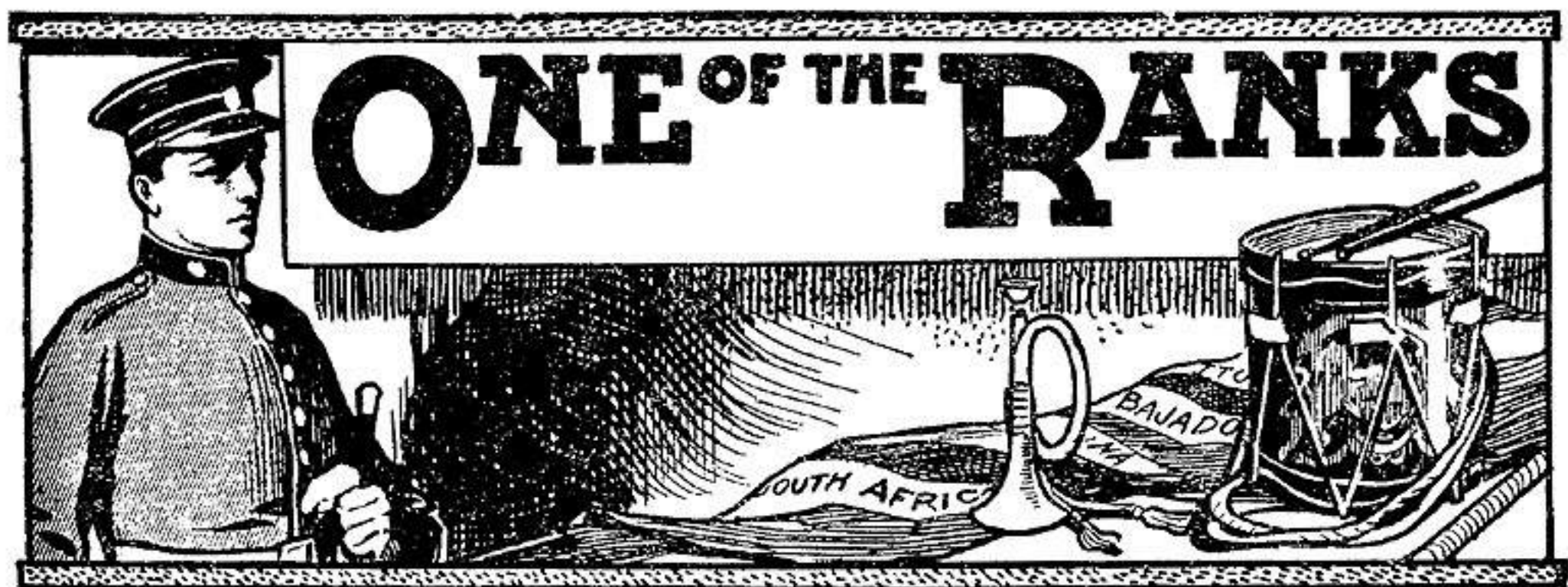
"Ow! Shut up!"

"It was jolly ripping, and I vote we have another game of rugger before long."

And Tom Brown and Mark Linley grinned at one another expressively.

THE END.

(A splendid double-length tale of Harry Wharton & Co next Tuesday, entitled "Nugent Minor," by Frank Richards. Order your "Magnet" Library in advance. Price One Penny.)



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. The Royal Wessex are forming the garrison of Eastguard Forts, near Plymport, during manoeuvres. After some nights' weary vigilance, the enemy make an attack, and Ronald is told off with a party of men to help in the magazine. Bagot, the ex-sergeant, attempts to blow the place up, and when Ronald captures him the two fall into the sea. They are, however, rescued by one of the enemy's torpedo boats, and are eventually put ashore. From that moment the two men disappear, so Gussie, one of Ronald's comrades, persuades Mouldy Mills, another friend of Ronald's, to stay behind when the Wessex leave Plymport, and make a search for the missing men. An attempt to drug Gussie and Mouldy is made in a public-house of low repute, and the two soldiers pretend to fall down unconscious.

(Now go on with the story.)

Gussie's Signalling.

The shutters were put up, the doors locked, the gas turned out, and the bar left in darkness.

Gussie and Mouldy sprawled where they had fallen without daring to move a finger. They heard the sound of voices in the little parlour, and then the creaking of feet on stairs, mysterious shufflings on the boards overhead, and scrapings behind the wainscoted walls.

Gussie pinched Mouldy's leg, which lay across his chest, as much as to say "How goes it? Wonder what they're up to now?" And Mouldy kicked Gussie softly with the other heel, as if to reply, "Just wondering the same thing myself; but dry up, for there's no knowing who's left to watch us."

After a further scuffling behind the wainscoting, more tramping of feet overhead, and creaking of stairs, the gas-jet in the little parlour was relit.

"Any sign, Jim?" whispered the landlord to a spy, who had evidently been lurking in the dark on watch.

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"Not a sound. They've copped it right enough. Ain't moved a finger, neither of 'em."

"No, nor are they likely to till to-morrow afternoon, with that stuff inside 'em," growled the landlord with a satisfied chuckle. "Lend a hand here now, you chaps. We'll get 'em out of this, and later on decide what we'll do with 'em. If Pushoffsky or his toff friend knows anything about 'em, and if they've come spying about here after the chap below—well, they won't never go spying any more, I can promise 'em. One minute though, before we shift 'em. We'll just make sure that they ain't shamming."

So saying, he struck a match, and lifting up the eyelid of each, thrust the flame so near to the naked eyeball that only by a superhuman effort of self-control could the two soldiers refrain from wincing.

"Right-ho! Pick 'em up!" cried the landlord, evidently satisfied.

And Gussie and Mouldy were promptly lifted like full sacks, hustled upstairs and lumped down, then crammed through some narrow aperture, and dragged neck and crop along narrow, damp-smelling passages, slimy walls on either side, until, after much winding and turning of corners, they were flung down on a stone floor, where their captors prepared to leave them.

"Supposing they come to, how about that chimney-hole?" ventured someone.

"Oh, they're all right! Dead as door nails!" growled the landlord, relieving Gussie's pockets of all his money, and turning out Mouldy's, which were already empty. "Besides, the chimney's barred, and they wouldn't know the trick of it. And if they did they would only break their necks."

After that a heavy door shut with a thud, and bolts jarred on the outer side. They were left in a darkness that could almost be felt.

Gussie gave them a full five minutes, then felt for Mouldy's ankle and tugged it. Mouldy responded with the stertorous snore of a man drugged. Gussie had been doing his elementary course of signalling of late; while Mouldy, in his more energetic days had been an expert flag-wagger. So when Gussie proceeded to slowly tap out a message on a

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rather bruised and sensitive part of his shin-bone, the veteran had no difficulty in reading it.

"Chester is somewhere about here. You heard what he said about the chap below. I am going for that chimney. If I don't come back, follow."

Mouldy replied with "Carry on!" and stealthily Gussie got upon his hands and knees. A cautious tour of their prison showed him that, like the floor, the walls were of stone, rough hewn in massive blocks, and ancient as the hills.

There were no windows—at any rate, as high as he could reach—but in due time he groped his way into a low aperture, which certainly was never intended originally for a fireplace.

It appeared as if this was one of the hiding-places where deserters were sheltered, as a mouldy palliasse in one corner seemed to indicate it might have been put to that use. In fact, on one side there were broken slabs of stone, showing that a staircase had wound its way upwards through the walls.

Standing upright, Gussie's hands laid hold of the grating which had been spoken of. To his joy and surprise the bars yielded upwards to his pressure. Evidently the secret catch which secured them had been left unfastened by someone who had recently passed that way.

Pushing the grating back, Gussie set his toes in the crevices of the broken stair, and hoisting himself up, found that the steps above were intact. Progress was now easy, but Gussie held his breath, for a thousand-and-one dangers might be lurking in that stygian darkness ready to assail him.

The stair was now winding. He had ventured to only the twentieth step after ten minutes which seemed like so many years. Now his hands could feel nothing. It seemed to his overwrought nerves that a bottomless abyss yawned before him, waiting to engulf him.

"If they knew the trick they'd only break their necks." The landlord's words still echoed in his ears.

He sank down upon the topmost step too shaken for the moment even to retreat. How long he cowered there he could not tell, but all at once a dim, ghostly light wavered along a wall now visible to the left of him, and he heard the sounds of muffled footsteps apparently deep down below him.

Now he could faintly see the outline of his surroundings. The stair up which he had come had opened originally into a narrow passage scarcely two feet wide; but, either by decay or design, the masonry had broken away underfoot, revealing a yawning hole, through which a stream of sea-air, redolent of weed and muddy foreshore, came blowing.

To bridge this chasm when necessary, a plank was provided, but as this lay a good seven feet out of reach, and to jump was out of the question, Gussie was compelled to remain where he was, cudgelling his brains to think where, in the name of wonder, Mouldy and he could have got to.

Evidently the masonry was ancient and of enormous strength. Could this be the obliterated and forgotten ruins, the subterranean chambers and workings of the stronghold, from which Castle Gate took its name, now turned into a secret haunt of thieves?

Gussie cowered back, ready to retreat if the dim light reflected at the far end of the passage grew stronger, but after flickering a little it remained stationary.

"What time do you expect him?" suddenly asked the gruff voice of one of the men who had carried him out of the Spyglass.

"Don't expect him at all!" growled the landlord of the Spyglass. "It is Pushoffsky who's so cocksure he'll come. Says, now he's got his chance, he'll be over as sure as eggs, to see the job done himself. There's some blinking mystery about it as I don't pretend to understand. Only there it is. If he puts up the brass, we sha'n't jib at the job. It wouldn't be the first, anyway, and it ain't for us to be too particular."

"What time's the tide to-night?" asked the other.

At that moment Gussie felt a gentle twitch at his trousers, which sent his heart rattling against his teeth. It was only Mouldy, however, who, acting on orders, had followed up his pal to see what had become of him. The faint murmur of voices below had already caught Mouldy's ears, so there was no need to caution him to silence.

"Tide's still on the ebb now," answered the landlord. "It'll begin to make at one; by four o'clock the job'll be done, and we can let the body float out before daylight on the early ebb—that is, if we've got the brass and the word to go ahead."

Gussie shuddered, for the terrible fate which awaited Ronald Chester was beginning to dawn upon him. Somewhere in these subterranean burrows below high water level there was a dungeon to which the rising tide could be admitted or kept out. In this murder-hole their comrade lay a prisoner awaiting his death sentence. And the man who was to give the fatal word was—

Gussie had no need to ask himself that question. His mind flew back to the night of the mysterious conversation.

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NEXT
WEEK:

"NUGENT MINOR."

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he had overheard when cowering down outside the door of Pushoffsky's School of Physical Culture, and he found the answer there.

"Where's Jim?" asked the other after a long silence.

"Waiting down East Street for the gent, as appointed. If he comes to-night he'll take him down to Ley's Wharf, and bring him in that way. Hallo! Out barkers! I heard a step!"

The light went out in a flash. There was a clicking of revolver-locks, and suddenly all was silent as the grave.

Ian Gets Welcome News and Returns Hot Foot—The Fate of the Spies.

Leaving his sergeant to see the men of the advance-party entrained, Sub-lieutenant Chenys had climbed straight into an empty first-class compartment, and immediately tore open the note which had been thrust so mysteriously into his hand.

It was from Pushoffsky, as he already guessed by the spidery German fist. It ran as follows:

"The man you know is hier. Come at once—to-night, certain. Bearer will be in East Street, first turning right, after you leave town-hall. Bring money—£200—without fail. Haf friends who will not wait. No fear required."

"No fear required!" sneered Ian. "I suppose the lout means by that that there is no danger for me to fear! That remains to be seen. Still, he's got that fool of a step-brother of mine at last, and by this talk of money—£200—he's willing to go through with the job. Why does he want to drag me deeper into it? Why couldn't he do it first and then come down on me for the money afterwards? That was the bargain; but I suppose these carrion friends of his are the ones who want their pickings. Two hundred pounds to-night, eh? And no more trains back to Plymport! Hang them! Do they take me for a veritable 'oof-bird, that lays both golden eggs and flies to deliver them?"

Ian gnawed his lips with vexation. The train started at this moment with a jerk. There was some shouting, and he thrust his head out just in time to catch a glimpse of Mouldy and Gussie standing and gaping at the departing train.

Ian cursed loud and long at their carelessness, and then he remembered that Augustus Smythe was left-handed man of the rear four; that he had passed him just as Pushoffsky's mysterious messenger had sidled up to deliver the letter. Was this carelessness only, or had Smythe detected the act and got left behind intentionally to see what he could make of it?

"Tush!" snapped Ian, in self-rebuke. "I've grown weak and silly. Drugs and disappointment have been playing old Harry with my nerves! What could the man know or suspect. Still, I would rather they were here than there, just in case that meddlesome fop, Fairly, tumbles across them on his way back to Eastguard, and begins to pump them. He thinks he is on the track of something I know, and if Smythe blabbed about this letter, it might put something into his head which would make it very awkward for me to stir."

"No; the fact is, that now my chance has come, the sooner I take it and put an end to it—all this torture and uncertainty—the better. I must hook back to Plymport to-night, when all is quiet. I can borrow young Falkener's motor at the Roebuck, and ought to be back in East Street by the time named."

No sooner had "Lights Out" sounded for the detachment at Woolchester Barracks than Ian made his rounds, and having changed into mufti, and donned first a seedy ulster, and over that a heavy motor-coat, he slipped out of a private gate behind the colonel's quarters, and made for the Roebuck Hotel.

Falkener—a brother subaltern of G Company, away on leave—had offered him the loan of his motor during his absence, so there was no difficulty there. A quarter of an hour later Ian was free of the outskirts of Woolchester, and speeding along at a hot thirty miles an hour in the direction of Plymport. Here he put up his car at a garage where he was not known, and pulling his cap down over his eyes, and the collar of the seedy ulster well up about his ears, he made his way to East Street.

The man with the crooked face awaited him, and exchanging scarcely two words set off, guiding the way towards the docks, striking almost the identical route which Gussie and Mouldy had followed but an hour or two previously.

Keeping wide of the outskirts of Castle Gate slum, they hugged the water's edge, as often as possible, making their way along ramshackle quays.

A Splendid Double-length Tale of Harry
Wharton & Co. By F. ANK RICHARDS.

At last, when Ian's fears and suspicions were beginning to get the better of him, and he felt like giving his silent guide the slip, Pushoffsky suddenly appeared from the door of a shed on a wharf which, judging from the dilapidated notice-board, the broken roofs, the rank weeds sprouting from between the cobbles, must have been unlet for many years.

With scarcely more than a grunt of recognition, the wrestler led the way into the shed and closed the door, plunging the place into darkness. Ian was now guided to what seemed to be a trapdoor in the ground, and his feet set upon a ladder. Down he went rung by rung—Pushoffsky before him, and the man with the twisted face waiting to bring up the rear.

Suddenly a snuffling sound came from under the door, which they had just closed, and then Ian's guide crept back to listen. He flung the door open at last, and something scuffled away with a terrified whimpering.

"Vat vos it?" asked the Pole breathlessly, as the door was barred again.

"Only some mongrel that must have followed us," growled the man with the twisted face from the darkness.

Then came the sound of a trapdoor closing, and Pushoffsky struck a match.

The light showed Ian, white as death and shaking with fear. If he had been going to his own execution instead of to sign the death warrant of the victim of his hate and avarice, he could not have presented a more pitiable spectacle. That he feared treachery, that at every moment he expected assassin hands to spring out from the darkness was evident by his crouching attitude of defence, and the fact that he held a revolver ready in his nerveless hands.

Pushoffsky at the sight of him gave a low chuckle, which echoed weirdly along the stone passage in which Ian now found himself.

"So you are frightened, Mr. Officer?" sneered the wrestler, turning to lead the way. "Come, put up your pistol and follow! You need not fear for yourself. Mein frends vill not hurt you!"

Stung by the tone of contempt in the foreigner's voice, Ian thrust his weapon back into his pocket and followed in silence at the wrestler's heels, through narrow passages, eternally twisting, across foul-smelling chambers reeking with moisture, and always boring, it seemed, into the bowels of the earth.

That this detour was made only for the purpose of bewildering him and making it impossible for him to find his way in or out of the place again, became evident to Ian; but before he could hint at this he was ushered into still another chamber, the light going out before he could set eyes on the interior.

Ian stood in silence quivering with terror, waiting for a fresh match to be lit.

"Is this your friend?" asked a strange voice, coming so suddenly out of the darkness that Ian almost sprang out of his skin.

"It is!" answered Pushoffsky.

"And have you brought the money?" asked the voice again, addressing Ian this time.

"I have!" answered Chenys in a cracked whisper that even Gussie, lurking in his hiding-place within ear-shot, and fully anticipating Ian's arrival, could not recognise.

"Good!" answered the landlord of the Spyglass. "Light the glim again, Jim, and then we can get straight to business."

"So," said he, gazing sharply at the young officer as the candle once more flickered into flame, "you got Pushoffsky's note and you've come about a man we hold, named Chester?"

"Yes, where is he?"

"Never you mind. All in good time. We've got three others of your regiment here as well, but I'll come to them later. This man, Chester, though, is in our hands, and we ask no questions but await your orders. If he's in your road, as I understand, why, now's your time to get him out of it."

"Three others of my regiment?" gasped Ian in dismay, scarcely hearing the latter part of the sentence. "Who are they?"

"All in good time, I tell you," insisted the landlord hotly. "Why they're here don't matter much now, anyway. One is a chap named Bagot, and he's done for, with a broken neck, so you won't have any trouble there. The others you'll see for yourself later. They're both drugged and out of harm's way, and that's enough for the present. You needn't alarm yourself about them now."

Gussie nudged Mouldy with his foot in silent joy at this, but Mouldy crouched, gaping like a codfish, scarcely knowing whether to believe his ears. What Ian Chenys, an officer of the Wessex, was doing in this thieves' den, bargaining away the life of a humble comrade of the ranks, was more than his stunned senses could fathom. He had not the advantage of Gussie's knowledge of the opening stages of the conspiracy.

If Gussie had had a thousand pounds in his pockets at that moment he would have given it cheerfully to be across that yawning pit and at the far end of the narrow passage, so that he might hear more distinctly the voices which, now that the death of a fellow-being was being plotted, had sunk to a cautious murmur. At last came the steady rhythmic chink of money, and then the clatter of boots upon the stones.

Suddenly remembering their own parts which they had to play, Gussie turned in a panic, and drove Mouldy before him. Down the stone steps they slid cautiously, and gained the recess in the dungeon wall at last.

Then Gussie pulled the barred grating shut behind them, and the two, marking their bearings as best they could, stretched themselves out on the floor, just as they had been first flung down.

Minutes passed, and they dared not speak aloud, though a dozen questions were tapped out in the Morse code.

"He's gone to look at Chester. They'll be here in a minute. Stand by for surprises, and be ready to fight if we must!"

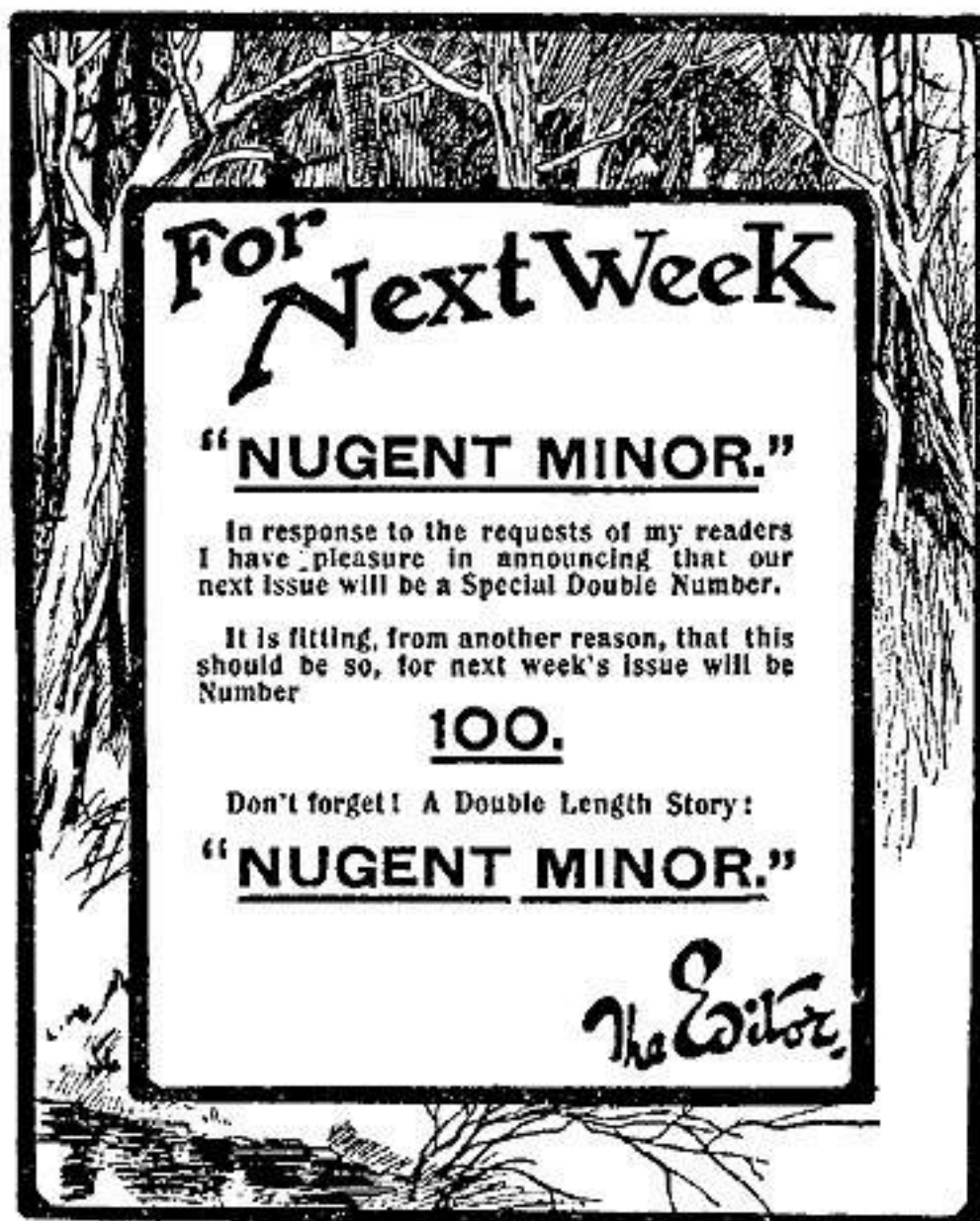
Still the minutes passed, and nobody came. At last a stealthy hand was laid upon the bolted door. It swung open noiselessly, and somebody hung there, listening for signs of life within. Evidently satisfied that their prisoners had not returned to consciousness, the intruder struck a match, and Gussie, through all but closed eyes, caught a glimpse of the landlord of the Spyglass. The latter made a sign to others without, and Ian and Pushoffsky entered on tip-toe, and stood glaring at the redcoats lying on the floor.

"Smythe and Mills, of my company, hang them! What are they doing here?" snarled Ian, under his breath. "Wait! I understand why they hung behind now. They are spies. They watched your messenger give me that letter, and they followed. Pushoffsky, we must look to this, or we shall find ourselves betrayed. They must not leave here alive!"

"Ja, tonner und blitzen, if dot is so they must die!" growled the Pole, about to spring on the pair and throttle them to death with his mighty paw.

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It is fitting, from another reason, that this should be so, for next week's issue will be Number

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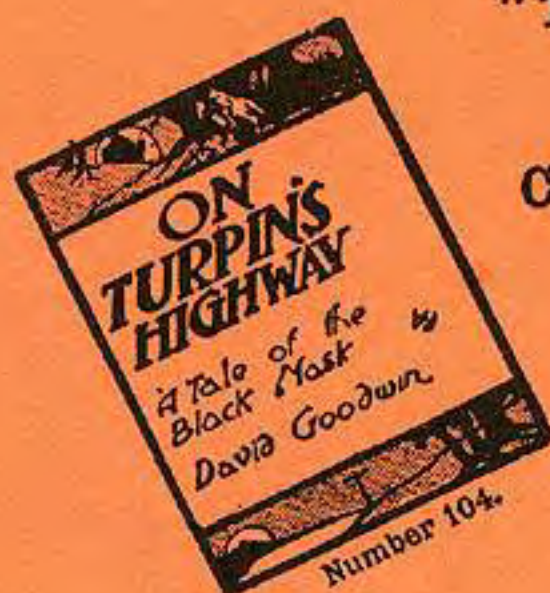
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