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Vol. 6.

THE SCHOOLBOY VENTRILOQUIST AT WORK!



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A Splendid,
New, Long, Com-
plete School
Story of Harry
Wharton & Co.
at Greyfriars.

BY

FRANK
RICHARDS

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Bunter Invites Himself.

"BEASTS!"

Billy Bunter, of the Remove Form at Greyfriars, made that remark. The fat face of Billy Bunter wore a very dissatisfied expression.

Billy Bunter had reason to be dissatisfied, from his own point of view, at least. He was standing in the Remove passage, outside the door of Study No. 1, which was closed. Within the study could be heard sounds of a cheerful nature to a hungry junior—the clinking of crockeryware, the singing of a kettle—and there was a most appetising scent of frying bacon. A feed was preparing in Study No. 1 in the Remove, which belonged to Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent. And several other fellows were there with them—Bob Cherry, and Johnny Bull, and Hurree Singh, all of the Remove Form. And Billy Bunter stood in the passage and sniffed.

Billy Bunter could not see any reason why he should not join in that study feed. That he was the greediest fellow in the Form, and always took the lion's share of any feed; that he talked incessantly, always upon the subject of himself and his wonderful gifts; that he was, in fact, a most insufferable bore and worry, did not seem to him a good reason. Billy Bunter was, in Billy Bunter's own opinion, a most estimable person, and the prejudice that existed against him in his Form he attributed to personal jealousy, and was not slow to say so.

A junior came down the passage, and Bunter turned round to blink at him through his big spectacles. It was Mark Linley, of the Remove.

"Hullo, Linley!" said Bunter, with great affability. "Going to the feed?"

"Yes," said Linley.

"I'll come in with you, if you like."

"Can't you go in by yourself?" he demanded. Bunter coughed.

"Ahem! You—you see, Wharton's forgotten to—to ask me—"

"Well, remind him, then."

"You—you see, perhaps that wouldn't be any good, either," said Bunter. "Look here, I'll come in with you as your friend."

"Will you?" said Mark Linley grimly.

"Oh, certainly! You see, a fellow's allowed to take a friend in to a feed, you know. They couldn't possibly say anything. It's all right, I suppose?"

"But you're not my friend," said Mark.

"Oh, yes, I am," said Bunter confidently. "I—I have always admired you very much, Linley. I've never had it up against you that you are a scholarship bounder. I don't really look down on you because you used to work in a factory before you came to Greyfriars. I don't see why I shouldn't associate with you—really!"

"I do!" said Mark.

"Oh, that's all rot, you know!" said Bunter. "I'm perfectly willing to take you up, Linley. In fact, to be very friendly with you, in spite of the fact that you're a low sort of chap. Now, you just pass me in as a friend—"

"I'll pass you down the passage like a football, if you don't catch off!" said Mark Linley. "Get out, you fat cad!"

"Oh, really, Linley—I say, you know, if I'm willing to speak to an awful outsider like you, you might be civil, you know—"

Mark Linley pushed the fat junior aside, and reached the door of the study. Billy Bunter blinked after him furiously.

"You rotter!" he bawled. "You factory cad—"

Mark turned half round, and Billy Bunter backed away in sudden alarm. The Lancashire lad entered the study and closed the door behind him. Bunter grunted.

"Beast!"

The fat junior hesitated a few minutes. As Bunter had had his tea, and had expended two borrowed shillings in the school tuckshop since tea, he ought not really to have been hungry. But Bunter never could see a feed without wanting to join in it. He rolled up to the study door and knocked, and opened the door without waiting for an invitation.

He blinked into the study. Certainly, the interior looked very cheerful and inviting. There was a bright fire in the grate, and the kettle was singing on the hob, and there was a big pile of toast in a dish on the fender. Frank Nugent was attending to the big frying-pan laden with rashers of bacon, from which came a most appetising scent. Harry Wharton was scraping jam out of a big jar into a smaller dish. The other fellows were all lending a hand. It was a feed of larger proportions than was usual in a junior study, and was accounted for by the fact that all the chums of the Remove had found themselves in funds that day, and they had combined resources for a really good study brew.

All eyes were turned upon the Owl of the Remove as he blinked in. There was no welcome in any face, Bunter was not popular with Harry Wharton & Co.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "What's that—a nightmare in the daytime? Ayaunt!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—I've come—"

"Oh, you've come, have you?" said Harry Wharton. "Well, now you can go!"

"I say, you fellows, considering what a good friend I've been to all of you, I think you might ask a chap to a feed!" said Bunter, with a very injured look.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at. I'm hungry. I'm willing to cook all the bacon and eggs—"

"And to eat them?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you fellows! I do consider—"

"It's no good, Bunter," said Wharton. "I tell you we can't stand you. It's impossible—you're too outside."

"Quite past the limit," said Nugent.

"If you come in, you'll begin some of your rotten caddishness again, and we shall have to kick you out," said Johnny Bull. "Better stay outside, while you're safe."

"I don't think you fellows ought to let personal jealousy carry you as far as this," said Bunter loftily. "A fellow can't help being good-looking."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I tell you what, you chaps. I'm expecting a postal-order to-morrow morning, and if you like to stand me a feed now, I'll stand you all a better one to-morrow. I'm expecting a whacking big postal-order from a titled friend of mine—"

"Lies already, and you're only half in the study," said Bob Cherry.

"The helpfulness of the esteemed Bunter is terrific," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

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Read the grand new story of the "THE SCHOOLBOY MUTINEERS!" in this week's "GEM" Library. Juniors of St. Jim's, entitled: Now on Sale. Price One Penny.

"Oh, I know you're jealous because I've got titled friends," said Bunter.

"You young ass—"

"But I'm willing to overlook it. Now, look here, don't be cads. Why can't you ask an old friend in?"

The chums of the Remove looked at one another.

Billy Bunter was intolerable, but it was difficult to say a direct no to a fellow who was so persistent. There was plenty to eat on that auspicious occasion, owing to the unusual plenitude of funds in the Remove studies. There was no danger of Bunter clearing the table, and leaving nothing for anybody else, as he had very frequently been known to do.

Bunter saw his advantage, and pressed it.

"Now, be decent," he said. "I'll tell you what—after tea I'll give you a splendid ventriloquial display, free of charge—"

"Ass!"

"And I'll sing you a song if you like. You know what my voice is like—"

"A rusty saw!" suggested Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Blessed if the fat bounder wouldn't talk the hind legs off a mule!" exclaimed Harry Wharton impatiently. "Shall we let the porpoise roll in?"

"Oh, let him come in!" said Bob Cherry. "But the first time he says anything caddish, he goes out on his neck! Is that agreed, Bunter?"

"Oh, really—"

"If that's not agreed, you go out now," said Harry Wharton.

"Oh, certainly. I'll agree to anything you like," said Billy Bunter, pulling the most comfortable chair up to the table. "I say, you fellows, this is all right! Would you mind passing the bacon, Bull?"

"Here you are!"

"I'll have some eggs, Nugent."

"Oh, good!"

"Hand me over the toast, Cherry."

"Anything else?" asked Mark Linley, with cheerful sarcasm, which was quite wasted on William George Bunter.

"Yes—the pickles."

And Billy Bunter fell to. There was not too much room at the study table for half a dozen fellows, but Bunter allowed himself ample elbow-room. He had cheerfully turned all the other fellows into waiters to supply his wants in his usual way. And he kept them very busy.

The juniors looked at Billy Bunter, and looked at one another; but they were in for it now, and they grinned and bore it. Billy Bunter did not look at anything excepting the good things on the table. He was going ahead with knife and fork as if for a wager.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

On His Neck.

THE chums of the Remove chatted cheerfully over their tea. Billy Bunter was silent for the present; conversation seemed to him a sheer waste of time when there were so many good things on the table. Harry Wharton & Co. were discussing cricket, and also a rumour which had reached Greyfriars.

It was rumoured in the neighbourhood that a new jam factory was to be opened in the vicinity of Courtfield, and the rumour was received with mixed feelings by the Greyfriars fellows.

Billy Bunter looked up at last, and blinked through his big spectacles at the Co.

"You might pass the toast, you fellows!"

"All done in!" said Bob Cherry.

"Oh! Going to make any more?"

"No!" said Wharton shortly.

No one felt inclined to rake up the fire and make toast specially for William George Bunter, who had had enough for three already.

"Oh, really! I suppose you don't want a guest to go short of food?" said Bunter peevishly. "I think you chaps ought to remember how I looked after you during the vac., when we went to Italy!"

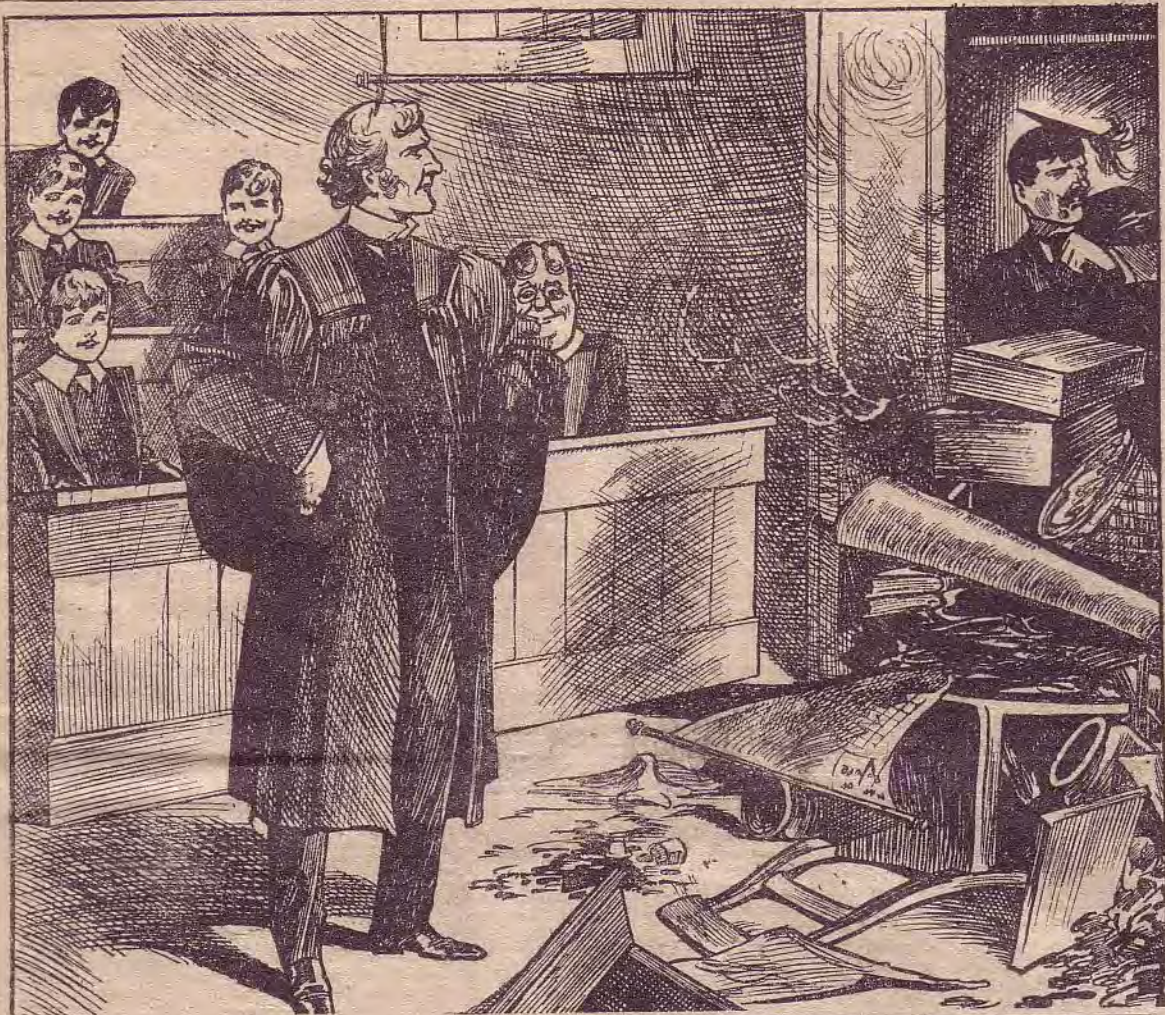
"I remember you were a frightful trouble, and we wished you'd fall inside Vesuvius!" said Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull!" said Bunter. "Look here, who's going to cut some bread-and-butter, if there's no toast going?"

Frank Nugent picked up a ruler, and then, remembering just in time that Bunter was a guest, he changed it for a knife, and cut bread-and-butter. Bunter took it discontentedly; he wanted more toast, and he would have kept Nugent busy for half an hour making and buttering it—if Nugent had been "taking any"—which he wasn't.

"Pass the pickles!" said Bunter.

"All done in!" said Mark Linley.



"I tell you I heard his voice. If you listen you will hear it too—he's still there!" shouted the new master. "Very well," replied the Head. "I will listen!" And the Head listened; but there came no sound from the cupboard. The schoolboy ventriloquist's voice was silent—quite silent now! (See Chapter 8.)

"Oh, really, Linley, you might leave a little pickles for a chap!"

Mark grinned.

"You've had the lot, Bunter. You didn't give anybody else a show."

"Well, let's have some more eggs, then!"

"You've finished them!"

Bunter grunted.

"I'm hungry!" he said. "Look here, you fellows, you might buck up a bit when you're standing a feed to a chap. I'm going to stand you fellows a ripping feed when—when my postal-order comes! Let me have the jam!"

Bob Cherry passed the jam-dish. Bunter had already scraped the last speck off that.

"Where's the jar?" he asked.

"In the wastepaper-basket—empty!"

Bunter gave another grunt.

"Got anything more to eat?" he asked discontentedly.

"Bread-and-butter!"

"Groo!"

The chums of the Remove burst into a laugh; they could not help it. Billy Bunter blinked at them indignantly. He had only eaten enough for three, and he could have gone on for a considerable time yet. The chums of the Remove had finished before Bunter was half through his tea. Billy Bunter cast a disapproving eye round the table.

"Well, if it's done, it's done, I suppose!" he said. "I call this a measly spread, I must say! You don't mind my saying so, do you?"

"Not at all!" said Nugent politely. "There's something else we should like you to say, too."

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"What's that?"

"Good-bye!" said Nugent.

Bunter sniffed.

"I'll have some more tea," he said. "May as well finish up the sugar and milk. I say, you fellows, I want to speak to you. I'm thinking of standing a picnic."

"Same postal-order?" asked Bob Cherry sarcastically.

"No; a—another one that I'm expecting! I'm thinking of standing a picnic to the Cliff House girls on Wednesday afternoon, and I want all you fellows to come."

"Go hon!"

"In case my postal-order shouldn't arrive by Wednesday, I suppose you fellows wouldn't mind advancing me the cash?" suggested Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I can't see anything to cackle at, myself! It would be rather rotten if there weren't any grub, after Marjorie and Clara had arranged to come!"

"You needn't be alarmed," said Bob Cherry, laughing. "Marjorie and Clara wouldn't arrange to come to a picnic with you!"

"As a matter of fact, I'm quite certain they would," said Bunter, with a satisfied grin. "I know 'em! You chaps don't know what Marjorie thinks of me!"

"I do," said Bob Cherry. "She thinks you are a fat, rotten, conceited toad, and she is quite right. You are!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I suppose I ought to punch your head for saying that, but I can afford to let you off," said Bunter loftily. "I know how hard it is to bear jealousy. Shakespeare says something about it being a green-eyed

NEXT
TUESDAY:

"FRANK NUGENT'S GREAT WHEEZE!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.
Order Early.

monster. If you chaps knew the things Marjorie says to me when we're on our lonesome—"

Bob Cherry rose to his feet.

"You remember the agreement," he said. "First time you said anything caddish you're to go out on your neck."

"Oh, really—"

"Collar the cad!"

Bunter jumped up in alarm as the juniors closed round him. Bunter could not see where he had offended. It was a common custom of his to tell falsehoods about girls who were "mashed" on him, as he called it. He blinked indignantly at the juniors as they reached for him.

"I say, you fellows, hands off, you know! I—I— Oh!"

Bump!

Billy Bunter went down heavily upon the study carpet, and a little cloud of dust rose.

"Yow!" he roared. "Hold on—I—I mean let go! Yah! It isn't my fault that I'm a good-looking chap, you cads, and girls take notice of me! Yow! You're a set of jealous beasts! Ow! Leggo!"

"Outside with him!"

"Kick him out!"

"Yaroo!"

Many hands grasped William George Bunter, and, in spite of his weight, which was considerable, he was swung bodily to the door. Mark Linley opened the door, and Bunter was swung through.

Bump!

He landed in the passage with a bump that seemed to shake the boards. Fellows looked out of their studies along the passage and roared with laughter as they saw the fat junior rolling on the linoleum.

"Now, buzz off!" roared Bob Cherry, his eyes gleaming with anger. "If you come back into this study, you cad, we'll scalp you!"

"Ow, ow! Yaroo!"

Slam!

The study door closed upon William George Bunter. The Owl of the Remove sat up, and gasped for breath, and blinked at the juniors who were grinning at him from the doorways of the other studies.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Bolsover, the bully of the Remove. "Why don't you go in and lick them, Bunter? I wouldn't stand it."

"Faith, and he isn't standing," grinned Micky Desmond; "he's taking it lying down!"

Billy Bunter staggered to his feet. His fat face was crimson with rage. He tore open the door of Study No. 1, and blinked in at the juniors. Harry Wharton & Co. looked round angrily at him, and Bunter shook a fat fist at them.

"Yah!" he roared. "Beasts! Bob Cherry's jealous because Marjorie Hazeldene is mashed on me, and—"

Bob Cherry made a spring towards him.

Bunter did not wait.

He slammed the door and bolted down the passage towards the stairs. He heard the study door re-open behind him, and knew that the incensed Bob Cherry was in pursuit. He dashed at the stairs, and ran down them two at a time, but he was too clumsy and too short-sighted to do that with safety. He missed his footing, and rolled, clutching wildly at the banisters and yelling.

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was standing in the hall, chatting with Mr. Capper, the Fourth Form-master. Mr. Quelch stepped quickly towards the stairs to see what the sudden noise was about. As he did so, Billy Bunter came flying headlong down, and he crashed right into the Form-master with a most terrific crash.

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"Groo!" gasped Bunter.

Mr. Quelch flew backwards, and fell upon the floor, and Bunter rolled over him, and rested on his chest.

"Oh! Help!" groaned Mr. Quelch. "Is—is it an earthquake? What can have happened? Something hurtled upon me from above—"

"Ow! Ow! Ow!"

"Bunter! Bless my soul! Get away immediately!"

"Ow! Ow!"

Mr. Capper grasped Billy Bunter by the collar and dragged him off—no very easy task, for Bunter was by no means a light-weight. Mr. Quelch sat up, gasping, and then staggered to his feet.

"Bunter!" he gasped. "Bunter! How—how dare you, sir—how dare you?"

"Ow! I—I fell downstairs, sir!" panted Bunter. "Yow! You don't think I did it on purpose, do you? Ow—ow!"

Mr. Quelch did not reply. He walked away to his study, looking quite pale. It was no joke to have Billy Bunter's weight tumble upon him down the stairs. The fat junior crawled away groaning. He was not nearly so much hurt as Mr. Quelch was; but Billy Bunter always made the greatest possible capital out of any little injury.

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THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Not Quite a Success!

"YOU fellows heard?"

Bulstrode of the Remove asked the question, as he came into the junior Common-room that evening.

"News?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Yes, about Quelch."

"Has he recovered from having a porpoise fall on him?" asked Ogilvy, with a grin.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bulstrode shook his head.

"That's just what he hasn't done," he said. "He's seedy. I don't know whether it's through Bunter bumping on him, but I expect it is. He's seedy, and he's going to leave Greyfriars for a few days. I just had it from Wingate, who had it from Quelch himself."

The Removees were interested at once. They were sorry Mr. Quelch was not well, and they were very keen to know who was to take charge of them in the Form-master's absence. The Remove had the reputation of being the most unruly and reckless Form at Greyfriars, and the Head would hardly think of putting them under a prefect, even for a few days. Even Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, would hardly have been equal to the task of managing the Remove for long.

And the Remove well remembered that upon a previous occasion, when Mr. Quelch had been away, they had had a temporary master, and there had been terrific ructions. The new master had been to blame, of course—there wasn't a fellow in the Remove who doubted it. And they could not help wondering whether they were to have some experience of this sort over again.

"I suppose we shall have a giddy temporary master," said Nugent. "I hope he will be better than that crank we had before."

"I don't know," said Bulstrode. "I only know that Quelch is going. He's leaving in the morning. I suppose there'll be a new master."

The Remove were soon enlightened on that point. They learned that evening that a new master was coming to take charge of the Lower Fourth, so long as Mr. Quelch's absence should last, and that he would arrive on the morrow afternoon, which happened to be Wednesday, a half-holiday at Greyfriars.

"Name's Roper—Grahame Roper," said Bob Cherry, in the dormitory. "I wonder what he will be like? If he turns out to be a rotter, we shall have to bump Bunter for falling on Quelch, and making him ill."

"Oh, really, Cherry?"

"Let's bump Bunter, anyway," suggested Tom Brown.

Billy Bunter bolted into bed like a rabbit into a hole. Wingate of the Sixth came in to see lights out, and he frowned a little at the juniors.

"None of your larks, you young rascals," he said. "Your Form-master is seedy enough to make him, too, having charge of the Remove."

"Why, we've been as good as gold!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, indignantly. "All excepting Bolsover, and he's agreed not to go out poaching any more of a night."

"Oh, shut up, hang you!" said Bolsover.

Wingate grinned.

"Well, no larks," he said, as he turned out the light, and left the dormitory.

Snoop sat up in bed.

"Jolly good chance to have a dormitory rag," he remarked. "Quelch won't feel inclined to give any trouble, if he's seedy."

Bob Cherry snorted.

"Oh, go to sleep!" he said. "You're a worm, Snoopy."

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"Look here, Bob Cherry—"

"I agree with Snoop," said Bolsover, who generally did agree with anybody who disagreed with Harry Wharton & Co. "Why shouldn't we take the opportunity of raiding the Upper Fourth? Temple, Dabney & Co. have been getting their ears up, too."

"There won't be any raiding to-night," said Harry Wharton quietly.

"Who says there won't?" demanded Bolsover.

"I do! It's only decent to play the game while Quelchy is off colour. It would be a cad's trick to bother him now."

"Preaching again!" sneered the bully of the Remove.

"Well, preaching's better than poaching, and skulking behind your young brother when you get into a row," said Bob Cherry.

And there was a chuckle from the Removites. And Bolsover, not having any reply ready, snorted, and went to sleep.

The next morning Mr. Quelch was certainly looking a little seedy when he took the Remove in the Form-room. Harry Wharton & Co. were very much on their good behaviour, and as Harry Wharton & Co. generally gave the law to the Remove, the rest of the Form, for the most part, followed their example.

From the point of view of the Famous Four, it was cad-dish to bother their Form-master when he was ill, and the best fellows in the Form agreed with them. But Bolsover, and Vernon-Smith, and Snoop, and several other fellows of the same kidney were of a different opinion. They looked upon it as a good opportunity for a rag, and they meant to have the rag, if only to show the Famous Four that they would do as they liked. Bolsover, who was sitting next to Billy Bunter, nudged him while second lesson was in progress. Bunter blinked round at the bully of the Remove.

"Go it!" murmured Bolsover.

"Eh? Go what—and where?" asked Bunter.

"Let's have some giddy ventriloquism," said Bolsover, in a whisper. "Old Quelchy isn't up to form this morning, and it will be all serene for you."

"I got licked the last time!" objected Bunter.

"Oh, rot! Quelchy can't handle up this morning!" said Bolsover. "Didn't you see him leaning on his desk just now, white as impot. paper. If we rag him now, he'll chuck us over to a prefect, and we can have a giddy morning!"

"Begad," murmured Lord Mauleverer, who was on the other side of Bolsover. "You are an awful cad, you know! Let Quelchy alone!"

"Mind your own bizney!" snapped Bolsover.

"But, begad, you know—"

"Shut up!"

Billy Bunter turned it over in his mind. Ventriloquism in the Form-room had not been what he called a howling success so far. Mr. Quelch had discovered his little joke the last time he tried it, and Bunter had felt the weight of his hand, and he didn't want to repeat that painful experience. At the same time, he was always eager to show off his wonderful powers to the Remove.

"I'll make it jam-tarts after lessons," whispered the tempter.

Bunter's fat face brightened up.

"How many?" he murmured.

"Three."

"Twopenny ones?"

Bolsover grinned.

"Yes, if you like."

"Good, then! After all, Quelchy is a beast, and we ought to make him sit up!" said Billy Bunter. "I don't see why Wharton should dictate to us, even if he is captain of the Form!"

"Quite so!" said Bolsover. "Go ahead!"

Billy Bunter watched his opportunity, and gave the little grunt which always meant that he was just going to begin. Nugent was standing up construing, and Mr. Quelch was listening to him with a somewhat absent expression. Suddenly, and apparently from the back of the Form-room, there came a low squeal.

Nugent stopped, in astonishment, and Mr. Quelch looked round sharply.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "There is an animal in the room!"

Squeal!

Mr. Quelch frowned.

"Where is that animal? Which of you boys has dared to bring a pig into the Form-room? This is outrageous!"

Sque-e-e-e-e-e!

Mr. Quelch swung round. The sound appeared to come from under his own desk. He caught up a cane, and bent down to look under the desk. There was nothing there, and Mr. Quelch rose again, looking very puzzled.

"Can any of you boys see where that animal is?" he asked.

There was an irrepressible chuckle in the Remove. Most of the Remove guessed at once what was in the wind. Perhaps the chuckle enlightened Mr. Quelch. He might be seedy, but he had a good memory, and he was very, very

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NEXT
TUESDAY:

"FRANK NUGENT'S GREAT WHEEZE!"

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ONE
PENNY.

keen. His sharp eyes turned upon the amateur ventriloquist of the Remove, and he saw Bunter's lips moving.

"Bunter!" he rapped out.

Billy Bunter jumped.

"Oh! Yes, sir?"

"Did you make that sound?"

"No, sir! What sound, sir? Certainly not, sir!"

"I am aware," said Mr. Quelch, witheringly, "that you have some skill as a ventriloquist, Bunter. I have told you before that the Form-room is no place for its exercise. Stand out here, Bunter!"

"Oh! If—if you please, sir—"

"Come here at once!"

"It—it was only a joke, sir!" stammered Bunter, in dismay. "I—I only did it to oblige Bolsover, sir—I—I mean—"

"Oh, you rotten little sneak!" murmured Bolsover, snapping his teeth.

Mr. Quelch fixed an icy look on Bolsover.

"So you induced Bunter to interrupt lessons in this ridiculous way, Bolsover?" he exclaimed.

"I, sir! Certainly not, sir!"

"Oh, really, Bolsover, you know you said you'd stand three jam-tarts after lessons—twopenny ones, too—"

"Shut up, you fat sneak!" said Bolsover, in a furious whisper.

"I'm not going to shut up!" replied Bunter loudly.

"You're not going to put it on me, the same as you put that poaching business on your young brother, I—"

"Both of you stand out here," said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, really, sir! As it was Bolsover's fault, I—I consider—"

"Come here at once, both of you!"

The two juniors reluctantly came out before the Form. Mr. Quelch grasped his cane, and told Bunter to hold out his hand. Billy Bunter received a cut across his fat palm that made him simply wriggle, and he gave a yell that woke every echo in the Form-room.

"Stop that ridiculous noise, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch angrily. "and go back to your place!"

Bunter obeyed with great promptness. Then the Remove-master turned to the sullen Bolsover.

"Hold out your hand, Bolsover!" he said. "You are worse than Bunter, and I shall give you four strokes. I hope it will be a lesson to you."

And Bolsover took the four, two on each hand, and he squeezed his hands desperately under his arms as he went back to his seat. Mr. Quelch had a heavy hand with the cane when he was angry. The Remove bully sat with a face like thunder for the rest of the morning—and there was no more ventriloquism in the Form-room. And when classes were dismissed Billy Bunter prudently put as much distance as possible between himself and the bully of the Remove. He did not ask Bolsover for the jam-tarts.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. A Startling Discovery.

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"
"What is it, Bob? What are you exploding like a giddy cracker for?" asked Harry Wharton, raising himself on his elbow in the deep, rich grass.

"The Moocher!"

"My hat!"

The Famous Four had been playing cricket that afternoon, a single-innings match with the Upper Fourth. They had had the satisfaction of beating Temple's team quite hollow; the Remove having batted first, and declared when they had a hundred runs to their credit, and then dismissed the Upper Fourth for a total of forty-five. The Form match had thus ended much earlier than they had expected, and the famous Co. of the Greyfriars Remove had gone out for a stroll in the woods for the rest of the pleasant summer afternoon.

They were resting in a deep glade in Friardale Wood, under the shade of the big trees, with birds twittering in the thickets round them. Bob Cherry had brought a pocketful of nuts out with him, and the juniors had cracked them and disposed of them, and then they lay in the grass chatting on the subject of the new master who was expected at Greyfriars. It meant very much to them whether Mr. Roper turned out well or ill, and it was a subject of great interest to the Removites. Bob Cherry's sudden ejaculation interrupted the discussion.

The four juniors glanced in the direction of Bob's pointing finger. Through a slight opening in the thicket they could see a thick-set, ragged form, with a bronzed face and a frowsy head surmounted by a ragged cap. The tramp was no stranger to their eyes. They had seen him before, and their eyes gleamed at the sight of him.

"The Moocher!" muttered Nugent.

"The brute who came round here trying to scare Bolsover minor into giving him money," said Johnny Bull. "Let's bump him. We bumped him before."

"Not a bad idea," said Harry Wharton. "I felt pretty certain that the rascal hadn't gone. If he's after young Billy again, we'll bump him hard. But—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" murmured Bob Cherry, in suppressed tones. "There's another of 'em!"

The Moocher had stopped in full view of the juniors through an opening in the thicket, though at a considerable distance off in the wood. He did not see the boys, who were almost hidden by the long, thick grass they were lying in, and he did not glance in their direction. The ruffian evidently was quite unaware that there were observers near him in the deep, silent wood.

Another man had come into sight—a man of somewhat slight figure with a cold, hard face and greenish eyes. He was well dressed, and extremely neat in appearance, and he carried a silver-headed umbrella in his well-gloved hand. The juniors could not help staring in amazement at the sight of a well-dressed gentleman in company with the ragged, ruffianly tramp.

"Who the dickens can that be?" murmured Bob Cherry, in amazement. "What is a fellow like that doing in company with the Moocher?"

"Perhaps a giddy missionary trying to convert him!" hazarded Nugent.

"He doesn't look it!"

There was a murmur of voices in the thickets. The two men had moved on a few paces, and now the thick bushes hid them from sight. But the murmur of their voices came to the ears of the juniors, though the words could not be distinguished.

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged puzzled looks. It seemed to them as if this were a secret meeting in the wood, which they were surprising by sheer chance. The voice of the Moocher, raised a little, came more clearly to their ears.

"It's a good lay, and I'm on it, you bet!"

"My only hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "What does that mean, I wonder? I don't half like lying here and hearing them! They're coming nearer, too!"

Harry Wharton nodded. The two men were walking slowly through the wood as they talked, and a smell of tobacco came to the juniors' nostrils. The two would pass very near them, and perhaps come right upon them, and their voices were growing more audible. The Moocher was a ruffian and a rascal—they knew that, but they had no desire to play the part of eavesdroppers.

"Give 'em a yell," suggested Johnny Bull.

"Good egg!"

The other man's voice could be heard now, low and clear.

"I shall see you again; you know where to wait, and—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry's stentorian voice rang through the wood, awaking a thousand echoes among the trees, and startling the birds from the branches overhead.

There was a sudden sharp exclamation from behind the bushes.

The voices died away.

"They'll come along and see who it is," chuckled Bob Cherry.

But Bob was mistaken.

There was a rustle in the wood, a sound of retreating footsteps, and then silence. The Moocher and his companion were gone.

"They've bunked!" said Johnny Bull.

Bob Cherry rose to his feet, and stretched himself, and yawned.

"Time we were gone, too," he remarked. "I'm getting hungry, and we've got to take in some tommy for tea. We'll go through the village, and get it at Uncle Clegg's. I wonder what those two bounders were confabbing about?"

"Well, it's no business of ours," said Harry Wharton, "but if that ruffian is after young Billy, he will get it in the neck, if we find him mooching round Greyfriars. We told him what to expect if he came here again."

"Yes, rather."

The juniors strolled at an easy pace through the wood. They kept their eyes open for the Moocher and his gentlemanly companion, but they saw nothing of either of them. They came out into the road above the village, and stopped at Uncle Clegg's little shop in the old High Street of Friar-dale, and made their purchases there. With two or three little packets in their hands, the chums of the Remove sauntered back to Greyfriars.

The sun was setting behind the Black Pike, and shadows darkening on the long white road as they reached the gates of the school. Gosling, the school porter, had just come out to close the gates. Gosling was often late in many matters,

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but he was never late in closing the school gates. Perhaps he was pleased whenever some unfortunate junior was shut out, and had to be reported to the Head for being out after locking-up.

Gosling grunted as the Famous Four came in, and the juniors chuckled.

"Not late, are we?" said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "Sorry to spoil sport for you, Gossy, old man! Horrid to have nothing to report, isn't it?"

Gosling grunted again.

"Wot I says is this 'ere," he growled. "All boys oughter be drowned at birth, I says! That's wot I says! And Master Wharton is to report 'isself, too."

"What for?" demanded Harry indignantly. "I'm not late!"

Gosling grinned stolidly.

"You're to report yourself to the new Form-master, because you're 'ead boy of the Remove," he explained.

"Oh, you ass!" said Wharton laughing. "That's all right. The new Form-master has come, then, Gossy?"

"He 'ave," said Gosling.

"What's he like?"

Gosling sniffed.

"I dunno—never took no notice, I got my own business to attend to—and there's enough of it, what with being worried by a set of dratted boys, and 'aving tin cans tied to my dog's tail, and sich. Wot I says is this 'ere—"

The chums of the Remove did not wait to hear what the surly porter had to say. They walked over to the School House in the gathering dusk.

"Tell us what's he like, when you come back," said Nugent, as Wharton left them in the passage to go to the new Form-master's study. "We'll get tea ready while you're gone."

"Righto!"

Harry Wharton went down the passage to the door of the study that had belonged to Mr. Quelch. Mr. Quelch had departed soon after morning lessons were over that day, and his quarters had been left for the new-comer. Harry Wharton tapped at the door, and a sharp, clear voice called out:

"Come in!"

The junior gave a start. Where had he heard that voice before? It seemed to him that those keen, metallic tones were ringing in his ears—that he had very lately heard them somewhere. He obeyed the injunction, and as he opened the study door and entered he knew.

The gas was lighted in the study, and a man was seated at Mr. Quelch's table, in Mr. Quelch's chair. It was the new master of the Remove. And as Harry Wharton's glance fell upon the cold, hard, clear-cut face, he gave a violent start. For the new Remove-master of Greyfriars was the man he had seen with the Moocher in the depths of Friar-dale Wood!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Roper Explains.

HARRY WHARTON stopped dead in the study, his eyes growing wide and startled. It was not polite to stare so at his new Form-master, but he simply could not help it. The amazing discovery had taken him quite aback. He had wondered what a well-dressed gentleman could be talking in the wood with a ruffian like the Moocher. But to find that the Moocher's strange companion was no other than the new Remove-master of Greyfriars was a staggering discovery.

Mr. Roper looked at him with sharp, steely eyes that seemed to have changing hues of grey and green in them.

The boy's amazement could not escape his notice; indeed, Mr. Roper looked like a gentleman who allowed very little to escape his notice. The grey-green eyes seemed to take in everything at a single sharp and searching glance.

Wharton realised that the new master's eyes were upon him, keenly, suspiciously, questioningly, and he flushed red as he realised it.

"Well," said Mr. Roper, rapping out the words in the sharp, metallic tones Wharton was learning to know well—"well, do you take me for a ghost, boy?"

"N-n-no, sir!" stammered Wharton.

"Then why are you staring at me in this way?"

"I—I—I'm sorry, sir—"

"Who are you?" asked Mr. Roper abruptly. "I gave orders for the head boy of my Form to be sent here! Are you he?"

"Yes, sir, Harry Wharton."

"Very good!" Mr. Roper rose to his feet. "And now, Harry Wharton, kindly explain what there is about me to cause you so much surprise?"

"S-s-surprise, sir!" exclaimed Wharton lamely.

"Yes."

"I—I—I— You—"

"That is not very lucid!" said Mr. Roper, with a glitter



Harry Wharton stopped dead in the study, his eyes growing wide and startled, as he saw the cold, hard, clear-cut face of the man. For the new Remove-master of Greyfriars was the man the junior had seen with the "Moocher" in the depths of Friardale Wood! (See Chapter 5.)

in his eyes. "I do not like being stared at as if I were a raree-show! It is not respectful, Wharton!"

"I—I didn't mean to be disrespectful, sir!"

"Then kindly explain the cause of your surprise!" Mr. Roper seemed to be strangely persistent upon that point. "I am a stranger to this school, and you have never seen me before, to the best of my recollection. Certainly, I have never seen you!"

Wharton was silent.

"You may have seen me without my seeing you," said Mr. Roper. "If so, I am interested to know upon what occasion."

"Indeed, sir, I—I—"

"You have seen me in London?"

"No, sir."

Mr. Roper drew a deep breath.

"Very well! Have you seen me before? Answer my question!"

"Yes, sir!" said Wharton.

He had not intended to tell Mr. Roper of the incident in the wood, but since the question was put to him directly, he had no choice in the matter.

"Where, and when?" demanded Mr. Roper.

"To-day, sir—in the wood!"

Mr. Roper gave a start.

"In the wood! You—you saw me—"

"It was quite by chance, sir," said Harry. "We were resting there when you passed near us, and we saw you."

"Indeed! I did not see you. I think I remember strolling through the wood," said Mr. Roper reflectively. "I think someone spoke to me there. I came down by an early train to-day, and the countryside looked so fresh and sweet after the dust and noise of London that I could not resist taking a stroll before coming on to the school."

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"FRANK NUGENT'S GREAT WHEEZE!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.
Order Early.

Wharton nodded; he quite understood that, though he would hardly have supposed that Mr. Roper looked much like a man to be moved by the beauty of the countryside.

"Someone spoke to me in the wood," said Mr. Roper. "But I did not see any boys there. Was there anyone with you, Wharton?"

"Yes, sir—Nugent, and Bull, and Bob Cherry, of my Form."

"Very well! Was I alone when you saw me?"

Wharton coloured.

"No, sir."

"Ah! Then you must have seen me at the time I was accosted by a tramp," said Mr. Roper lightly. "I remember a very rough fellow came up to me in the wood, and asked for money. You may have seen him?"

"We saw him, sir!" said Wharton.

The few words he had heard in the wood had certainly not given him the impression that the Moocher had been asking Mr. Roper for money, but it was not for him to contradict his Form-master.

"I talked with the man a few minutes, perhaps longer," Mr. Roper remarked, in a reflective sort of way. "I tried to induce him to look for work instead of begging. It has always been one of my objects to attempt to do a little good by the wayside in this manner. I cannot say that the man seemed a promising subject, however. Perhaps you heard me talking to him, Wharton?"

It was cleverly done, but Wharton was no fool. He knew perfectly well that the Form-master was trying to pump him without appearing to do so, and he wondered why Mr. Roper could not be more frank. But Wharton had no idea of making any secret about the matter in any way.

"I only heard you say a few words, sir," he replied, "then

Bob Cherry shouted out, so as to let you know we could hear. We didn't want to listen."

Mr. Roper stared at him.

"That was very honourable of you," he said, after a pause.

"Well, we're not sneaks in the Remove, sir."

"So it was one of your companions whose voice I heard?" said Mr. Roper. "I remember it startled me considerably."

"Yes, sir."

"And what was it you heard me say?"

"Something about meeting the man again, sir. You said he knew where," said Harry Wharton.

Mr. Roper gave him a searching glance.

"That was all, Wharton?"

"That's all, sir."

"Indeed! You did not hear me say that I would endeavour to find him work on a neighbouring farm, if he was willing to begin?"

"No, sir."

"I promised him as much, and I trust I shall be able to induce him to take it up," said Mr. Roper. "I do not believe in charity, especially to able-bodied men. Did you hear the tramp say anything?"

"Yes, sir. He said something was a good lay."

"Nothing else?"

"No, sir."

Mr. Roper laughed lightly.

"I am glad of that," he said. "The man's language was not what I should choose boys to hear. He said it was a good lay—the work I promised him, you know—but I have my doubts as to whether he will stick to it. But we shall see. I have done a great deal of mission work among the poor in London, and I have been fairly successful, though this case is a rather hard one, I fear. But let us drop the subject now. I want to have a talk with you about the Form."

"Certainly, sir!"

Wharton was only too glad to drop the subject; for though there was no real reason to doubt what the new master had told him, and though he would never have dreamed of doubting the word of any other master at Greyfriars, he could not help receiving an impression of insincerity from Mr. Roper. He could not help feeling that the man had been keenly anxious to know how much he had heard in the wood, though he had concealed his anxiety under a light manner. And it was extremely uncomfortable for a frank and honourable lad to listen to statements which he only half-believed, when his respect for the speaker's position made it incumbent upon him to believe them wholly, or, at least, appear to do so.

Mr. Roper made the junior sit down, and plunged into a talk upon school matters, with a knowledge of the subject which soon showed Wharton that he had an experienced man to deal with. Whatever might be the connection between Mr. Roper and the Mocher, whether it was momentary and accidental, as he stated, or not, certainly Mr. Roper was a man who knew schools inside out and had a very clear idea of his duties as a Form-master.

He kept Wharton for a quarter of an hour, and then dismissed him with a few kindly words at parting, and the captain of the Remove quitted the study with strangely mixed feelings.

His chums were waiting for him in No. 1, and tea was ready.

"You've been a jolly long time," said Frank Nugent. "I've made the giddy toast, and the tea's been stewing for five minutes. Wire in!"

Wharton sat down at the table. His thoughtful expression did not escape the other fellows.

"What's the new bird like?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Like somebody you've seen before," said Harry.

Bob Cherry gave a whistle.

"Not like the crank master we had while Quelch was away before?" he exclaimed, in dismay.

Harry Wharton laughed and shook his head.

"No, Bob; nothing like that. You have seen him before; as a matter of fact, you were the first Greyfriars chap to see him."

Bob Cherry looked astonished.

"I don't quite catch on," he said. "Explain, you ass! What are you getting at?"

Wharton explained.

"He's the man we saw meet the Mocher in the wood."

"What!" yelled the three juniors together.

"It's so," said Harry.

"Great Scott!"

"You're not pulling our leg, you bounder?"

"Honour bright!"

"Well, my only summer bat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "If this doesn't beat the record! You are quite sure about it?"

"Yes, rather! He explained how it came about." And THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 222.

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Harry Wharton detailed Mr. Roper's explanation. The chums listened in silence.

"Rather queer for a Form-master to take the trouble to explain so much to a junior," said Nugent slowly.

"That struck me, too."

Nugent looked at Wharton sharply.

"You believe him?" he asked.

"Well"—Wharton hesitated—"I suppose so. I suppose we can't think that a Greyfriars Form-master has personal acquaintances among fellows like the Mocher. We must believe him; only it's jolly queer."

And the chums of the Remove concurred upon that point; it was decidedly "queer."

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Hard Lines!

HARRY WHARTON thought a good deal about the matter that evening. Mr. Roper had assured him that he had talked with the Mocher only for the purpose of trying to effect some improvement in the ruffian, and Wharton was bound to accept his statement. But whether Mr. Roper was trying to improve the Mocher or not, Wharton had no belief whatever that the Mocher meant to be improved. The ruffian was in the neighbourhood of Greyfriars again upon some mischief, Harry was quite certain of that. And whatever might be his connection with the new master, Wharton felt that it could not be doubted that the Mocher's visit to Greyfriars meant harm to Bolsover minor. And after his preparation was finished in No. 1 Study, the captain of the Remove went along to the Third Form-room to speak to Billy.

Preparation was over also in the Third Form-room, and the fags were filling in the time before bed with a game of leap-frog among the forms. Mr. Twigg, the Form-master, had left when prep was over, and all order had departed with him. Bolsover minor was not taking part in the game. He was sitting by the Form-room fire, with a book upon his knees, laboriously trying to drive into his memory the fact that although, in the noble Latin language, mensa, a table, became mensae, tables, in the plural, yet regnum, a kingdom, became regna, kingdoms, in the plural. Declensions were a horror to little Billy, though he was bravely grappling with them, and manfully facing the pitfalls of hic, haec, and hoc.

There was plenty of noise in the Third Form-room, which was, perhaps, not conducive to study. It was part of the fag nature to make a noise, and the Third Form of Greyfriars lived nobly up to the traditions of all Third Forms.

"Tuck in your tuppenny, Paget!"

"Now, come along, Tubb!"

"Buck up, Price!"

Bump! Jump! Bump!

Harry Wharton came over to little Billy, and tapped him on the shoulder. Bolsover minor looked up from his Latin principia.

"Ulle!" he said.

Wharton smiled. Billy had greater difficulties with the letter H than even with the Latin declensions. He had horrified Mr. Twigg with 'ic, 'aec, and 'oc in the Form-room, and he was very slowly learning that aspirates were a necessary part of pronunciation.

The Third Form grinned unreservedly over Billy's manner of speaking, but he was a general favourite in the Form, all the same. The lad who had been lost to his parents in his early childhood, discovered in a slum, and only lately reclaimed by his father, was an object of great interest to all Greyfriars, and almost every fellow in the school was willing to lend him a helping hand. Perhaps his brother, Bolsover major, was the most conspicuous exception. Bolsover major could never conceal his anger and shame at the unfortunate experiences of his younger brother, and he helped to make his minor's life at Greyfriars harder than it need have been.

At one time, certainly, Bolsover major had seemed to be coming round, and had been observed to treat his minor with some decency. But a visit from an old chum of Billy's from a London slum had changed all that. The juniors still grinned over the visit of Tadger to Greyfriars, and Bolsover major still scowled over it. And worse than the friendly visit of Tadger was the unfriendly visit of the Mocher, a ruffian who had known Billy in his unfortunate days in Angel Alley, and had threatened to come to the school and "show him up," as he called it, unless he handed over money. The chums of the Remove had come down very

ANSWERS

heavily upon the Moocher, but he had evidently not left the neighbourhood for good; the sight of him in Friardale Wood that afternoon proved that he did not intend to keep away.

"I want to speak to you, Billy," said Harry Wharton slowly.

"Go 'ead, Master 'Arry," said Billy.

"Have you heard anything from the Moocher lately?"

Bolsover minor's face changed.

"No, Master 'Arry."

"You haven't seen him?"

"No, Master 'Arry. I'm in 'opes he's bunked for good," said the fag anxiously. "You ain't seed 'im, ave you?"

Wharton nodded.

"Yes; he was in the wood this afternoon, Billy."

"Oh, crums!" said Billy, in dismay. "Why can't he let me alone?"

"We'll see that he does let you alone, Billy," said Harry Wharton quietly. "You had better keep within gates for a bit, as I suppose he will hang round the school looking for you. We'll look for him."

Bolsover minor looked worried.

"It's rotten!" he said. "Percy will cut up rough again if 'e 'ears that the Moocher 'as been round 'ere again. But I can't 'elp it, can I?"

"Of course you can't, Billy! I suppose there's no doubt that the Moocher has come back to look for you?" said Wharton slowly.

"I s'pose so, Master 'Arry. I don't see wot else 'e could want 'ere. 'E don't know anybody else at Greyfriars, so far as I knows on."

Wharton did not reply to that. It was quite probable that the Moocher knew somebody else—no other than Mr. Roper, the new master of the Remove. But the Remove captain did not mean to confide that to the fag.

"Well, I thought I'd tell you, Billy, so that you can keep a look-out. You'd better keep out of the way of the Moocher if you can. He's a dangerous brute, and you'd better leave it to us to tackle him."

Billy wrinkled his brows in worried thought.

"H I don't see 'im, Master 'Arry, 'e may come 'ere to see me."

"Let him! We'll frog's march him round the quad, if he does, and give him a high old time," said Wharton, with a gleam in his eyes.

"Percy would feel horrid about it."

"But you mustn't think of giving the man money, Billy. If he got money out of you, you would never get rid of him. It would be the most foolish thing you could possibly do," said Harry earnestly.

"I s'pose so, Master 'Arry."

"Sit tight, and it will be all right," said Harry Wharton, and with a kind nod he left the fag.

His chums were waiting for him in the junior common-room. Bob Cherry was playing chess with little Wun Lung, the Chinese junior. Wun Lung was grinning serenely every time Bob left his king in check without noticing it, which was about every fourth move. Nugent and Johnny Bull stood by the table giving Bob friendly advice, which was perhaps one of the reasons why he made so poor a show.

"There you are!" exclaimed Bob Cherry triumphantly as he moved a rook. "I don't think you'll get out of that, kid! Mate in two!"

"Kinee in checkee!" murmured the Chinese.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Oh, you can't play chess for toffee!" said Bolsover major, who was looking on. "That's about the tenth time. Why don't you move your bish?"

"Leaveee kinee in checkee to queeneee if moveee bisbee," murmured Wun Lung.

And there was a chuckle at Bolsover major's expense. Loder, the prefect, looked in at the door of the common-room unamiably.

"Bedtime, you young rotters! Buzz off!"

That was Loder's polite way of addressing the juniors.

"Oh, wait a minute!" said Bob Cherry. "I want to mate this blessed Chinese. I'll beat him hollow in ten seconds."

"Me no tinkee!"

"Buzz off, I tell you!" said Loder, raising his voice. "Take fifty lines, Cherry!"

Bob Cherry grunted, and rose from the table.

"I'll beat you to-morrow, Wun Lung. You are such a nice chap, Loder. Your people must be delighted when you go home for the holidays—I don't think!"

And Bob Cherry tramped off to bed with the Remove. Loder followed the juniors, with a scowl upon his face. He gave Billy Bunter a prod with his foot in the passage. He was in a hurry to get back to his study, where his chums Carne and Walker were waiting for him to finish a little game of nap.

"Get a move on!" he growled.

"Yow!" roared Billy Bunter. "Yowp!"

"Shut up that row!"

"Ow! I'm hurt! Yowp! Yaroooh!" roared Bunter.

"What are you kicking me for? Yah!" Loder took the fat junior by the back of the collar and ran THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 222.

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ONE
PENNY.

him along the passage. Mr. Roper came out of his study and looked at them in surprise.

"What is the trouble here?" he demanded sharply.

"Oh, it's always a trouble getting the Remove to their dormitory, sir," said the prefect quite untruthfully; "and when they get there, it's a trouble to keep them there. They will get out of the dorm. at all hours to play some jape or another."

Mr. Roper frowned darkly. Loder's last statement seemed to make a very serious impression upon him.

"While I am here they will not be allowed to do anything of the sort," he exclaimed. "You hear me, boys? Any junior who leaves the dormitory after lights out will be caned severely. I shall never be lenient with such an offence. I wish all of you to understand distinctly that discipline will be very strictly maintained while I am here. Go to bed at once. What is that boy's name, Loder?"

"Bunter, sir. He is one of the most troublesome boys in the Form."

"Oh, really, Loder—"

"Indeed! Bunter, step into my study!"

"Oh, really, sir—"

"Will you obey me?"

"Oh, dear!" murmured Billy Bunter, as he followed the Form-master into the study.

Mr. Roper took a cane from his table.

"Bunter, you have given a prefect trouble at bedtime. I shall cane you. You must learn discipline. Hold out your hand!"

"But I didn't, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I didn't! Ho—I—Oh—"

"May I speak, sir?" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Bunter wasn't giving any trouble. It's not fair of Loder to say so. He may have been slow, but Loder was bullying him for nothing, and—"

Wharton broke off. Mr. Roper's steely eyes were fixed upon him with a most unpleasant expression.

"I did not give you permission to speak, Wharton!"

"But, sir, Bunter wasn't to blame, and—"

"That is for me to decide. Hold out your hand, Bunter!"

And Billy Bunter yelped as he received a sharp cut upon his quivering palm. Mr. Roper pointed to the door with the cane.

"Now go to bed, and give no more trouble!" he said.

"And you, Wharton, had better learn that while speech is silver, silence is golden, or I may be under the necessity of caning you, too."

Wharton set his lips as he walked away. Billy Bunter squeezed his aching hand and groaned as he dragged himself upstairs. The Remove, looking decidedly glum, came into the dormitory. Their new Form-master was evidently a change for the worse after Mr. Quelch. Harry Wharton's eyes were glittering with anger. He had only done his duty in speaking up for Bunter. The Owl of the Remove was generally in the wrong, but on this occasion he was in the right, and it was the Form captain's duty to speak for him. Loder was grinning with malicious satisfaction. Mr. Roper was a Form-master after Loder's own heart.

"Tumble in!" said Loder. "You can see that you won't have so easy a time now as you had with Quelch. No more coddling for you young scoundrels. If you don't stop that groaning, Bunter, I'll give you something to groan for!"

Bunter stopped groaning. The Remove turned in sullenly enough, and Loder extinguished the lights and left them. After he was gone there was a buzz of voices in the Remove dormitory, and the voices had angry tones. The Remove criticism of the new Form-master was not friendly.

"Roper is a giddy rotter!" said Bob Cherry emphatically.

"And if he goes on as he's begun, there will be trouble in the family!"

"Yes, rather!"

"He doesn't seem to know that a Form captain is anybody special, does he?" said Bolsover sincerely. "How are the mighty fallen!"

"He, he, he!" chuckled Snoopy.

"Oh, shut up cackling, Snoopy!" said Bob Cherry crossly. "What do you want to imitate a cheap cracker for? I think Roper is a rotter!"

"Hear, hear!"

"And there will be trouble if he keeps on like this. Of course, it doesn't matter about Bunter being caned—"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"But he might cane some of us, and that would be serious."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll—I'll make him sit up to-morrow!" groaned Bunter. "He doesn't know anything about the ventriloquism, even if old Quelch does, and I'll make him squirm! Ow!"

And somewhat comforted by that idea, Billy Bunter groaned himself to sleep.

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"FRANK NUGENT'S GREAT WHEEZE!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.
Order Early.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The First Morning in the Form-room.

WHEN the Remove assembled in the Form-room the following morning, they gave their new Form-master very wary looks. They had fully realised that there was to be a change from the sway of Mr. Quelch. The cold, hard lines in Mr. Roper's face showed that he was a cold, hard man, and the shifty look in the green-grey eyes did not inspire confidence in him. But if the new Remove-master meant to rule them with a rod of iron, the Remove inwardly resolved that there would be trouble. They were very wary now, and ready for Mr. Roper, as Bob Cherry expressed it, to make a break.

They had already observed that the new Form-master had taken the trouble to make himself agreeable to the prefects. But perhaps he considered the juniors not worth the trouble of being agreeable to; and perhaps, too, his nature was naturally harsh, and he did not trouble himself to restrain it.

He was quite up to the work of the Form, and he was evidently an experienced man, so far as that was concerned; but it was not probable that his pupils had ever liked him.

Billy Bunter had a very business-like look as he sat in his place in the Form. Bunter intended to make Mr. Roper "squirm," as he expressed it, for the unjust punishment of the previous evening, and he was secure in the knowledge that the new master had no suspicion of his powers as a ventriloquist. And all the Removes, for once, were in sympathy with William George Bunter. They felt that Mr. Roper deserved to squirm, and they would have been only too pleased to see him squirm.

Mr. Roper had a very sharp, unpleasant way of speaking. And when he came near enough to the juniors to rap their knuckles with a pointer—a little trick he had—they made another discovery, and that was that Mr. Roper's breath was laden with the odour of liquor. Mr. Roper was evidently not a teetotaler, though he looked too keen and hard to be likely to fall very much under the influence of drink. But certainly he had been indulging in the cup that cheers since his arrival at Greyfriars, wherefrom the juniors deduced the fact that he had brought a bottle of whisky among his luggage, and that it was now in his study. And Lord Mauleverer, who made an involuntary motion of shrinking when he caught the spirit fumes, was instantly detected in doing so, and Mr. Roper caned him on the spot—for inattention to lessons, he said. And Lord Mauleverer sat glowering with indignation and disgust for a considerable time.

"There's going to be trouble in this Form!" Bob Cherry whispered to Harry Wharton.

And Wharton nodded assent.

It was just as well for him that he did not reply verbally, for Mr. Roper had ears of great keenness, and he swung round at once upon Bob Cherry, and pointed to him.

"You—what is your name?"

"Cherry, sir," said Bob, in some dismay.

"You were talking to the next boy."

"I—I—"

"Take fifty lines."

"Very well, sir."

"I shall keep order in this class, or know the reason why," said Mr. Roper.

"Rats!"

Mr. Roper jumped.

It was not Bob Cherry who replied "Rats!" That ancient and classic monosyllable came, or appeared to come, from behind Mr. Roper's own desk.

The Form-master swung round, white with anger.

"Who was that?" he exclaimed.

There was no reply. Mr. Roper grasped his pointer, and ran round behind the high desk. If he had discovered anybody there, that body would certainly have had a most unpleasant time. But the space behind the desk was quite vacant, save for the high chair. Mr. Roper paused in amazement.

"I—I certainly heard somebody speak," he said. "Some boy in this room made a most disrespectful remark."

There was silence. Mr. Roper's eyes glittered green as his glance swept over the silent Form.

"I order the boy who spoke to stand out!" he exclaimed.

Silence!

"Very well," said Mr. Roper, greatly incensed. "I shall—"

"Rats!"

He swung round again. The word was uttered by a voice he did not know, and he could have sworn that the speaker stood just at his elbow.

But there was no one there.

"Who was that?" shouted Mr. Roper, wondering whether his ears were playing him false, and thinking, with a chill of dismay of the "peg" he had taken before coming into the

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Form-room. Whisky plays strange tricks upon the nerves, and Mr. Roper was uneasy.

There was no reply from the Form. The juniors did not laugh. Mr. Roper looked as if he would fall upon the first who even smiled.

"I will find out this impertinent boy!" shouted the Form-master. "I will—"

"Rats!"

Mr. Roper dashed towards the high cupboard in the corner of the Form-room, where easels and rolled-up maps and other paraphernalia of the Form-room were kept. The voice had certainly seemed to proceed from the cupboard.

The master tore the door open, and glared into the cupboard, among the lumber stacked there, with eyes that glittered with fury.

"Come out!" he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors could not help it; they roared. Mr. Roper swung round towards the class, and instantly every face was quite grave again.

"Silence!" shouted Mr. Roper.

The Removes were silent enough now.

Mr. Roper turned to the cupboard again, and struck upon the stacked lumber there with his pointer, with a resounding crack.

"I order you to stand out!" he shrieked. "I know you are hidden there, and I will make an example of you. Come out at once."

"Rats!"

The Form-master seemed to breathe fury.

"Come out!" he shrieked.

"Yah!"

"You—you impertinent young villain! Come out instantly!"

"Rats!"

Mr. Roper raised his hand again, and struck upon the lumber with such terrific force that his pointer broke in two, and one half flew through the air. And as the sound of the heavy blow re-echoed through the Form-room, there came a wail from the recesses of the deep cupboard.

"Oh! Murder! You have killed me! Oh!"

A deep groan followed.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Mysterious Voice.

MR. ROPER stood glaring into the cupboard, as if transfixed.

From the interior, following the groan, came a gasping wail of anguish, and then silence.

"G-g-good heavens!" gasped the Form-master. "I—I— Come out at once!"

There was a low moan.

"I—I know you are pretending!" shrieked Mr. Roper. "I am quite aware that you are not really hurt! Stand forth!"

Moan!

"I order you to show yourself!"

Another faint moan.

Mr. Roper threw the remaining half of the pointer upon the floor, and dragged at the lumber in the Form-room cupboard with both hands. A large easel came whirling out, and fell with a crash on the floor. Then two or three huge rolled maps came out, and clouds of dust with them. There was a crash in the cupboard, as several heavy articles, dislodged by Mr. Roper's violence, fell about. There was a fresh groan of agony.

"Ow! Help!"

Mr. Roper started back.

His face was very pale now, and there were big drops of perspiration upon his brow.

He could have no doubt that the individual who had "cheeked" him was hidden in the cupboard, and if he was buried under that piling lumber, he was certainly hurt, and in great danger of suffocation.

The Form-master was dismayed. His temper had carried him too far, and if the boy was seriously hurt, there would be trouble to follow.

"Get out at once, I command you!" muttered Mr. Roper.

Moan!

"I know you are shamming—"

Moan!

"I—I will punish you severely for this, whoever you are!" said Mr. Roper. He swung round towards the grinning Remove.

"Boys, is this boy here a member of this Form?"

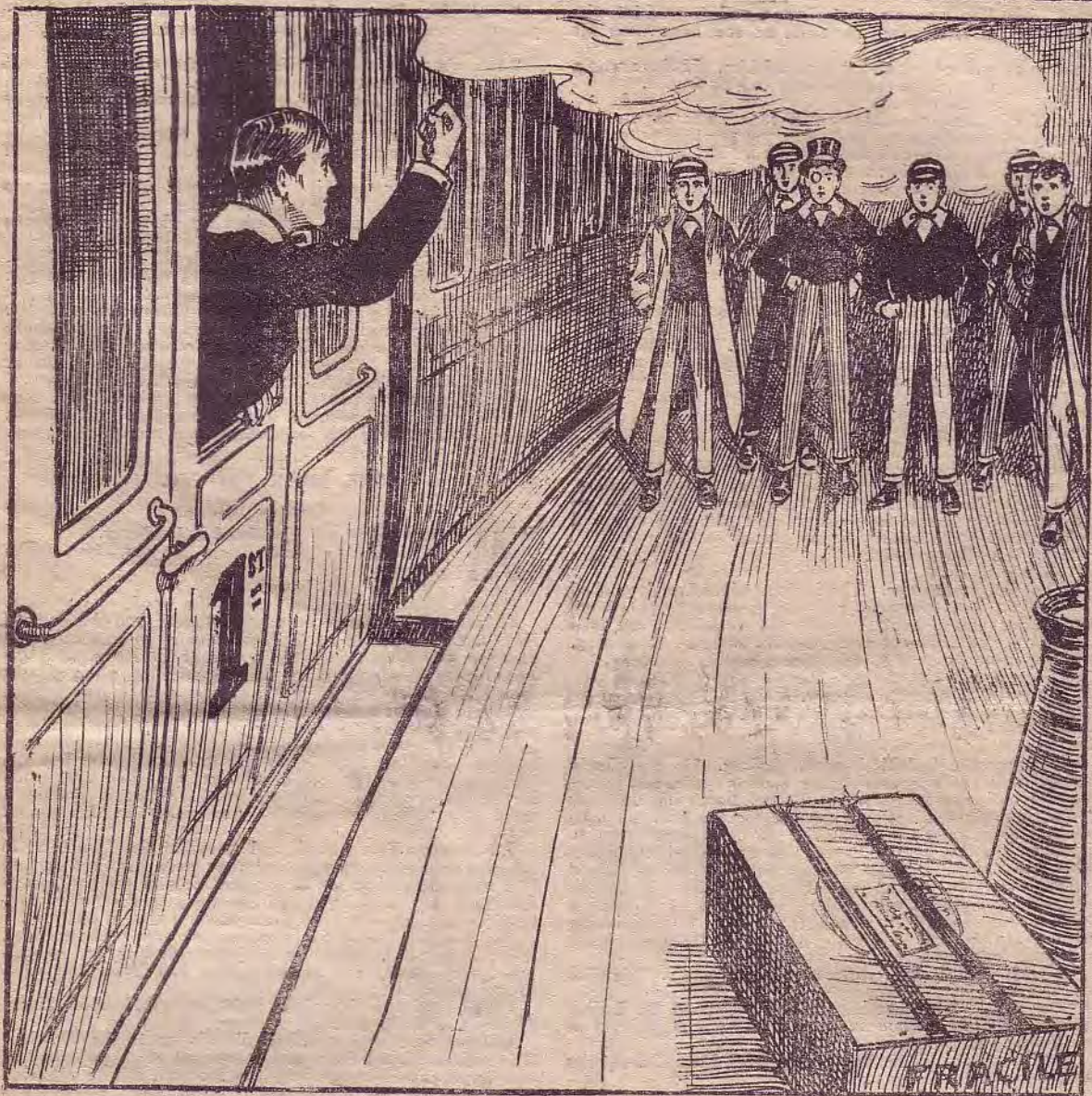
"All the Remove are here, sir," said Harry Wharton.

"Then it is not a Remove boy who is in this cupboard?"

"I am sure there isn't a Remove chap there, sir."

"Quite sure, sir," said Ogilvy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"



The train gathered speed as it glided out of the station. Levison picked himself up off the floor of the carriage dusty, breathless, and furious. He turned a livid face upon the crowd of juniors who had expelled him from St. Jim's. "I'll make you pay for this!" he shrieked, shaking his fist. (The above incident will be found in the splendid, long, complete tale of Tom Merry & Co., at St. Jim's, entitled, "THE SCHOOL-BOY MUTINEERS!" by Martin Clifford, which is contained in our popular companion paper

"The Gem" Library. Out on Thursday. Price One Penny.)

"Silence! This is not a laughing matter! The boy who has hidden himself here appears to be hurt—entirely by his own fault, as you can see."

"Ahem!" murmured Bob Cherry.

A faint moan proceeded from the cupboard.

Mr. Roper proceeded to drag out the articles there, one after another, slinging them out recklessly into the Form-room.

In a few minutes he had the big cupboard almost clear—clear enough for him to scan the interior, and to ascertain that there was no one there.

His eyes almost started from his head as he scanned the recesses of the cupboard. Where was the boy whose agonised moans he had heard?

"Dear me!" said Mr. Roper, passing his hand across his brow, and leaving a smear there, for his hands were very dusty from his late occupation. "I—I do not understand this! What has become of the boy?"

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The Form-master's appearance, with the smear of black dust across his forehead, was queer enough, and there was a chuckle in the Form.

"Is there—is there a secret opening in this cupboard?" exclaimed Mr. Roper. "Can any of you boys enlighten me?"

"I don't know of one, sir," said Wharton.

"There are a lot of secret passages in the House, sir," said Bolsover. "Greyfriars is full of 'em. I never heard of one in this Form-room, though."

"That is the only way to account for it, however," said Mr. Roper, and his teeth came together with a sharp click. "This is a planned piece of impertinence, and the culprit shall suffer severely when I discover him. I will make an example of him!"

"Rats!"

The voice came, to all appearance, from the dark wainscoting that formed the back of the deep dusky cup-

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board. Mr. Roper gave a start of rage, and stepped into the cupboard, and felt over the wood at the back with his fingers.

But there was no opening to reward him. If there was a secret panel there, it escaped his eyes and his fingers.

"Yah! Go and eat coke!"

Mr. Roper simply writhed with rage. The moans had been a pretence—he knew that now; the practical joker had tried to frighten him—and had succeeded. Mr. Roper caught up the half of his pointer, and crashed it on the wood at the back of the floor-cupboard. There was a loud crash, but nothing more.

"I order you to come out!" said Mr. Roper hoarsely.

"Get your hair cut!"

"What!"

"Leave the whisky alone!"

The Remove roared. Mr. Roper seemed on the point of dancing with rage. Certainly the mysterious voice was no respecter of persons.

"I—I will break your neck!" yelled Mr. Roper, quite forgetting the kind of language that was expected of a Form-master. "I'll smash you! I'll—"

"Gammon!"

"W-w-what!"

"Why don't you sign the pledge?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" yelled Mr. Roper, and he turned so ferocious a look upon the Remove that the juniors ceased laughing. "The next boy who laughs will be caned. Wharton, go and request Dr. Locke to come here. I will have this wall broken down if the secret opening cannot be discovered!"

Harry Wharton grinned.

"Very well, sir."

He left the Form-room. The juniors grinned, and watched Mr. Roper. The new master of the Remove peered round the interior of the cupboard, and his restless fingers tried every corner of the woodwork. But if there was an opening, it still escaped him. And the voice went on cheerfully.

"Get your hair cut!"

"Silence!" shouted Mr. Roper.

"Try coffee in the morning—it's better than whisky!"

"Silence, I say!"

"Rats!"

Mr. Roper clenched his hands with fury. He was simply raging, when the Form-room door opened again, and Harry Wharton returned with the Head. Dr. Locke did not look any too well pleased. He had been taking the Sixth when he received Mr. Roper's message, and he had stepped over to the Remove-room, as Mr. Roper urgently wished to see him there, but he was not pleased, and he was still less pleased when he saw the excited face of the Form-master, and his crimson face smeared with dust.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the Head. "What is the matter, Mr. Roper? I trust you are not having trouble with your Form the very first morning?"

"I have been treated with utter disrespect, sir," howled Mr. Roper.

"Dear me! What has happened?" exclaimed Dr. Locke, gazing at the pile of lumber Mr. Roper had dragged out of the Form-room cupboard.

"Some boy, sir, hidden in that cupboard, has called out the most disrespectful things to me."

Dr. Locke frowned.

"Indeed! This is very serious! He shall certainly be severely punished. Who was it, Mr. Roper?"

"I cannot find him, sir. There is a secret opening of some sort in the cupboard, and he has gone out by that."

"Dear me!"

"I am sure of it, sir. While I have been standing here he has called out most impertinent things through this wainscoting."

"Are you sure? I am quite unaware of any opening existing there," said Dr. Locke, peering into the cupboard. "This is not a part of the original building, which certainly is honeycombed with passages. But this cupboard is quite modern, and I cannot imagine a workman leaving an opening. It is quite inconceivable."

"But I tell you the impertinent fellow has gone out that way!" shrieked Mr. Roper. "He could not pass out here without my seeing him."

"Ahem! You are sure he was there, Mr. Roper?" asked the Head, with a very curious look at the Form-master.

"Sure! I tell you I heard his voice! If you listen you will hear it, too—he is still there," shouted the new master.

"Very well; I will listen."

And the Head listened, but there came no sound from the cupboard. The mysterious voice was silent—quite silent. Mr. Roper gritted his teeth with rage. He could understand that this was intentional—that the impertinent unknown would not venture to play tricks in the presence of the Head of Greyfriars.

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"Well, Mr. Roper, I hear nothing," said the Head impatiently, after a pause of two or three minutes.

"He must be gone, sir."

"It is very—very odd," said Dr. Locke, and again he cast a very curious glance at the new master. "Very odd indeed, I must say. You are quite sure that it was not an effect of the imagination, Mr. Roper?"

"Sir, I am quite certain!" said Mr. Roper, looking quite dazed. "I—I do not understand it, unless the young rascal is gone."

"But what boy could it be, Mr. Roper? All the boys are in their class-rooms," said the Head drily.

"It is amazing, sir. But certainly there was someone there!"

"Well, I do not understand it, that is all," said the Head. "I may as well return to my duties. I certainly hope you will not be troubled in the same way again."

And the Head quitted the Remove Form-room abruptly. The juniors grinned at one another. There was no doubt that the Head considered Mr. Roper's conduct very peculiar indeed, and that he had no faith in the real existence of the mysterious voice which had so amazed the new master.

Mr. Roper cast a last glance into the cupboard, and then closed the door, and returned to the Removites. And he was very subdued during the remainder of the morning's lessons.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Ordered Off.

"MY only chapeau!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Well, ass?" said Frank Nugent, with polite inquiry.

"There's the bounder!"

The chums of the Remove were in the wood.

Afternoon lessons were over at Greyfriars, and the Famous Four had strolled out of the school gates instead of going down to the cricket-field with the rest of the Remove. They had a purpose in doing so. If the Mocher was in the vicinity of the school looking for Bolsover minor, they had a good chance of coming upon him—that was what they very much wanted to do. Each of the four juniors had taken with him a thick stick, and if they met the Mocher he was booked for a troublesome time, as Bob Cherry put it. And hardly had the Removites entered the woodland footpath when they came in sight of the ruffian, leaning against a tree and smoking a black pipe, with his hands in the pockets of his ragged trousers.

The Famous Four halted, and stared at the Mocher. It was the man right enough; but they were surprised to find him so easily, and to see him in full view of the path. The Mocher, they knew, had had trouble with the police, and they did not expect him to court public notice in this way.

The Mocher looked at them, and his low brow wrinkled in an angry scowl. He knew the juniors at once, and remembered very clearly the bumping they had given him on a former occasion.

"Well, it's the Mocher right enough," said Harry Wharton. "Come on!"

And the four juniors walked directly up to the Mocher. The ruffian did not make any movement to retreat; but he cast an anxious glance along the footpath in the direction of the road, as if he were expecting every minute to see someone come from the school.

The juniors did not doubt what that meant.

"You are waiting here for Bolsover minor, I suppose," said Harry Wharton abruptly.

The man scowled at him.

"I ain't!" he said.

"You are expecting somebody from the school," said Nugent. "You've been getting at that kid again and threatening him."

"I ain't," growled the Mocher.

"What are you doing here, then?" asked Johnny Bull.

"I ain't doin' no 'arm," said the Mocher sullenly. "You sheer off, and let a man alone. Can't a man smoke 'is pipe 'ere if he likes?"

"No; not when he comes here specially to wring money out of a kid by threatening him," said Harry Wharton. "That's what you've been doing."

"I ain't. That's nothin' now; I ain't 'ere about that kid," said the Mocher. "I tell yer it ain't got nothing to do with 'im."

"Then what are you here for? You're not doing any work."

The Mocher grinned; he could not help it. The idea of doing any work struck him as being humorous.

"Well, no; I ain't workin'," he conceded.

"Then what do you want here?"

"I wanted to be let alone," said the Mocher, with unusual peacefulness. "You jest mind yer own business, and don't

ask no questions, and I won't tell yer no lies. Jest you let an honest man alone!"

"I don't believe a word you say," said Harry Wharton decidedly. "You came down here before, and threatened Bolsover minor, and got money out of him. You got a good bumping, and the order of the boot; and you knew what to expect if you came back. Now, you're going to get it."

The Moocher slipped his filthy pipe into his pocket, and grasped his cudgel savagely. The four juniors were closing round him.

"If you touch one of us with that cudgel," said Wharton, "we'll make you sorry for it. If you want to get hurt, go ahead! Collar him!"

And the juniors rushed at the Moocher.

The ruffian, in spite of Wharton's warning, flung up his cudgel to strike, but Wharton caught the blow on his stick and turned it aside. The next instant he struck back, and the Moocher gave a wild howl as the stick cracked on the side of his head. He staggered against the tree, and the juniors piled on him and dragged him down. The Moocher went struggling to the earth, with four sturdy fellows scrambling over him.

"Got him!" roared Bob Cherry.

There was a sound of hurried footsteps on the path, and a sharp, angry voice rang out:

"Stop! Release that man at once!"

The juniors gasped in surprise. It was the voice of Mr. Roper, the new master of the Remove. Harry Wharton & Co. jumped up as if they had been electrified, leaving the ruffian gasping on the ground. They stared blankly at Mr. Roper, who was regarding them with eyes that gleamed with rage.

"How dare you!" shouted Mr. Roper. "What are you attacking that man for?"

The juniors were at a loss for words. The savage anger in the master's face took them quite aback. Even if they had been making an unprovoked assault upon a harmless tramp, such a savage look was uncalculated. And it was perfectly evident, even to one who did not know the circumstances, that the Moocher was not a harmless tramp, but a dangerous ruffian.

The Moocher staggered slowly to his feet. His head was singing from the crack of Wharton's stick, and his brutal face was purple with rage. He grasped his cudgel, and seemed about to hurl himself upon the juniors; but Mr. Roper made an angry gesture, and he drew back.

"How dare you, you young rascals!" exclaimed Mr. Roper. "You shall be punished for this."

"You don't understand, sir," said Harry Wharton. "We—"

"You attacked this man. He did not touch you. I saw it all as I turned into the footpath," exclaimed the Form-master.

"Yes, sir; but—"

"If I had not happened to pass, you would have ragged him, I suppose," the Form-master exclaimed. "A sheer example of schoolboy ruffianism. I—"

"We should have ragged him, certainly, sir," said Wharton. Mr. Roper's words had struck him strangely. Mr. Roper had said that he happened to pass. Yet it was only too clear that the Moocher had been waiting there for someone from the school. If it was not Bolsover minor that he was waiting for, was it Mr. Roper? And Mr. Roper had said that he happened to pass. Again it was borne in upon Harry Wharton's mind that the new master was insincere, to say the least of it.

"You admit it, you young ruffian?" said Mr. Roper.

"I wish you would let me explain, sir. This man isn't a stranger here; he has been here before," said Wharton.

Mr. Roper started violently.

"What! Do you know him?"

"We have seen him before, sir. Some time ago he got money out of a bag, by threatening him, and we bumped him for it, and told him we'd do it again if he ever came back. Now he's come back."

"Oh!" said Mr. Roper.

"He's a dangerous brute, sir," said Nugent. "He ought to be locked up."

Mr. Roper's anger seemed to die away. Perhaps he was realising the need of keeping up more careful appearances before the juniors.

"I am very much surprised at this," he said. "You have no right to take the law into your own hands like this, but certainly what you say is some excuse. What is this man's name?"

"He is called the Moocher, sir. I don't know his name."

"Oh, you are called the Moocher, are you, my man?" said Mr. Roper, turning to the ruffian. "Did you come into this district to see a boy belonging to Greyfriars School?"

The Moocher gave him a peculiar look.

"No, sir," he said; "I—I'm lookin' for work."

"I told you the other day," said Mr. Roper, "that I would try to find you work. If you choose to be honest and industrious, there is no reason at all why you should not get a good job in this neighbourhood. Many of the

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farmers round about here want extra hands in the summer. I will do my best for you, if you make an effort for yourself. My boys, you may leave this man to me. I have every hope of doing him some good. And I warn you that if you see him again you are not to interfere with him."

"But if he begins his old game, sir—"

"If you discover anything of the sort, you may report it to me, your Form-master," said Mr. Roper severely. "I forbid you to take any notice of this man in future. I hope to help him to get work. You may go."

"Very well, sir!"

The chums of the Remove walked down the path in silence, looking dissatisfied and angry. They turned into the wood to take a short cut to the school, and almost ran into Billy Bunter, who was creeping through the thickets as if he were practising for a Boy Scout. Bob Cherry grasped him by the collar, and shook him, and Bunter gasped.

"Ow! Oh, really, Cherry—"

"What are you up to, sneaking about like that?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Ow! I'm stalking Roper."

"What on earth for?" exclaimed Nugent.

"I'm going to let him hear mysterious voices in the wood, that's all," said Billy Bunter, setting his ruffled collar straight. "You can come and see the fun, if you like."

"You'd better let Roper alone now; he's ratty."

"Oh, rats!"

"You'll get a licking," said Johnny Bull.

"Oh, bosh!"

And Billy Bunter went on his way, creeping through the thickets with great caution. The chums of the Remove grinned as they went on towards the school. In spite of Billy Bunter's great caution, he was making a considerable rustling in the thickets; he was not born for a scout. The chances were that he would betray himself as soon as he got near the new Form-master, and he would probably feel the weight of Mr. Roper's walking-cane; but it was his own business, as Nugent remarked. The Famous Four looked for Bolsover minor as soon as they entered Greyfriars, and found him with Paget and Tubb in the Close. Bolsover minor looked merry enough, and certainly not as if he had any worry about the Moocher on his mind. Harry Wharton drew him aside from the other fags.

"Have you seen the Moocher yet?" he asked.

"No, Master 'Arry."

"Or heard from him?"

"No, Master 'Arry."

"Then you hadn't arranged to go out and meet him to-day?"

"No," said Bolsover minor, with a look of wonder. "Is he about 'ere, Master 'Arry?"

"Yes, we've seen him; but he said he wasn't after you," said Wharton. "It looks as if he was telling the truth. It's all right, kid."

And the Famous Four went into the School House. They were looking and feeling very puzzled. They were sure that the Moocher had been waiting in the footpath for someone to come from Greyfriars. Evidently, now, it was not Bolsover minor he had been waiting for. Mr. Roper had come—by chance, he had declared. Had the Form-master told an untruth? Was that an appointment between the ruffian from Angel Alley and the new master of the Remove? The juniors could not help thinking so. But what did it mean? If Mr. Roper had specially met the Moocher again with some idea of providing the man with work, why had he lied about it?

"There's something fishy in this!" said Bob Cherry at last emphatically.

Harry Wharton nodded assent.

"I don't like Roper, and I don't trust him," he said, in a low voice. "But—but what can it mean? What can the Form-master of a public school want with that awful outsider? It's a giddy mystery."

And the chums of the Remove had to admit that it was a mystery they could not fathom.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

No Luck for Bunter.

THE Moocher stood rubbing his aching head, and muttering savagely to himself, after the Greyfriars juniors had gone. Mr. Roper was regarding him with a look of mingled anger and uneasiness.

"You never told me about this!" he exclaimed abruptly.

"I did not know that you were known to any of the boys of Greyfriars."

The Moocher scowled sullenly.

"Wot does it matter?" he growled.

"It is dangerous, or it may be dangerous," said Mr. Roper.

"You should have told me."

"Well, you know it now," growled the Moocher.

"Those same boys saw you in the wood yesterday, when I met you there," said the Remove-master abruptly. The Moocher's fingers closed on his cudgel.

"I wish I had known!" he muttered.

"None of that, you fool!" said Mr. Roper sharply. "You will take care to give the boys a wide berth. You—"

He broke off abruptly.

There was a rustle in the thickets on the other side of the footpath, and it caught the Form-master's keen ear at once.

"There's someone there!" muttered the Moocher, alert too. "It's one of the whelps come back to spy on you, I reckon."

"I will soon see. Get into the wood. I don't want to be seen talking to you. Get out of sight now. I'll see you presently."

"Orright."

The Moocher disappeared among the trees. Mr. Roper took a tighter grasp upon the heavy cane he carried, and fixed his eyes upon the spot in the thickets whence the rustle proceeded.

That someone was there was quite certain; and it was certain, too, that that someone was approaching with great caution, and was unaware that he was betraying his approach. Mr. Roper stepped suddenly across the footpath, and plunged into the thicket, and came abruptly upon a fat junior. Billy Bunter was caught fairly in the act. He was upon his hands and knees, creeping stealthily towards the footpath. That he was only intending to play a ventriloquial trick the Form-master could not possibly guess, and there was some excuse for the conclusion he came to at once.

"Bunter!" he rasped out. "How dare you spy upon me?"

Billy Bunter remained petrified, as it were—still upon his hands and knees, but with his fat face looking up at the angry Form-master, his round eyes wide open with terror.

"Oh!" he gasped. "Oh, really, sir!"

"Get up!"

"I—I—I—" stammered Bunter.

"Get up!" roared Mr. Roper.

Bunter scrambled up, and stood sheepishly before the Form-master, dusty and red and breathless.

"Now," said Mr. Roper grimly, "what were you doing?"

"I—I was looking for a shilling I've dropped, sir," said Billy Bunter, jerking out the first lie that came into his mind—so obvious an untruth that it would hardly have imposed upon a child. Mr. Roper gritted his teeth.

"You were spying upon me!" he exclaimed.

Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles. He was the spy of the school, and never had any scruples about spying or listening, but in this case the charge was certainly unfounded. He had not been spying upon Mr. Roper—he had had no idea that there was anything to spy upon.

"Oh, sir!" he exclaimed. "I—I wouldn't think of such a thing, sir! I—I didn't know you were up to anything, sir. I—I never dreamed it for a moment, sir."

Mr. Roper bit his lips. Bunter's words plainly implied that if he didn't know before that Mr. Roper was "up" to anything, he knew it now.

"What were you doing here, then?" the Form-master demanded.

"Just taking a stroll, sir," stammered Bunter. "I didn't

watch you come out of the gates, and I never saw you turn into the footpath from the road, sir."

Mr. Roper grasped him by the collar with one hand and swung up his heavy cane with the other. Bunter wriggled painfully in his grasp.

"Oh, sir! I—I—I—"

"You followed me from the school," said Mr. Roper.

"Oh, sir! No, sir! I—I mean yes, sir! I—I was—was—was thinking of asking you to let me off my lines, sir! I—"

"You are lying, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, sir! Not at all, sir!"

"Tell me the truth before I thrash you," said Mr. Roper sternly. "Were you following me?"

"No, sir—yes, sir!" faltered the unhappy Bunter, blinking in agonised anxiety at the cane poised in the air over him.

"I—I wanted to speak to you, sir. I—I'm a very truthful chap, sir—I've often made myself quite unpopular by telling the truth so much, sir. I don't think I could tell a lie, sir!"

"What were you following me for?"

"I—I wanted to ask you to let me off my lines, sir—"

"The truth—quick!"

"I—I wanted you to excuse me lessons to-morrow morning, sir," stammered Bunter.

"Will you tell me the truth?" roared Mr. Roper.

"I—I wanted you to lend me five bob on a postal-order I'm expecting, sir!" gasped the unhappy Bunter, ready to make any explanation possible, and too terrified and confused to realise that the explanations did not tally with one another. "I'm expecting a postal-order from a titled relation of mine, sir—"

Whack!

The cane came down across the fat back of the Owl of the Remove, and Billy Bunter uttered a yell of anguish that rang through the wood.

Whack—whack!

"Yow! Yaroooooow!"

"I shall teach you not to spy and listen," said Mr. Roper. "I disapprove of that kind of thing very much. I think I shall succeed in teaching you, Bunter, that it is unsafe as well as mean to spy upon me."

Whack—whack—whack—whack!

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

Billy Bunter squirmed and wriggled and yelled in the grasp of the Form-master. But that grasp upon the back of his collar was like iron. Bunter almost suffocated himself in his efforts to escape, but he did not succeed. The grip did not relax for a moment, and the cane rose and fell till the fat junior's roars rang and echoed through the wood and across the road. Never in all his career had the Owl of the Remove experienced such a thrashing.

In his extremity the Owl of the Remove bethought himself of his ventriloquism—rather late. Suddenly, from the direction of the footpath, came a sharp voice—the voice of the Head of Greyfriars.

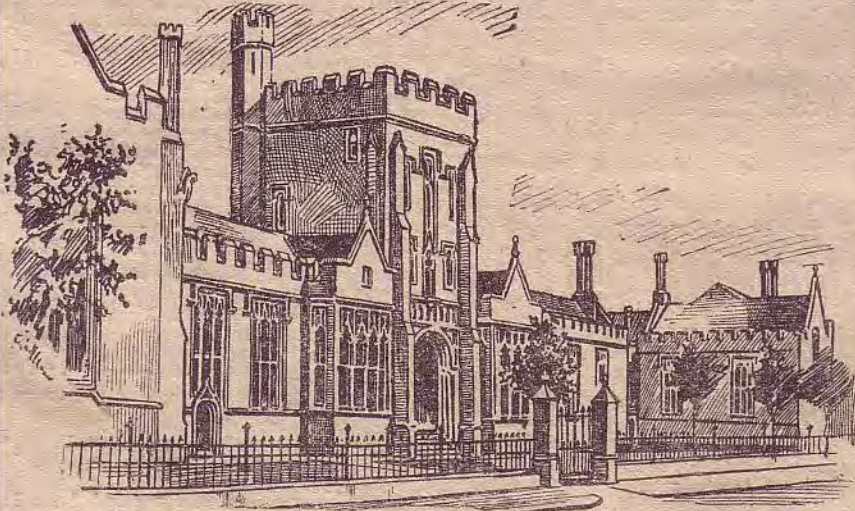
"Mr. Roper, what are you doing to that junior?"

The lashing cane suddenly stopped. Mr. Roper realised very clearly that such a savage thrashing as he was administering to Bunter would be viewed with great disapproval by Dr. Locke. He released Bunter, and, striving to compose his features, he stepped from the thicket into the footpath. Billy Bunter dropped upon the ground as the Form-master's hold

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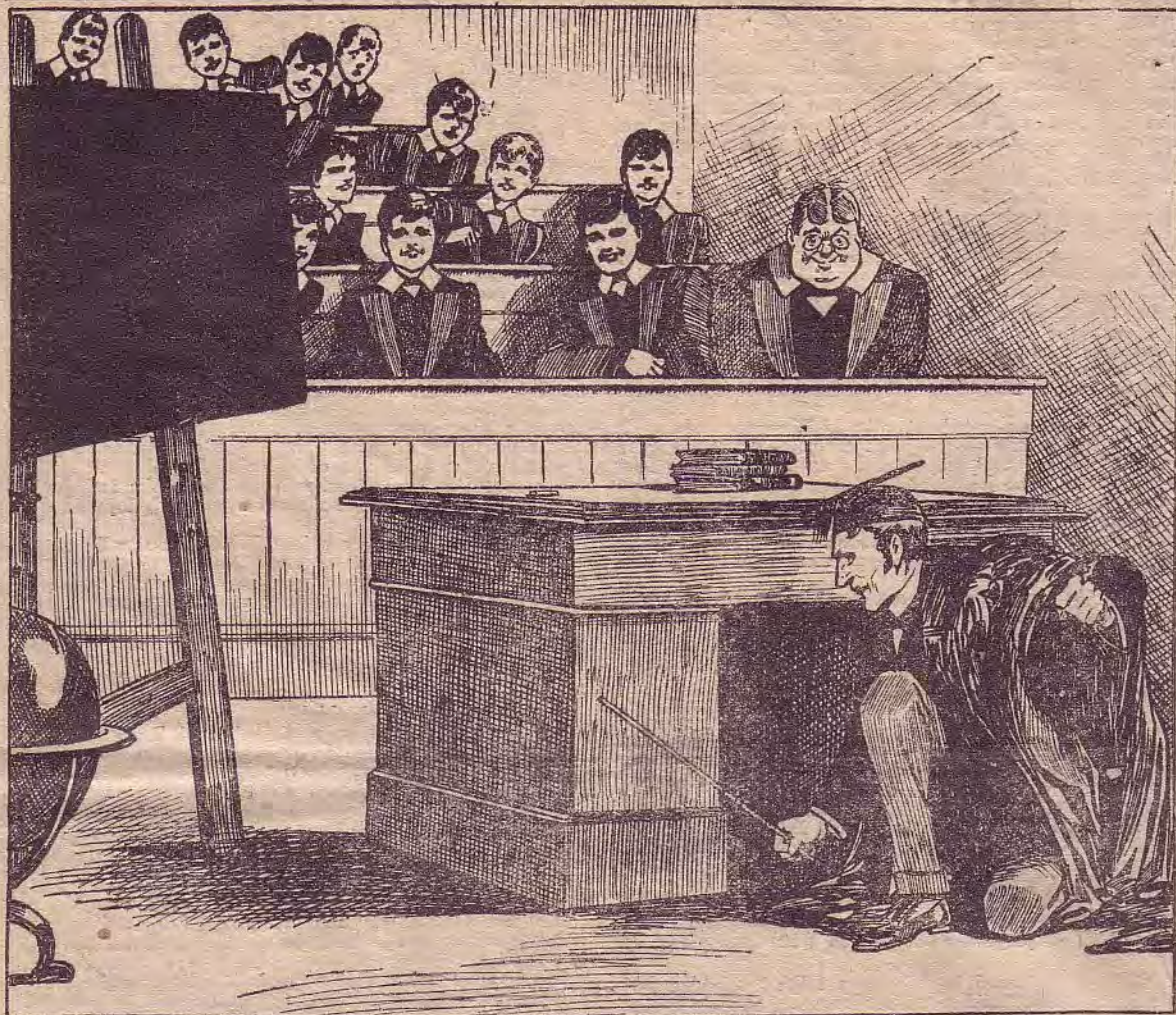
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"Where is that animal? Which of you boys dared to bring a pig into the Form-room? This is outrageous!" Mr. Quelch swung round. The sound appeared to come from under his own desk. He caught up a cane and bent down to look. There was an irrepressible chuckle in the Remove Form, for the juniors knew that the schoolboy ventriloquist was at work. (See Chapter 3.)

relaxed, but in a second he was upon his feet, and fleeing at top speed through the wood. He did not mean to give Mr. Roper any opportunity of recapturing him and continuing that terrific licking.

"Ahem!" said Mr. Roper, coughing apologetically as he emerged from the thicket into the footpath. "I was compelled to administer a somewhat severe correction to that junior, sir, because—because—"

Mr. Roper's voice trailed off in utter amazement, as he found that he was speaking to space. There was no one on the footpath excepting himself. The Head of Greyfriars was nowhere to be seen.

Mr. Roper gazed up and down the footpath in blank amazement, and with something like terror creeping into his eyes.

He had heard distinctly the voice of the doctor—and where was the doctor now? It was absurd to suppose that the reverend Head of Greyfriars was playing hide-and-seek with him, and had dodged into a thicket immediately after speaking. But if it was not so, what had become of him? Mr. Roper looked round the footpath, silent and vacant, for some minutes, his face growing paler. He remembered the mysterious voice in the Form-room, and felt an inward tremor. Was it a trick of the imagination? Had the secret drinking, which had caused him more injury than anyone could suspect, shattered his nerves to this extent?

There was a look of fear upon the Form-master's face as he walked away from the spot at last with hurried steps, as if he feared to see some spectral sight, or to hear the voice of a bodiless phantom.

"It must have been the imagination," he muttered. "It

must have been! I—I must let the bottle alone—until I am finished at Greyfriars, at all events! What a fool I have been! And yet—and yet—"

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

In the Stilly Night.

"I—I—I say, you fellows!"

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent were having tea in No. 1 Study when Billy Bunter rolled in and sank into the armchair. Nugent's hand dropped upon a ruler, but he released it again as he looked at Billy Bunter. The Owl of the Remove was not humbugging this time. He was really suffering for once. He sat in the armchair and groaned.

"What on earth's the matter?" asked Nugent.

"Ow! That beast Roper!"

"Did he catch you ventriloquising?" asked Wharton, with a grin.

"Ow! No! He jumped on me suddenly in the wood and accused me of spying on him!" groaned Bunter. "As if I would do such a thing!"

"Well, you generally do," said Wharton. "Roper seems to have tumbled to your character at once. Weren't you spying?"

"Ow! Oh, really, Wharton! Of course I wasn't. I didn't know he was up to anything!" And the fat junior groaned pathetically. "He was in an awful temper, and I only got off by imitating the Head's voice and calling the beast away."

Look here, you fellows, I'm hurt! He laid into me with his walking-stick! Ow!"

"Well, I warned you to keep off the grass," said Harry. "Roper is a dangerous customer to play tricks on."

"Ow! I'll make him squirm, all the same!" groaned Bunter. "The beast drinks! That's why he's so rotten bad-tempered. It takes some men like that, you know—spirits affect their liver, and they get ratty about nothing. I've had an awful licking. Ow! I've a jolly good mind to complain to the Head! Ow!"

Nugent chuckled.

"Well, you won't be able to explain to the Head what you were playing doggo for," he said. "You'd better grin and bear it. Have some of this cake, and shut up!"

"I've lost my appetite!" moaned Bunter. "You fellows don't seem to realise that I'm really ill! Ow!"

"Right-ho! We can finish the cake ourselves!"

"Oh, really, Nugent! I think perhaps I could eat a little cake," said Bunter, holding out a fat hand. "I say, you fellows, that fellow Roper's got a secret!"

He munched the cake, and appeared to derive some comfort therefrom. The chums of the Remove looked at him curiously.

"Oh, he's got a secret, has he?" said Nugent.

"Ow! Yes! This is jolly good cake—I'll have some more," said Bunter. "If he wasn't up to something fishy why should he be so jolly afraid of being spied on? I wasn't spying on the beast—I was only going to jape him. But he never thought of a jape; he jumped at once to the conclusion that I was spying. That shows there's something jolly fishy about him. He's got something on with that Moocher chap—"

"What do you know about the Moocher?" demanded Harry Wharton.

"Well, you chaps saw him meet Roper in Frindale Wood yesterday."

"How do you know?"

"Ahem! I'll have some more cake!" said Bunter, changing the subject hurriedly. But Harry Wharton was not to be put off.

"How do you know we saw them in the wood yesterday?" he exclaimed.

"This is jolly good cake—"

"Answer my question, you fat bounder!"

"I'd like some plum-cake, too," said Bunter, blinking at the table. "I'm jolly hungry, now I come to think of it. I suppose you fellows wouldn't like to make me some toast?"

"Quite right; we wouldn't!" agreed Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"How did you know about our seeing the Moocher with Mr. Roper in the wood yesterday?" roared Wharton, picking up a ruler.

"Oh, I—I happened to hear you fellows speaking last evening, that's all," said Bunter nervously. "I—I happened to be passing your study door, you see, and I happened to stoop down to tie my shoe-lace, and so I happened to—hear—"

"You'll happen to get a jolly good licking, if these things keep on happening to you!" growled Wharton. "The licking you've just got serves you jolly well right."

"I'll have some plum cake, please," said Bunter. "I say, you fellows, that fellow Roper is a bad egg. Fellows who drink secretly are all bad eggs. I don't approve of a Form-master who keeps a bottle of brandy in the desk in his study."

"Does Roper do that?"

"Ow! Yes. Did you hear me say I'd have some plum cake, Nugent?"

"How do you know Roper keeps a bottle of brandy in his study desk?" asked Wharton.

"I—I happened to look—"

"It's lucky for you that Roper didn't happen to catch you looking," said Nugent. "You are a spring beast, Billy!"

"I think the rotter ought to be shown up, and I'm jolly well going to show him up!" groaned Bunter. "What is he doing, chumming up with a fellow like that Moocher? It's a disgrace to the school. When a man takes to drink, he takes to lots of things. He may be a thief for all we know. Ow! Did you hear me say that I would have some of that plum cake, Frank Nugent?"

"Yes, I heard you," said Nugent calmly.

"Well, hand it over, then. Don't be mean—I'm ill."

"My dear chap, if you're ill, you don't want to eat more than two pounds of cake at once—it would make you iller."

"Upon the whole, I'm feeling very much better now."

Nugent laughed, and tossed the cake over to the Owl of the Remove.

"Take it, for goodness' sake, and dry up!" he said. "And if you'll take a word of advice, you'll let Roper alone in the future. Even if there is anything fishy about him, it's no business of yours."

future. Even if there is anything fishy about him, it's no business of yours."

"I'm going to show him up!" growled Bunter. "I'm not going to be licked for nothing. I'm going to give him some ventriloquism to-night, after he's gone to bed. I'll make him think the ghost of Greyfriars is after him. I'll take the rest of this cake away with me, if you don't mind, you fellows."

"Oh, we don't mind, so long as you go!" said Nugent cheerfully.

And the injured Falstaff of Greyfriars rolled out of the study, still munching cake, and groaning at intervals. The chums of the Remove remained in a thoughtful mood.

"There's something in what that fat bounder says," Harry Wharton remarked abruptly. "It's very queer that Roper should jump to the conclusion that he was being spied on. Why should he think that anybody would spy on him?"

"It's jolly queer. I wonder if the Head knows as much about Roper as we do?" Frank Nugent said reflectively.

"I'm jolly sure he doesn't, but it's not our business to tell him. I suppose we can't do better than mind our own business," Wharton remarked. And Nugent nodded assent.

Billy Bunter seemed to have recovered somewhat from his severe licking when the Remove went up to the dormitory that night. But he was in a very warlike mood towards the new master. The success of his ventriloquial efforts, when directed against Mr. Roper, made the fat junior feel that in that way, at all events, he could avenge his injuries with little risk to himself.

The Remove were very quiet when Loder saw lights out. Even the ill-natured prefect found nothing to complain of, and he left the dormitory without having a single excuse for giving anybody lines. The Removes were very much upon their good behaviour now. They did not want to have Mr. Roper in the dormitory with the cane he was only too willing to use.

"I say, Nugent," said Bunter, "will you stay awake and call me at twelve?"

"Ha, ha, ha! I don't think!"

"I'm afraid I shall go to sleep," said Bunter. "I'm rather a good sleeper—all fellows really fit, you know, sleep soundly. And I want to jape Roper very much. If one of you fellows will stay awake and call me—"

"Yes, I think I can see myself sitting up to call you at midnight!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Better go to sleep, and don't play the giddy goat."

"I'll call you if I wake up," said Bolsover.

"I'll stay awake," said Bunter with dignity. "I can stay awake if I choose."

And the Owl of the Remove propped himself up with pillows, to stay awake until the clock chimed out the hour of twelve.

The buzz of voices died away in the Remove dormitory, the juniors dropping off to sleep one by one.

Billy Bunter, with all his determination to keep awake, was one of the first to doze off. His unusual snore was very soon awaking the echoes of the dormitory.

If it had been left to Bunter, certainly the fat junior would not have stirred until the rising-bell clanged out in the morning. But as it happened, Bolsover awoke late in the night, and remembered his promise to Bunter. The Remove bully sat up in bed, and called:

"Bunter! Billy Bunter!"

Only Bunter's deep snore, and the deep breathing of the other juniors, replied. Bolsover raised his voice. Bolsover was very keen upon japing the Form-master, and he did not mean to spare Bunter, either.

"Bunter! Bunter! Bunter!"

Snore.

"Oh, shut up!" came a sleepy voice from Bob Cherry's bed. "Who's that kicking up a silly row? Let a chap sleep!"

"I'm calling Bunter!"

"Well, shut up!"

"Rats! Bunter! Bunter!"

Boom!

The sound of a deep stroke from the clock-tower came dully in. It was the first of the twelve. Midnight was striking.

"Bunter, you ass! Bunter!"

Snore.

"I believe you're awake, you fat bounder! You're jolly well going to get up, after giving me the trouble of calling you!" said Bolsover. "Bunter! Bunter!"

Snore-r-r-r-e!

Bolsover stepped out of bed quietly, and approached Bunter. He took a sudden grip upon the bedclothes, and dragged them off the bed with a single jerk. There was a roar from the Owl of the Remove. He was wide awake now, at all events.

"Oh! Yaroo! What's that! Oh!"

"Twelve o'clock!" said Bolsover cheerfully.
"Oh, really, Bolsover! On second thoughts, I—I'll leave that jape over till to-morrow! It's rather cold now, and I—I might catch a cold in the passage! Gimme my bedclothes!"
"Rot!" said Bolsover. "I've got out of bed to call you, and now you're going to get up! Out you come!"
"Oh! I say—I—I—Yaro-o-o-o-o!"

Bump!
Bolsover had grasped the fat junior, and he brought him out of bed, upon the floor, with a resounding concussion. Billy Bunter roared.

"You ass! Yow! You fathead! Yowp!"
"You'll have a prefect here if you make that blessed row!" growled Bulstrode from his bed.

"Ow!" grunted Bunter, scrambling to his feet. "Upon the whole, Bolsover, I'll leave it till to-morrow!"
Bolsover chuckled.

"Upon the whole, you won't do anything of the sort!" he replied. "You're going to do it to-night! I'm keen on it; and it was your own idea. Buck up and get your togs on! I'll come with you, if you like!"

"I think I'd rather—"
"It's not a question of what you'd rather, but what I'd rather!" said Bolsover coolly. "You'll get dressed in two minutes, or you'll get a licking!"

And Billy Bunter, groaning dismally, dressed himself in the darkness.

"I'll come with you," said Bolsover encouragingly. "For goodness' sake, stop that groaning! Buck up, or I shall rather you!"

"Oh, all right! Ow!"
And Bunter dressed himself, and rolled out of the dormitory with the bully of the Remove.

And several other fellows, curious to know what would happen, turned out, too, and waited at the open door of the Remove dormitory to hear what passed.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Three.

BOLSOVER and Billy Bunter halted outside Mr. Roper's door. The School House was very quiet and still. Everybody was, or should have been, in bed, and all Greyfriars was buried in slumber and silence. The passages were dark, and the two juniors had had to grope their way along with outstretched hands.

"Here's the door!" muttered Bolsover.

"A-a-all right!" murmured the Owl of the Remove. His teeth were beginning to chatter. The plan of scaring Mr. Roper in the middle of the night had seemed simply ripping to Billy Bunter when he planned it. But it did not seem quite so ripping now that the middle of the night had come.

Billy Bunter was, in fact, rather badly scared himself by this time. But there was no retreat for him. Bolsover had nerves of iron, and he did not mean to let the unfortunate ventriloquist escape.

"How are you going to do it?" whispered the Remove bully.

"I—I don't know!"

"You'd better be quick and think it out, then!" said Bolsover unpleasantly.

"I—I think that perhaps if we left it until to-morrow—" stammered Bunter.

"Do you want me to open Roper's door, and pitch you in head first, and then bolt?" asked Bolsover, in a tone of polite inquiry.

Bunter gasped at the bare idea. He could imagine what reception Mr. Roper would give him, if he were awakened in that manner.

"No—n-n-n-no!" he stammered.

"Then get to business!"

"I—I was thinking of opening the door softly, and—and making a noise come from under his bed!" murmured Bunter.

Bolsover chuckled quietly.

"Good egg! I wonder if the door's locked?"

The next second Bolsover had a startling proof that the door was not locked.

It opened.

As the two juniors stood there whispering outside the door it swung back, and the form of Mr. Roper appeared, and he stepped hurriedly out into the passage.

The Remove-master was fully dressed, even to a cap, and he had soft rubber shoes on, which accounted for the fact that the juniors had not heard him moving inside the room.

Bolsover and Bunter were, of course, utterly unprepared for the sudden appearance of the Form-master. Before they could make a movement he had walked right into them in the dark, and they reeled back from the shock. The Form-master was equally startled, and he gave a sharp cry, instantly suppressed.

"You fool! How did you get in, then?"

The next moment Mr. Roper realised that there were two figures before him, and that they were juniors.

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He clenched his hands hard, and his eyes seemed to blaze like emeralds in the dark, like some savage cat looking out of deep shadows.

"Who—who are you?" he gasped.

The two juniors, startled and terrified, made an attempt to run. Mr. Roper groped out at them savagely, and caught Bolsover by the collar and Bunter by the arm. His grasp was like the clutch of a vice, and it seemed almost to make the bones crack.

"You spies!" he hissed. "I—"

"Ow—yow!"

"Is that you, Bunter?"

"No!" gasped Bunter wildly. "It isn't me, sir—I mean it isn't Bunter! I'm—I'm Wingate of the Sixth, sir—Ow!"

"Who is the other?" asked Mr. Roper, in a hissing voice. "I'm Bolsover of the Remove," said the burly junior sullenly. "Leggo my collar! We ain't doing any harm!"

"N-n-not at all, sir!" spluttered Bunter. "D-d-don't shake me like that, sir. You might make my glasses fall off, and they might break—"

"What are you doing out of your dormitory at this hour?"

"And then I should expect you to pay for them, sir—"

"Why are you not in bed, Bolsover?"

"We heard a noise, sir," said Bolsover boldly. "We fancied it might be burglars, sir, so we came down to look."

Mr. Roper's face turned so white that even in the darkness Bolsover could see the wave of pallor sweep over it.

"Burglars!" muttered the Form-master, in an almost inaudible voice.

"Yes, sir," said Bolsover, with a grin, as he noted how that word seemed to take away all the Form-master's nerve.

"Burglars, sir! Did you hear anything, sir?"

"I? No! What do you mean?"

"Well, sir, as you're up and dressed, I thought—"

Mr. Roper started, and Bolsover heard his breath come in a gasp.

"Yes, yes!" muttered the master. "I— Now you speak of that is to say, I was very uneasy, and I could not sleep. It seems to me that I heard a noise in the quadrangle, and—and I rose to see what it was."

"Shall I call the Head, sir?" asked Bolsover, with a cool "cheek" that quite took Billy Bunter's breath away.

"No, no!" breathed Mr. Roper. "I suppose, after all, it was only you juniors I heard. Are you sure you heard a noise, Bolsover?"

"Quite sure, sir," said the Remove bully. He had, as a matter of fact, heard the branches of the old elms creaking in the night breeze from the sea, but he did not explain that little circumstance to Mr. Roper. "It was quite plain, sir."

"What—what noise was it?"

"A sort of creak, sir."

"Yes, I heard it, too," said Bunter. "I—I was frightfully alarmed, sir—and we—we came down to hunt for them, sir. There was an attempted burglary at Greyfriars once, sir—the villains were after the school silver. It's very valuable, sir, and it's kept in the safe in the Head's study, sir. I think, sir—"

"Hold your tongue!" snapped Mr. Roper.

"Oh, certainly, sir! I was going to say—"

"You have no right to leave your dormitory under any circumstances at this hour," said Mr. Roper, between his teeth. "If you hear a noise again and come down I shall cane you severely."

"But the house might be burgled, sir—"

"Nonsense! You will both come into my study to-morrow morning, and I shall cane you for alarming me in this manner. I think it is very probable that you did not hear a noise at all, and that this is some ridiculous jape. Stay! I shall cane you now. Come into my room—"

Fortunately for the Greyfriars ventriloquist, he had recovered his presence of mind now, and was ready for business.

Suddenly, from the darkness along the passage, a voice came, or appeared to come, in wonderful imitation of the rough, savage tones of the Mocher.

"Ere! 'Ands up! Mind, I've got my heye on yer!"

Mr. Roper clicked his teeth hard together.

"Back to your dormitory, quick!" he panted.

The juniors did not need bidding twice. They raced back to the Remove dormitory, leaving Mr. Roper to deal as best he could with the supposed Mocher. Bolsover and Bunter ran into the dormitory, and there were exclamations from the fellows gathered just inside the door.

"Ow! Fathead! Where are you running to?"

"Faith, and I—"

"The runfulness of the esteemed silly asses is terrific!"

"Oh, shut up!" said Bolsover. "Let's get to bed. That beast Roper will be after us soon, when he finds out he's been tricked. I suppose that was your voice, Bunter?"

"Yes, rather! You know what a jolly good ventriloquist I am."

"Oh, shut up, and tumble in!"

"How did it go?" asked Russell. "Did you jape Roper?"

"He came out of his door just as we were standing there," said Bolsover. "He ran right into us. He was up and dressed."

"My hat!"

"Blessed if I can make the man out!" said Harry Wharton. "What on earth was he up and dressed for at this time of night?"

"Goodness knows! And when he ran into us, he took us for somebody else. Anyway, he said, 'How did you get in?'"

"Great Scott!"

"He can't be receiving visitors at this time of night?" said Ogilvy.

"Cave! Here he comes!"

The juniors dived into bed like rabbits as the door-handle turned. When Mr. Roper's pale and angry face looked into the Remove dormitory there was a sound of regular breathing, mingled with snores, which ought to have impressed him with the fact that the Remove were all fast asleep; but didn't.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Voice of the Moocher!

"BOYS!"

There was a tone of menace in Mr. Roper's voice, though it was not loud, that sent a chill through Billy Bunter, and stopped the regularity of his snore. The other juniors breathed on steadily.

Mr. Roper turned on the electric light, and the long, lofty room was flooded with it. He cast a gleaming glance up and down the row of white beds.

"I know you are not asleep," he said, in his penetrating, metallic tones. "You may as well not pretend. Do you hear me?"

Bolsover yawned.

"Is that you, sir?"

"Yes, it is I, Bunter!"

"Ye-es, sir? I—I'm asleep, sir—I—I mean I was just going to sleep, sir. I—I hope it's all right about the burglars, sir. I'm afraid of burglars, sir. I think that that man is here, sir—that man you were talking to yesterday in the wood, sir."

Mr. Roper ground his teeth.

"You think nothing of the kind, Bunter. You boys will have to learn to stay in bed after bedtime. I have already impressed that upon you, and you have chosen to disobey me. I suppose you have what you call a rag to-night, and you may all come swarming out of the dormitory. I shall soon put a stop to that. Bunter and Bolsover, I have brought my cane here, and I am going to punish you. I—"

"Old 'ard!" said a rough voice.

Mr. Roper jumped.

The voice appeared to come from the upper end of the dormitory, and it was so like the tones of the Moocher that Harry Wharton & Co. leaped out of bed.

"The Moocher—he's here!" exclaimed Harry.

"In the dorm!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, seizing a water-jug, the nearest weapon. "That's what he was after, then. He said it wasn't Bolsover minor this time. He's come down here to burgle the school!"

"I forbid you to say anything of the sort!" exclaimed Mr. Roper furiously. "How dare you talk such nonsense? The man is not here."

"Ere I am, ole pal!"

"I can hear his voice, sir!" shouted Nugent. "Can't you, sir?"

Mr. Roper gazed up and down the dormitory like one in a dream. The juniors were amazed, but Mr. Roper seemed to be simply astounded.

"Let's look for him!" yelled Joligny Bull. "Let's have him out!"

"Good egg!"

"Guard the door, so that he can't get away!" exclaimed Mark Linley. "There are enough of us to take the brute prisoner."

"Back to your beds!" shouted Mr. Roper. "I tell you he is not here!"

"But we can hear him, sir!"

"Nonsense! I say it is nonsense!" The Form-master, in his strange agitation, seemed hardly to know what he was saying. "Get back to bed! I forbid you to search!"

"I'll out some of yer!" came the savage voice.

There was a shout.

"He's under Penfold's bed!"

With one leap Penfold was out of bed. The juniors, taking no notice of Mr. Roper now, and grasping all kinds of weapons, gathered round Penfold's bed.

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"Come out!" roared Bob Cherry. "We've got you now, and you may as well surrender quietly. Come out, you bouncer!"

"The come-outfulness is terrific, you esteemed villain!"

"Have him out!" yelled Fisher T. Fish. "I guess this is where we scoop him in. Have the thief out!"

"Boys!" shouted Mr. Roper. "I command you to go back to bed! I—"

"Lemme alone!" came the voice from under Penfold's bed.

"You lemme alone, or some of you will git 'urt!"

"You'll get hurt if you give us any trouble," said Vernon-Smith. "Come out at once! There are forty chaps here ready for you if you make a row!"

"I ain't coming out!"

"We'll soon have you out then," said Vernon-Smith. "Stand ready, you chaps, and I'll fling a jug under the bed!"

"Ere, you 'old on!"

"Come out, then!"

"I ain't coming out!"

Vernon-Smith took a jug and slung it under the bed. It spun through into view beneath the coverlet on the other side. Evidently it had met with no resistance.

"That's queer!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "He's there right enough!"

"Ow!"

"Hark! He's got a whack, anyway!"

"Ow! I'm 'urt!"

"Come out, then."

"Sha'n't!"

Vernon-Smith took another jug in his hand and lifted the coverlet cautiously, to take better aim next time. Then he staggered back in amazement, and the jug fell from his hand and broke upon the floor.

"He's not there!" he gasped.

"What!"

"My hat!"

"Look for yourselves!" gasped Vernon-Smith.

A score of juniors looked under the bed. The space was vacant. Then the Removites understood, and they glared at Bunter, who was sitting up in bed and grinning. They would have bumped the Remove ventriloquist out of bed upon the floor, only that would have betrayed him to Mr. Roper. The juniors understood, but Mr. Roper did not, and his eyes seemed to start from his head as he peered under the bed, and found that the redoubtable Moocher was not there.

"Good—good heavens!" he gasped. "What—what does this mean?"

"Must be a ghost, sir," said Bolsover calmly. "Greyfriars is haunted, you know, sir. We have several ghosts at Greyfriars, and this is a new one, sir."

The door opened, and Wingate and Courtney of the Sixth came in with cricket-stumps in their hands. The noise in the Remove dormitory had alarmed the prefects. They stared in amazement at the sight of the Removites swarming out of bed, and Mr. Roper in the dormitory, and the light full on.

"Oh!" ejaculated Wingate. "I didn't know you were here, sir! I thought it was some junior rag that was going on."

"It's burglars!" said Bolsover.

"What!"

"Honest Injun! That fellow Moocher, that we all saw—the fellow who came after Bolsover minor—he's been here."

"Where is he now, then?"

"He—he seems to be gone!" stuttered Mr. Roper. "It is very singular, but certainly there was a strange voice—I cannot understand it. The boys had better go back to bed now, and you prefects can do the same. It is very extraordinary!"

"I suppose it is some blessed junior trick," said Wingate suspiciously.

"Oh, no! Mr. Roper got up because he heard a noise in the Close; he said so," replied Bolsover coolly. "You can ask him, Wingate."

The Form-master's pale face flushed.

"That—that is certainly the case!" he stammered. "But—but I think perhaps it was nothing after all. Pray go back to bed; the whole school will be alarmed at this rate."

The Remove turned in. Mr. Roper extinguished the light and left the dormitory with the two prefects. As the door closed the Removites broke into a chuckle loud and long.

"I say, you fellows, I rather think I did him that time!" grinned Billy Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I rather think he will do you, when he finds you out!" said Bob Cherry. "He will remember all this, when he finds out that you are a ventriloquist!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, he won't find out!" said Billy Bunter. "I'm an awfully deep chap, you know. Besides, he won't be at Grey-

frisks long—only till Quelchy comes back—if so long as that. My opinion is that he ain't respectable, and he will very likely get the push, even before old Quelchy comes. He drinks, and—

"Hark!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

There was the sudden sound of the barking of a dog from the Close. The juniors leaped up in bed. It was the dog of the school-porter, Gosling, that was barking, and so furiously that there was evidently an alarm outside.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Was there a burglar, after all?"

"Great Scott!"

"Let's see!"

And the Removites rushed for the dormitory windows, and crowded there, peering out into the dim moonlight of the Close.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Catching Coker.

MR. ROPER had seemed very anxious for the two prefects to go back to bed when they left the Remove dormitory. But Wingate and Courtney wanted to look round, and make sure that all was well—and the noise in the Remove-room had awakened a good many other fellows, and lights were gleaming from many rooms.

Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, came out of his room with a gun in his hand, which, fortunately, was not loaded.

Walker and Loder, of the Sixth, and Blundell and Coker and Potter, of the Fifth, had come out with pokers or sticks in their hands.

The alarm was general, and Mr. Roper, although he very evidently wanted to make light of the affair, could not deny that he had risen himself because he was alarmed, and so he could hardly oppose a search for possible burglars.

The seniors went round the School House, looking at doors and windows; and Wingate, as he examined a little window at the back of the house, uttered a sharp and sudden exclamation. The other fellows hurried to him at once.

"Is it unfastened?" exclaimed Coker.

"No; but I saw somebody outside!"

"My hat!"

The fellows flattened their noses on the glass. A patch of moonlight fell outside the window, and further on was dark shadow; they could see nothing.

"Sure, Wingate?" asked Courtney.

The Greyfriars captain nodded emphatically.

"Yes, quite sure! Just as I came up to the window someone crossed that patch of light. He's gone round the House now!"

"Then it's a burglar!" exclaimed Potter.

"It's somebody, anyway!"

"Oh, it is impossible!" exclaimed Mr. Roper. "You are not thinking of going out into the Close to search, Wingate, surely? It would be dangerous, granting that it may possibly be a burglar!"

Wingate looked at him.

"I don't think it would be very dangerous, with such a crowd of us, sir," he said. "But, anyway, I suppose we're not afraid. If it's a burglar he ought to be collared. Don't you think so, Mr. Prout?"

"Certainly!" said Mr. Prout, grasping his gun. "I will lead you! Come on!"

And the Fifth Form-master threw open the door of the School House. Mr. Roper could not oppose the decision of the senior master, and he followed the crowd of fellows into the Close. Lanterns gleamed in several hands, and lights shone from many windows, mingling with the moonlight.

Courtney dashed across to Gosling's lodge to tell him to let his dog loose, and the big dog was careering through the Close in a few minutes in search of the intruder. A sudden terrific burst of barking showed that he had found something.

"This-way!" yelled Wingate.

The fellows rushed on in the direction of the barking. Lanterns gleamed on the excited dog, and on a dark figure hunched against the school wall, which the animal had evidently discovered in the act of climbing out.

There was a roar from the Greyfriars fellows.

"There he is!"

"It's a burglar, after all!"

"I know that man!" shouted Coker. "He tried to rob me in the lane one day! He's the rotter they call the Moocher!"

"Collar him!"

The Moocher—for it was indeed that ruffian—stood back against the wall and faced the oncoming crowd with desperate eyes. The dog's barking rang through the air. The Moocher knew that he could not climb the wall now, and he made a sudden rush to escape, keeping along the school wall; and disappearing in the shadows.

"After him!" shouted Wingate.

With a wild whoop the crowd dashed in pursuit.

The Moocher had vanished, but the dog guided the pursuers, and they came in sight of the ruffian again as he

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appeared for a moment in a patch of moonlight. Then he vanished again, but the loud barking guided them.

"He's on the wall!"

"He's escaping!"

"Collar him!"

Coker, of the Fifth, was ahead, and he made a desperate bound. The Moocher had sprung upon the school wall, and he had his arms over the top, and was dragging himself over. Coker sprang just in time, and caught both his ankles, and hung on.

"I've got him!" shrieked Coker. "Help here!"

"Seize him!" shouted Mr. Roper, springing forward, and grasping Coker, and whirling him over on the ground with such force that he had to let go the Moocher.

Coker went down with a heavy bump, in the grasp of the Form-master, and the Moocher whipped over the wall and disappeared. Coker struggled desperately in the grasp of Mr. Roper, who was shouting at the top of his voice:

"I have him—I've got him! Help here!"

"Hurrah!"

"Mr. Roper's got him!"

"Lend a hand!"

The fellows crowded round, and the lanterns gleamed upon the struggling pair. There was a shout of rage and disappointment.

"It's Coker!"

"Let him alone, sir—that's Coker!"

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Roper, in great astonishment. "Are you sure? I certainly was under the impression that I had seized the burglar."

He released his unhappy victim, and Coker of the Fifth sat up, with his nose streaming red, and one eye closed. He was stuttering with fury.

"You idiot!" he roared.

"Coker!"

"What did the silly ass collar me for?" howled Coker. "He's bunged up my eye! He's busted my nose! Ow, ow! The howling ass!"

"Shut up, Coker," said Wingate. "You can't talk to a Form-master like that. It was a mistake, of course—"

"Mistake be blowed!" roared Coker. "I had hold of the burglar's beastly legs, and then Mr. Roper bowled me over. Yah! Ow!"

"It—it was certainly very unfortunate," said Mr. Roper. "I am very sorry. I can excuse your violent expressions, Coker, under the circumstances. The man appears to be gone. Pray search the Quadrangle, my boys, carefully."

"Not much use," said Wingate, apparently with a very poor opinion of Mr. Roper's intelligence. "He's gone over the wall. Better look for him in the road, if at all."

"That would be useless, I fear," said Mr. Prout. "The man is gone, and he is certainly not likely to return. We can furnish a description of him to the police to-morrow, and I have little doubt that he will be arrested. Let us go in."

There was evidently nothing more to be done. Coker caressed his nose and his eye very tenderly as he went to the Fifth Form dormitory. Potter was sympathetic; but he was grinning a little when Coker wasn't looking. It was just like old Coker to get into a bother like this.

The juniors had crowded out of their dormitories; everybody was awake and up now. Harry Wharton & Co. met the Fifth-Formers as they came up. Coker's damaged countenance showed that he had been in the thick of it, and they wanted news.

"There was a burglar after all, you fellows?" Harry Wharton asked.

"Yes; that fellow the Moocher," said Potter. "Coker caught him. Jolly near made a prisoner of the scoundrel, too!"

"He got away?" said Bob Cherry.

Coker gave a growl.

"Yes, all through that idiot Roper," he said.

The chums of the Remove were interested at once. It was very peculiar news that the burglar had escaped by the interposition of Mr. Roper.

"How was that?" Wharton asked.

"I grabbed his tootsies as he was getting over the wall, and that duffer rushed up, and collared me instead of the burglar," snorted Coker, dabbing his nose with his handkerchief. "He must have been so excited he didn't know what he was doing, or else off his chump. He had me over on the ground, hammering at me, while the burglar bolted. It's all Roper's fault; we should have had the villain but for him. I wish you'd boil your Form-master, you Remove kids!"

And Horace Coker stamped on to the Fifth Form dormitory in high dudgeon. The prefects were shouting at the juniors now to go back to their quarters, and the chums of the Remove returned to their dormitory, and turned in. But it

was a long while before the Remove slept. Harry Wharton & Co., and a good many more of the Remove, were thinking of their mysterious master.

Mr. Roper's strange acquaintance with the Moocher, the untruths he had told on the subject—the fact that Bolsover and Bunter had found him fully dressed in the middle of the night—his evident wish to prevent a search for the burglar—and finally the curious circumstance that he had been the means of preventing the seizure of the Moocher. It was a very peculiar chain of circumstances, and it gave the Removes much food for thought. Strange and dark suspicions were in many minds—suspicions that they hardly ventured to put into words, even to themselves.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Arrest of the Moocher.

THE next morning the school was in a buzz of discussion on the subject of the Moocher. That the man had been within the walls of Greyfriars was certain, and the only reason he could have had was to break into the school. Inspector Grimes, of Courtfield, who came over early in the morning, was of opinion that it was a case of attempted burglary, and he took a description of the Moocher, and promised that every effort should be made to find him. And the police looked very industriously for the ruffian that day, and as he was a man easily to be recognised from his description, they had little doubt of finding him.

Greyfriars waited in keen eagerness for news of his arrest. A telephone message to the Head informed him that the man had been traced as far as Abbotsford, and the direction he had taken showed that he was fleeing from the place, doubtless with the intention of getting to London. The Moocher had certainly made the neighbourhood of Greyfriars too hot to hold him—there was a reward of ten pounds offered for information leading to his arrest—and many country-people who had seen the ruffian in the vicinity, and knew him by sight, were searching for him.

Later in the day came a wire from Abbotsford. It was for the Head, but the Head had it posted up on the notice-board in the hall, for all Greyfriars to read.

It was a very interesting message for the school. It was brief, but it was very much to the point.

"Man arrested.—GRIMES."

A crowd gathered round the notice-board after morning lessons to read the telegram. There was general satisfaction on the subject.

"Got him!" said Bob Cherry. "The police ain't such asses, after all. Though I suppose it would have been rather difficult for the Moocher to get away without being seen. He has been seen a lot round here, and a good many people know him by sight."

"Jolly good thing they've got him!" said Bolsover. "I wonder—"

He paused, with a peculiar look on his face.

"Well?" said Wharton.

"I wonder if he'll give anybody away now he's caught?"

"Whom are you thinking of?" asked Russell.

Bolsover shrugged his shoulders.

"If you can't guess, I shan't tell you. Look here, this news ought to be jolly interesting to Mr. Roper, as he was the cause of the Moocher not being caught last night. It ought to make him quite joyful."

"Good, yes!" said Manleverer. "Let's go and tell him!"

"Good egg!" grinned Billy Bunter. "Let's all go, and see how he takes it."

Quite a little crowd of Removes followed Bolsover to Mr. Roper's study. Harry Wharton & Co. did not join them. It seemed wildly impossible that a Form-master of Greyfriars could have any guilty connection with the burglar, in spite of the peculiar circumstances of the case; and if, indeed, Mr. Roper had a guilty conscience, Harry Wharton understood what tortures of dread he must be suffering now, and had no desire to gloat over him. But considerations of that sort did not appeal to Bolsover.

Bolsover minor was among the crowd reading the telegram. Harry Wharton clapped him on the shoulder kindly. "You won't see the Moocher any more, after all, kid," he said.

Billy nodded cheerfully.

"It serves him right," he said. "If he kem 'ere after me, it serves him right. And if he kem to rob the school, he oughter go to choker."

"And he will!" said Frank Nugent.

Bolsover & Co. knocked at Mr. Roper's study door, and opened it. The Form-master was in the room, sitting at the table, apparently unoccupied, but the deep wrinkle in his brow showed that he was thinking hard. He looked up with a worried and irritable expression as the juniors appeared in

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a crowd in the doorway. There was a peculiar smell in the study, and Bolsover sniffed very audibly. He knew the smell of brandy well enough. Mr. Roper had evidently been fortifying his shaken nerves with his usual stimulant. There was a glassy look in his eyes which showed that he had been drinking more than usual, too, and that he was not quite himself.

"What do you want?" he exclaimed harshly.

"We thought you'd like to hear the news, sir," said Bolsover, with a respect of manner which was more than half impertinence.

Mr. Roper started.

"News? What news? What do you mean?"

"About the Moocher, sir. He's arrested."

Mr. Roper started to his feet, his face white as chalk.

"The Moocher arrested!"

"Yes, sir. I knew you'd be glad to hear about it, sir."

Mr. Roper stood staring at the juniors. His hand rested on the table, as if for some support; the other hand was trembling like an aspen.

"He—is—arrested!"

"Yes, sir. The police have got him, sir," said Billy Bunter. "Jolly good, isn't it, sir?"

Mr. Roper collected himself with an effort.

"Thank you for telling me," he said, with an effort. "This is very fortunate. You may go."

The juniors left the study, and Bolsover closed the door. He winked at the other fellows, and turned back to the study, as if he had forgotten something, and opened the door suddenly without knocking.

There was a sharp exclamation in the study, and a crash of breaking glass. The sudden opening of the door had startled Mr. Roper, and he was in the act of filling a glass from a brandy bottle. The glass went to the floor with a crash, and the liquor was spilt upon the carpet. Mr. Roper set the bottle down with a trembling hand, and glared savagely at the intruder.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, sir," said Bolsover demurely.

Mr. Roper caught up a cane.

He ran straight at the bully of the Remove, lashing out. Bolsover made a wild leap into the passage, and as he did so the cane crashed across his shoulders with such terrific force that it broke.

Bolsover gave a fearful yell, and ran down the passage. The other fellows ran, too, and the study door slammed after them.

"Ow, ow, ow!" groaned Bolsover, in the hall, where he halted breathless. "Ow! The murderous beast! Yow-ow!"

"Got it in the neck!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"My hat! He was in a frightful rage!" said Ogilvy. "Bolsover caught him filling his glass. He's more than half squiffy."

"We shall have to look out for squalls this afternoon," said Russell. "He gave Bolsover an awful cut."

Mr. Roper's look, when he came into the Remove Form-room for afternoon lessons, was a warning that it was necessary for the Removes to look out for "squalls."

His face showed that he was under the influence of spirits, and that his temper was in the most savage state.

The Remove were very careful. But carelessness did not save them from the irritable and exasperated temper of the Form-master, and the cane was brought into frequent use that afternoon. Bolsover and Bunter were the chief victims, and they were caned half a dozen times on the slightest pretexts. Neither of them was popular in the Form, but the Remove seethed with indignation at the sight of the incessant punishments without cause, and which were evidently dealt out simply as a means of wreaking the Form-master's irritable temper upon somebody. Bolsover was soon in a state of fury, and Bunter's fat face was a picture of rage and terror. When the Owl of the Remove was called out for the sixth time, he did not move from his seat. Mr. Roper shook his cane at him, and raised his voice, which was a little unsteady.

"Bunter! Come here!"

"If you pip-pip-please, sir—"

"You were talking!"

"I—I wasn't, sir. I—"

"Come here, or shall I fetch you?" thundered the Form-master.

Bunter rose to his feet. As he did so, his lips moved behind his hand, and a voice came sharply from the direction of the door. It was the voice of Dr. Locke, or so like it that no difference could be detected.

"Mr. Roper, you are not to punish Bunter again!"

All the Remove stared round towards the door. Mr. Roper glared. The door was half-open, and the Head was apparently speaking from the passage, for he could not be seen.

"Ahem!" said Mr. Roper. "Really, sir—"
"You are drunk, Mr. Roper!"
"What!"
"There are to be no more punishments, or you will hear from me, sir."

Mr. Roper stood almost petrified. After a moment or two, he strode to the door and looked out into the passage. The Head, if he had been there, was gone. Mr. Roper looked very subdued as he came back into the Form-room.

There were no more punishments that afternoon. Billy Bunter's ventriloquism had stood him and the other fellows in good stead for once.

Glad enough were the Remove when the time came for dismissal. They streamed out of the Form-room, and Mr. Roper went directly to his study. As the juniors came out into the Close they caught sight of Inspector Grimes, of Courtfield. The inspector nodded cheerfully to the Removites, who gave him a cheer as he passed. They felt that that was the due of the man who had succeeded in arresting the Mocher.

Inspector Grimes was shown in to the Head at once. Dr. Locke received him very cordially.

"You have the man, inspector?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Grimes; "he has been taken to Courtfield gaol. He has made a statement, which is a little extraordinary, and which concerns this school."

"Indeed!" said the Head, in surprise.

"Yes, sir. When he was arrested he was searched, but no burglar's instruments of any kind were found upon him. He declares that he did not intend to break into the house, but came into the school grounds hoping to be able to see a junior boy belonging to Greyfriars—a boy in the Third Form here, named Bolsover. He claims that he knew the boy in London, when he was in different circumstances, and that this boy has helped him with money before, and that he wanted to beg of him again. If this statement is correct, I am afraid that the charge of attempted burglary will fall to the ground, and that he can only be dealt with as a vagrant."

The Head looked troubled.

"I will send for Bolsover minor at once," he said abruptly.

He rang the bell, and sent Trotter for Bolsover minor. The boy appeared in a few minutes, looking somewhat scared. He did not know what he was wanted for, but a summons to the Head's study generally turned out seriously for a boy. To Billy's relief, the headmaster's cane was not in evidence. Dr. Locke gave him a kindly nod, and the wail of Greyfriars was somewhat reassured.

"It ain't true, sir," he said, when the Head gently explained. "He never kem 'ere to see me. 'Ow could he see me at twelve o'clock at night when I was in bed. 'E got money out of me before 'cause 'e threatened to come to the school and kick up a row. But Master Wharton told me I wasn't to give 'im any more, and 'e said that if the Mocher kem to me agin I was to tell you all about it, sir."

"Quite right and proper of Wharton," said the Head. "He gave you very good advice, Bolsover minor. Certainly you should have told me if this rascal had troubled you again. You had no arrangement to see him last night?"

"Not at all, sir. I never knew he was 'ere."

"Thank you! That will do, my boy."

Bolsover minor left the study. The Head turned to Inspector Grimes.

"The man has evidently lied to conceal his real intentions in coming here, Mr. Grimes," he said. "He intended to break into the school. I am sure of it."

The inspector nodded thoughtfully.

"So am I, sir, but I'm afraid he will be able to make out a good story before the magistrates, and we may only be able to get him a few months. I should like to make an example of him. I shall do my best."

And the inspector departed. From Bolsover minor the Greyfriars fellows learned what had passed in the Head's study, and they were all of the opinion that the Mocher had cunningly turned his knowledge of Bolsover minor to advantage, and they sincerely hoped that he would not be able to escape by doing so. But there was one person at Greyfriars who heard what the Mocher had declared with a deep sense of relief, perhaps because he had feared that the man might claim some other acquaintance at Greyfriars more highly placed than Bolsover minor of the Third. And that person was Mr. Roper, the new master of the Remove.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Caught in the Act.

MR. ROPER remained in his study almost the whole of the evening. He might have had his own reasons for not wishing to meet the eyes of the Greyfriars fellows, or he might have been, as Bolsover suggested, devoting himself to the bottle he kept in the study desk. He would have been surprised, probably, if he had known the discussion that was going on among the Removites. Bolsover was not blessed with keen perception, but he was suspicious.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 222.

NEXT
TUESDAY:

"FRANK NUGENT'S GREAT WHEEZE!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.
Order Early.

and the savage cut he had received across the shoulders had sharpened his suspicions of Mr. Roper. There was a red weal across Bolsover's shoulders, which he showed to some of the juniors in the dormitory, announcing at the same time his intention of making Mr. Roper sorry that he had put it there.

"And how are you going to do it?" Ogilvy asked, when the Remove were going to bed.

Bolsover gritted his teeth.

"I'm going to show him up," he said. "I told you chaps what he said when he ran into Bunter and me last night. What was he up in the middle of the night for? He said, 'How did you get in?' What did he mean by that?"

"Sure he said it?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Yes, I am!" replied Bolsover heatedly. "And the Mocher was in the Close all the time. My belief is that Roper was leaving his bed-room just then to let the Mocher into the house."

"Phew!"

"It does look like it," said Johnny Bull; "only that's too awfully thick, you know. We can't suppose that he's a confederate of giddy-burglars."

"Can't we?" said Bolsover savagely. "Well, I can, for one. I believe that that was his little game, and I believe he's here for no good, anyway. What do we know about him? He came here to take Mr. Queleh's place for a week. How do we know what kind of a rotter he is? He may have come here specially for what he could get. A man who drinks secretly, and turns up in the Form-room half squiffy, can't expect to keep a job as a master in a school. He's gone to the dogs, and if the Head had seen him in the Form-room to-day he would have booted him out of Greyfriars at once, and he certainly wouldn't have given him a recommendation. The man's been in a bad position, I don't doubt, but he's gone to the dogs, and he's capable of anything. That's my opinion."

And although Bolsover's opinion was not generally regarded with much respect in the Remove, most of the juniors admitted that this time the Form bully was probably in the right.

"It seems jolly thick," said Nugent. "But even if that was his little game, he would have to chuck it now they've arrested the Mocher."

Bolsover sniffed.

"I don't see that at all. The Mocher has told whoppers about having come here to get money out of my young brother. But any minute the police might get him to confess the truth—that he came here to see Roper. Roper knows that, and he's in danger all the time he stays here. I shouldn't wonder if that's why he's soaking so much, because his nerves are jumpy about it."

"A Daniel come to judgement!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"You ought to be a giddy detective, Bolsover!"

"I can detect that rotter, anyway, and I'll make him sorry he's laid his rotten cane on me!" said the Remove bully. "My belief is that they were going to steal the school silver last night, and the job was mucked up owing to the alarm. And I don't believe Roper will dare to hang on here, with the Mocher arrested and liable to blab any minute. I believe he'll try to make the haul, and bolt."

"Great Scott!"

"And if he does it, he'll do it to-night," said Bolsover, "and I'm jolly well going to keep an eye on him and see!"

"Do you mean that you're going to keep watch to-night?" asked Harry Wharton thoughtfully.

"Yes, I do!" said Bolsover defiantly. "Have you got anything to say against it?"

"No; you can do as you like, so far as I'm concerned. I shouldn't wonder if you're right, considering everything."

"You chaps can stay up with me if you like," said Bolsover, somewhat mollified.

Wharton hesitated.

"Very well," he said, after a pause, "I'll stay up. The thing looks so jolly suspicious that somebody ought to keep an eye open, I think."

"Good egg! We two can do it!"

"Oh, count me in!" said Bob Cherry. "I'll stay awake, too—unless I fall asleep."

Loder came in to see lights out, and the talk ceased. But while the other Removites dropped off to sleep, Bolsover major remained sitting up in bed, his eyes gleaming in the darkness. He was aching with the innumerable earnings Mr. Roper had given him, and the pain helped to keep him awake.

At half-past eleven, when the latest light at Greyfriars was usually put out, Bolsover rose from his bed and dressed himself. There was a sound from Wharton's bed. He was following the example of the Remove bully. Bob Cherry had fallen asleep after all, and they did not awaken him.

It was curious enough for Wharton and Bolsover to be

turning out together. As a rule, they were on the worst of terms. But the whole case was peculiar. Bolsover opened the dormitory door, and looked into the dark passage.

"All's quiet!" he said.

Wharton shivered as the cold draught from the passage struck him.

"Where are you thinking of waiting?" he asked.

"In the Head's study," said Bolsover coolly.

Wharton started.

"But—"

"The valuables are kept in the safe there. If he means mischief, that's where he'll go, and we can spot him there!"

"I fancy the door will be locked."

"Then we can wait in the room opposite."

"Good!"

The juniors crept softly downstairs. There was no light under the door of the Head's study, showing that Dr. Locke was gone. All Greyfriars seemed to be sleeping. Bolsover tried the door of the study. It was locked, and the key was gone.

"Locked?" asked Wharton, in a whisper.

"Yes."

"I thought it would be. Come in here."

One of the doors of the school library opened from the passage, a short distance down. The two juniors entered the library, and left the door ajar to enable them to watch the passage. Wharton sat in a chair, dozing a little; but Bolsover was not sleepy. He stood by the door, ajar, watching with unresting eyes. Twelve o'clock boomed out dully from the clock-tower.

Bolsover drew a deep breath. But nothing followed the sound—only the deep silence of the night.

But a few minutes later, a slight sound in the passage caught Bolsover's ear. He bent his head to listen.

It was the faint sound of a cautious footfall.

Bolsover's eyes gleamed, and he stepped back towards Harry Wharton and shook him. Wharton's eyes opened.

"Quiet!" whispered Bolsover.

"What is it?"

"There's somebody creeping down the passage."

"Phew!"

The two juniors peered from the dark doorway. From a high window there was a glimmer of moonlight in the passage. A dark figure appeared in view, and stopped at the door of the Head's study within six feet of where the juniors stood watching. They heard the door-handle turn, and then a muffled exclamation was audible. The midnight visitor had found the door locked, as the juniors had found it; but he was not baffled by a locked door. A few moments later there sounded a sharp click; the study door swung open, and the figure disappeared within. The door closed again silently.

Wharton's heart was beating like a hammer. Bolsover turned to him, his eyes gleaming in the darkness.

"He's in the Head's study!" he muttered.

"Yes."

"It's Roper!"

"I couldn't see his face—but it looked like him."

Bolsover opened the door and crept into the passage. Wharton followed him, his heart beating hard. Whoever the man was in the Head's study he must be there for purposes of robbery, as he had picked the lock of the door. The juniors listened intently outside the room. There was a glimmer of light under the door, and a faint sound as of a drill at work upon metal came to their ears.

"He's at the safe!" Bolsover whispered, barely audibly.

"Right!"

"Stay here and watch, while I wake the Head!"

"Good—call Wingate and Courtney, too, and Mr. Prout. There may be a struggle."

"Right—ho!"

Bolsover tiptoed away in the darkness.

The minutes seemed long to Harry Wharton while he waited. But a light gleamed along the passage at last; Bolsover had given the alarm. The Head of Greyfriars came into view, followed by Mr. Prout with a lamp in his hand. Wingate and Courtney and Loder of the Sixth followed them, and Bolsover brought up the rear. Dr. Locke was looking very stern. Bolsover had mentioned no name. He preferred to let the Head make the discovery for himself. He had simply stated that a man had broken into the study, and that he and Wharton had seen him. Dr. Locke looked inquiringly at Harry.

"Is he still there?" he asked.

"Yes, sir. Listen!"

There was a cracking sound in the study. Dr. Locke compressed his lips.

"He has opened the safe," he said.

"Shall we go in, sir?" asked Wingate.

"Immediately. Stand ready in case he should resist."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 222.

Read the grand new story of the "THE SCHOOLBOY MUTINEERS!" in this week's "GEM" Library. Juniors of St. Jim's, entitled: Now on Sale. Price One Penny.

The Greyfriars captain threw the door wide open and dashed into the study. Courtney and Wharton immediately after him. There was a sharp cry of terror in the room. The others were in a second, and Wingate turned the gas full on. A strange sight met their eyes. The safe in the wall was open, and a man had swung round from it, with wild terror in his chalky face and staring eyes. And the man was Mr. Roper, the new master of the Remove!

There was a terrible silence. Dr. Locke looked at the Remove-master, dumb with amazement.

"Mr. Roper!" said Wingate, like one in a dream.

"I knew it!" said Bolsover, with a grim chuckle. "He was going to let the Moocher in last night, and as his pal couldn't come, he's done it himself, and we've caught him!"

Mr. Roper did not seem to hear. His starting eyes were fixed upon the doctor's face. He was trembling in every limb.

"Mr. Roper!" the Head gasped. "Mr. Roper, you are a thief! I—I am amazed! I—I—"

The wretched man groaned.

He did not think of resistance. A glance at him was enough to show that his nerves were in rags. And the sturdy Sixth-Formers would have been too many for him if he had thought of a struggle. But he did not. He flung himself into a chair and covered his face with his hands, and burst into miserable tears.

"Ruined!" he groaned. "Send for the police—get it over! Oh, heavens! What a madman I have been!"

Dr. Locke looked at him steadily for some minutes. Then he made a gesture to those round him.

"Leave me with him!" he said.

"And now," said the Head, when the two were alone, "explain how came you to do this, Mr. Roper?"

The man raised a haggard face from his hands.

It was a wretched story he told—the story of a man who had had good prospects, and had held a good position, which he might have kept and improved, but for the gradual growth of the vice that had mastered him. Drink had ruined him. He had lost position after position, and had gone from bad to worse till even common honesty had gone the way of every other quality, and he had become the associate of such men as the Moocher.

A friend who had known him in better days had tried to help him, and had been the means of his getting a temporary post at Greyfriars.

He had deceived the kind friend who had held out the helping hand.

He had laid his plans with the Moocher, a cracksmen of great skill, and it was arranged that, as soon as he had learned the lay of the house, he was to admit that cracksmen to the school, and share the proceeds of the robbery. The happenings of the previous night had wrecked the plan.

Mr. Roper had already brought the cracksmen's tools into the house, and when the Moocher was arrested he determined to make the attempt himself.

It was a wretched tale, told in gasps between miserable sobs and pleas for mercy. Dr. Locke listened in silence.

"And now send for the police!" groaned the man. "Let me go to prison, and have done with it!"

"I do not wish to be hard upon any man," the Head answered. "I shall lock you in a room to-night. If you are here in the morning the police will take you. That is all I can say."

It was a nine days' wonder at Greyfriars. Many of the Remove fellows were sorry that the man got away. For he did get away—the window of the room he had been locked in was found open in the morning.

The police heard the story and searched for him, but the fugitive made the best use of his time, and he was not tracked down. And some of the fellows were glad that he had escaped. A ruined life and the anxieties of a fugitive were punishment enough.

Billy Bunter gave himself great airs in consequence of the discovery of Mr. Roper's true character. He declared that if he hadn't left the dormitory to play that ventriloquist trick upon the Form-master, in the first place, the intended robbery would have been effected quite easily, and nobody would have suspected Mr. Roper of complicity in it.

Which was, indeed, very probable; and perhaps the Owl of the Remove had some reason, for once, for giving himself airs. But when Billy Bunter proposed that the whole Remove should club up and stand him a feed for having deserved so well of Greyfriars, they bumped him instead—which was all the public recognition that William George Bunter ever received for his distinguished services in showing up the Traitor in the School.

(Next week's grand, long, complete tale of the "Chums of Greyfriars" is entitled: "FRANK NUGENT'S GREAT WHEZZE!" by Frank Richards. Order your copy of The "Magnet" now. Price 1d.)

**CHING-LUNG
IN THE
FORBIDDEN
LAND.**

A Wonderful Story
of Ferrers Lord,
Millionaire,
Rupert Thurston,
and Gan-Waga.

OUR GRAND SERIAL STORY!

**THROUGH
TRACKLESS
TIBET!**

**BY
SIDNEY
DREW.**



(READ THIS FIRST.)

Wishing to explore the practically unknown land of Tibet, Ferrers Lord, millionaire, makes up a party, including Prince Ching-Lung, Rupert Thurston, Gan-Waga, the Eskimo, and a number of the crew of the Lord of the Deep, to travel with him across Tibet to Kwal-Hal, the capital of Ching-Lung's province in China.

The party, conducted by an Afghan guide named Argal-Dinjat, have just crossed the Himalayas into the Forbidden Land, when, on reaching a Tibetan village ruled by an Irishman named Barry O'Rooney, they are attacked by the notorious pirate and outlaw, Storland Sahib, and a band of his ruffianly followers. Things are looking serious for the party when they are rescued by Ferrers Lord's wonderful aeroplane, the Lord of the Skies. They are flying over the crater of an extinct volcano, when the engines suddenly stop working, and they are sent hurtling down through the crater into an underground lake. The damage caused is so great that Ferrers Lord gives up hope of ever getting the aeroplane out of the cavern. Hal Honour, the engineer, however, makes a strange promise, and says that within two months he will rescue the whole crew. Punctually to the hour, Honour fulfils his promise, and the miniature aeroplane he has constructed rises from the black crater into the sunshine above with the first load of passengers, consisting of Ching-Lung, Gan-Waga, and O'Rooney. The aeroplane rescues the remaining members of the crew, and goes back once more for Ferrers Lord and the stores. On the return, Ferrers Lord decides to continue the journey to Kwal-Hal by motor-car, which Hal Honour undertakes to build. To get the material they have to return to the underground cavern. By way of a joke, Barry O'Rooney and Gan-Waga are tied back to back while sleeping, and the rest of the crew start pelting them with bad apples.

(Now go on with the story.)

**Out Exploring—A Discovery—The Cavern of Living Crystal
—A Close Shave.**

Prout and Thurston watched the prince keenly. The man made a feint of throwing, and they saw Ching-Lung's arm fly forward to catch the apple. But the pretence at throwing checkmated him. Quick as thought he made a second attempt, but failed.

The apple flung by the man flew true and straight, and down went the stick.

Ching-Lung was so confident of making the catch that he had already hurled an apple at Maddock. It filled up Maddock's left ear, and he howled as loud as any of them.

"Treason!" cried Rupert. "Cheating! Let him have it!" The mystery was explained. The outraged Prout led the attack. An apple bounced off Ching-Lung's skull, and then a shower of them whirled about him. He stood his ground, dodging and leaping. Once he had been hit, and only once.

Gan-Waga and Barry got several of the missiles intended for the prince.

And then the tables were turned.

A regular stream of fruit began to fly from Ching-Lung's right hand as water pours from a hose. And the fruit came at a terrific speed and with fatal deadliness. They turned and fled before the fusillade, and Ching-Lung pursued them, pouring in volleys until he had driven them far away into the darkness.

Then he went back and dug out the prisoners.

"Plaze, sir," said Barry, "wud yez loike to kiss me?"

"Thank you, I haven't been vaccinated."

"Ah, Oi'm sorry for that!" said O'Rooney. "Cud yez lind me a piece of soap?"

"I don't carry soap with me," answered Ching-Lung.

Barry wiped the apple-juice from his face, and limped stiffly towards the lake for a wash.

"Gan!"

"Yes," said Gan-Waga.

"Oi'll get up earlier in the future," mused O'Rooney. "Oi get noightmare whin Oi slape late, an' that affects me complexion. Bedad, this wather won't fetch off the paint! We'll have to go and bathe in turpentine. Do Oi luk pale?"

They secured turpentine, and helped each other to remove the colour from their features.

After play came work, and again pick and shovel sounded in the cavern. The adventurers became colliers again for four or five hours, dislodging and breaking up the masses of coal. The furnace fires began to roar. At twelve o'clock everything necessary had been done. It remained with Hal Honour and his half-dozen selected workmen to do the rest.

Ching-Lung began to find the time hanging heavily upon his hands. He was unusually quiet at lunch.

"What's wrong, Ching? You look dumpy and weary," said Rupert.

"Do I, Ru? I don't feel that way, my son. I was wondering what we could do to amuse ourselves this afternoon. Let's make a tour of the place."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 222.

NEXT
TUESDAY:

"FRANK NUCENT'S GREAT WHEEZE!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.
Order Early.

"We couldn't do it in a week."

"We can in the aeroplane," said Ching-Lung.

Ferrers Lord lighted a cigar.

"That sounds feasible," he said. "So far we haven't seen a place where the roof is not lofty enough to safely sail the vessel. If you care to go, the vessel is at your service. You have only to promise to be very careful, to go slowly, and to keep a good look-out. The roof is the dangerous point."

"You mean we might smash ourselves on a projecting part?"

"That is one danger," answered Ferrers Lord. "The other is even more serious. The aeroplane will cause a great amount of vibration, and the vibration may bring down some of the roof. Pass me the claret, Rupert. Thank you, my boy! You'll be careful?"

"You bet! Whom shall we take, Ching?"

"Oh, Prout, Maddock, O'Rooney, and Ganus the Waga. That will make six of us, and six are half a dozen, which is a quarter of four-and-twenty. Whack me another slice off that ham, and don't make it too thin. We'll put the provisioning part in the hands of Maddock, and take the wireless telegraphy thing along with us. Then if we want a clean collar or anything, we can wire back to mamama—"

"Oh, you talk too much!" said Rupert Thurston.

"And you eat—"

"When will you go?" put in the millionaire's quiet voice.

"As soon as we've finished grubbing. I shall expect Rupert to do something to pay for the enormous quantity of food he consumes, so he can make a rough plan of the show as we go along."

"I don't mind doing that."

"Then I'll see Maddock," said Ching-Lung, rising.

The aeroplane commenced her journey with three search-lights blazing—two shooting out their vivid rays to port and starboard, the last sending its beams gliding across the roof.

"Good-bye!"

A ringing cheer came back as they glided away, travelling cautiously and slowly. Prout, though he did not steer, held the most important position. It was his duty to watch the roof. In fact, he was the leadman, in a fashion, though he watched for danger from above, where the leadman on a vessel fears danger from beneath.

"Higher, there!" cried Ching-Lung. "I want to see if the place has any roof at all."

The suspensory screws increased their speed, and the vessel rose.

"What is it, Ru?"

"Nine hundred and fifty feet," said Thurston, glancing at the aneroid.

"And there's the roof at last, sir," put in Prout.

The searchlight swept across it. To their surprise, the roof of the cavern was almost as smooth as the ceiling of a room. No stalactites or jutting rocks hung from it.

"It might have been chiselled out and polished," said Ching-Lung. "It looks all right here, but it may rough up

further along. Go steady, Mr. Man-at-the-Wheel, and don't bump us into anything!"

Below all was dark. When they glanced down the aeroplane seemed to be sailing on a sea of ink. Barry O'Rooney, who was not experienced enough yet to have any special duty assigned to him, smoked his pipe solemnly. It was a new and odd sensation to float along through the gloomy pit. The f-r-r of screws and propellers rumbled and quivered through the cavern.

"How's her head, Ben?" sang out Rupert.

"Due east, sir."

"Then keep your eye out for the river, Tom. I tell you what, Ching. We'll follow the river, and see where it goes to."

"Right, my boy!"

The aeroplane sank until the floor of the mighty cave was clearly visible. Ching-Lung went to the wheel. He put the nose of the vessel south, in order to give Rupert an opportunity of making a rough plan.

"Rocks ahead!" yelled Prout.

A jagged wall loomed up, and the aeroplane swung to port. They appeared to have reached the southern boundary of the cave. As the aeroplane slowly skirted it, Thurston began to make his plan, while Barry O'Rooney and Gan-Waga watched the operation with great interest.

Ching-Lung gave the wheel over to Maddock, and began to get his camera and flashlight apparatus ready. The prince had become quite an enthusiastic photographer. He felt sure they would find something that would make an interesting picture before the journey was over.

"River below, sir."

Prout's searchlight was flashing on the dark water.

"Drop her, Maddock!" said Ching-Lung. "We'll trail a line behind, and get a fish for tea. Where are the lines?"

"In the locker, old chap," said Rupert. "I put a couple of spoon-bait in the last thing."

The propellers were stopped. Ching-Lung got out the line, and gave the end a hitch over the rail. Then he flung the glistening oval piece of metal, with its numerous hooks, into the water.

"Gently ahead, Benjamin—very gently!"

The aeroplane just travelled fast enough to make the bait spin, thus giving it the appearance of a living thing. For quite five minutes there was no sign of a bite. Gan-Waga grunted disgustedly, and Barry sniffed.

"Beggin' yer pardon, sor," said Barry, "me curiosity overpowers me. It's in the O'Rooney family, sor. Wance a cousin of mine was so curious to find out what was in a gentleman's safe that he broke it open wid a crowbar and dynamite. Oi may add that they showed him what a threadmill was like widout axin'. Of coorse that has nothin' to do wid it. Oi want to know, sor, av yez are thryin' to drown that piece of tin, or only tachin' it to swim?"

"Why don't you jump in and hang 'im on for me, Barry?"

At that moment there was a tremendous tug at the line and a flash of silver.

"Is it a shark?" cried Barry excitedly. "Oh, be gentle wid him, and don't give him the toothache! Don't hurt him, please. Remember that he, too, wonce had a mother. Call him kindly, and he'll come."

"Stop the 'bus, Ben!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

The fish Ching-Lung had hooked was no minnow. The moment the propellers were stopped it headed up-stream, dragging the aeroplane after it. Maddock set the screws working again, and, exerting his strength, Ching-Lung drew in the line yard by yard.

"Now, Barry—now, Gan, catch hold, my boys, and—lift!"

They had the gasping, struggling, snapping monster on deck in a few seconds.

"He's a forty-pounder!" said Rupert. "What a saucer-eyed brute! Give him a rap on the head, Barry, and hang him up. Have you finished, Ching?"

"Oh, I'll get another, so that he won't be lonely!" answered the prince. "He really ought to have a pal, and fresh fish is always a treat. Roll her along gently again, Ben."

Gan-Waga freed the bait from the pike's huge jaws, and tossed it overboard again.

Ching-Lung twisted the line round his wrist, in order to roll and light a cigarette.

He struck a match. All at once there was a tremendous jerk that almost dislocated his wrist. So powerful and unexpected was the sudden strain that, had not Barry seized him, Ching-Lung would have been dragged overboard.

"Get hold!" he yelled. "Here, you bounders, give me a hand! I've struck a Greenland whale, or a submarine boat, or something. Get hold! Quick, or we'll lose him! Jehoshaphat, what is it?"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 222.

Read the grand new story of the "Juniors of St. Jim's, entitled:

"THE SCHOOLBOY MUTINEERS!" In this week's "GEM" Library. Now on Sale. Price One Penny

Barry and Gan-Waga grabbed the line. Prout sent the searchlight spinning round. The water in one spot was being lashed into foam by the frantic struggles of the creature.

Even the light did not reveal what it was. It fought gamely against the united strength of the three men, darting, plunging, and tugging till the line blistered their hands.

"If it's a pike," panted Ching-Lung, "it's bigger than I am; but I never knew a pike that could pull like this!"

"An eel, Ching; I saw his tail!"

"Me see 'im, too!" grunted Gan-Waga. "Big, nasty black snake. Dere 'im tail now!"

"It's an eel, right enough," added Thurston; "and a six-footer! Hang on to him! It's a new line, and it ought not to break. There's his head now, and that looks a foot long. Phew! How he fights for it!"

But the battle ended in defeat for the eel. There was a cry of astonishment as the squirming monster was dragged up. He was more like a gigantic conger than an inhabitant of fresh water, and his eyes were unnaturally large and glassy.

Prout stood ready to stun him with the butt of a rifle. Moving back, Ching-Lung fastened the line to one of the vertical columns, giving the eel about six feet of slack. They saw then that they had hooked him foul, the bait being fast in the middle of his dark, slimy back.

And then the fun began. It was the liveliest eel ever captured, as well as one of the biggest, and its snapping mouth revealed rows of teeth that would not have shamed a crocodile.

It flung itself into the air, and from side to side, and lashed out with its tail in a fashion that made the men skip about nimbly.

"Now, Tom," said Ching-Lung, "pat his little head, and tell him to be good."

"That's all very well, sir!" growled the steersman; "but, by hokey, it's finding it! Every time I pat, his 'ead ain't there. Now, then, you brute—cosh!"

Prout made a vicious blow with the clubbed rifle—a blow that would have scattered the eel's brains had it only taken effect.

Unfortunately, it did not take effect. The eel shot into the air, and its great flat tail struck Prout's cheek with a slap as loud as a pistol-shot.

Prout reeled back several yards, and sat down.

Of course they all laughed, except Prout. Prout wondered if he had been hit with a club or a knuckle-duster. He felt the side of his face, to make sure it was there, and the eel uttered a hoarse sound that seemed like a chuckle.

"Me talk to 'im," said Gan-Waga, seizing the rifle. "Me give 'im beanses!"

He danced round the eel, waiting his chance. Then he struck.

"A bull's-eye!" said Ching-Lung. "Good shot, sir!"

The blow was well delivered just at the base of the head. It broke the brute's backbone. The creature was so tenacious of life that it still squirmed. Prout came to look at it.

"By hokey!" he sighed. "I never thought I'd live to be slapped by an eel! It's made me deaf in one ear. Oh, you ugly villain! What are we going to do with him now we've got him?"

"Eat 'im. Eel nice and butterful, Thomas!" said Gan-Waga, smacking his lips.

"And his fate'll make lovely soup!" grinned Barry.

"Do you mean to say you'd eat a dirty snake-like that?"

Gan-Waga rolled his eyes, smacked his lips, and patted his stomach at the thought of stewed eel.

"It butterful, grand, 'lissious, joocery!" he gurgled. "If yo' not like 'im, let me eat 'im, whole lot."

"Eat him, then!" said the disgusted steersman.

"Cut 'im's 'ead off firstest," said Gan-Waga, producing his knife.

He wiped the blade across his boot a few times to give it an edge. Prout, Ching-Lung, and Thurston turned away.

"He dead 'nough, Rooney," said Gan-Waga; "but not like tail waggin'. Lend me yo' sticker."

"Sartinly, me fat beauty!"

With Barry's knife Gan-Waga spiked the tail to the wooden locker. Then he raised the eel's huge head, in order to sever it from the body.

The next second Gan-Waga let out an ear-splitting yell of pain and horror, and went rolling across the deck like a human cannon-ball.

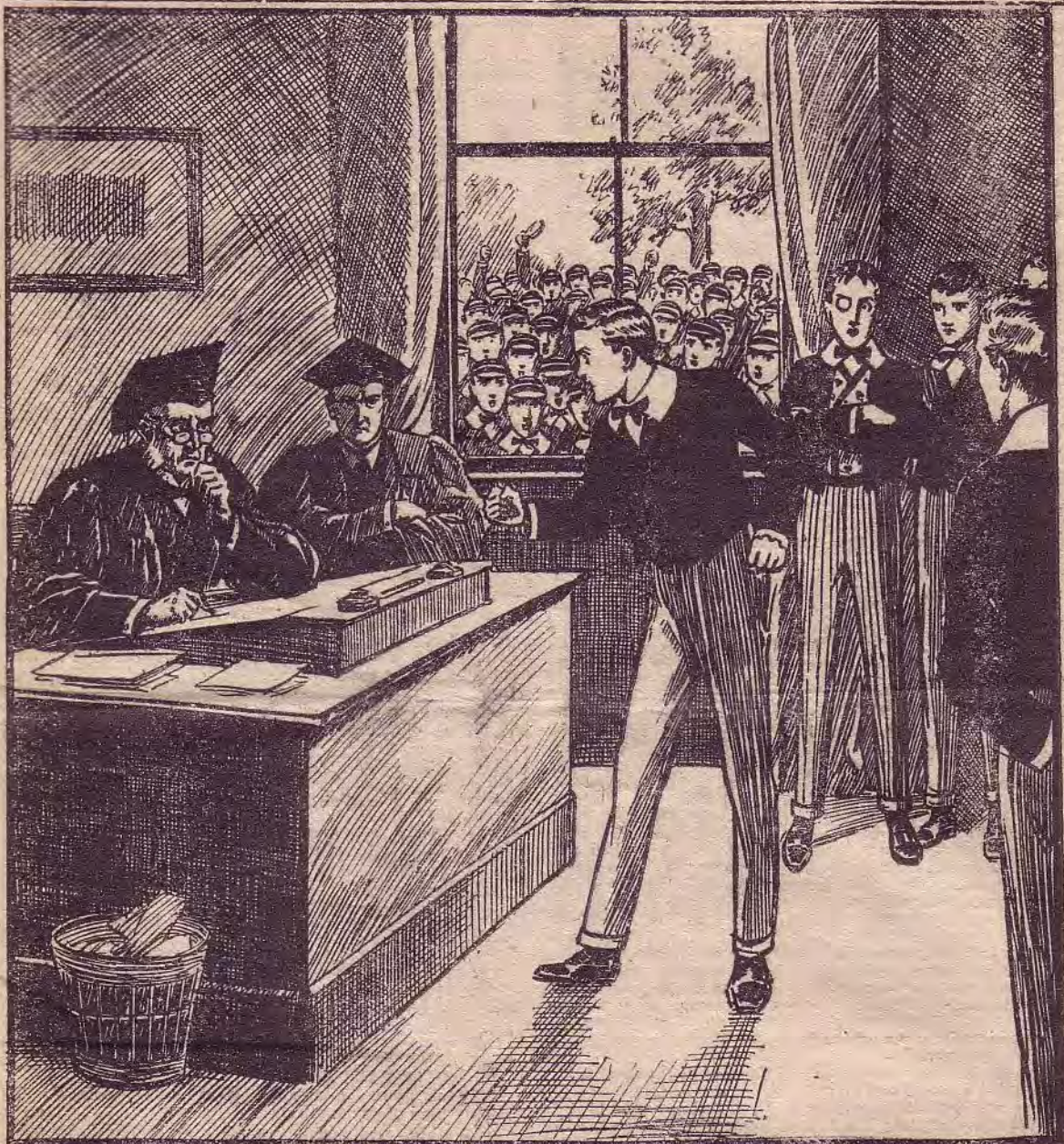
He overbalanced Ching-Lung, and Ching-Lung sat on him. The astonished men stared, utterly unable to understand it.

"What, in the name of goodness, Gan—are you mad?" asked Thurston.

"You idiot!" said Ching-Lung, picking himself up. "Do you take me for a skittle?"

Gan lay kicking, and groaning, and panting.

"Oh, I deaded—I deaded!" he wailed. "O'Rooney kick



TOM MERRY & CO.'S DEPUTATION TO THE HEAD OF ST. JIM'S!—(The above is the re-produced cover of our popular companion paper "THE GEM" Library, which contains a splendid complete tale of the chums of St. Jim's, by Martin Clifford, entitled "THE SCHOOLBOY MUTINEERS!" Out on Thursday. Price One Penny.)

me. I red-hot. Ow—oh—ooh! It bad 'nough. I deaded. He kick me when I not look. Oh—oo—oo—ooh! Murder!"

Ching-Lung sprang round, his face stern. He could hardly believe that Barry would do such a thing. Barry stood against the locker, the very picture of astonishment.

"Did you kick him?"

"On me honour, no, sir. Oi never touched him."

The look on Barry's face proved his innocence. It convinced the prince.

"Now, Gan," said Ching-Lung, "that yarn won't wash!"

"Oh—oo—oo—oh!"

"Why, the boy is really trembling!" said Rupert. "Are you hurt, Gan, or only shamming?"

"Deaded!" moaned Gan-Waga. "I burnin'. Oh—oo—oo!"

"Murther! Foire! Murther!"

There was another yell. This time it was Barry. He seemed to have suddenly gone mad. He was on the locker, dancing, waving his arms, and screaming.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 221.

"Murther, murther, murther! Oi'm kilt, kilt, kilt!"

Prout ran towards him, trod on the eel, and fell. And then, bellowing like a bull, Prout became a human ball, and rolled over the deck. He was up in an instant, and a man with a whole pack of wolves behind him never climbed a tree any faster than Prout shinned up the nearest vertical column.

"I deaded—ow! I deaded—deaded!" moaned Gan-Waga.

"Murther! Foire! Save me!" shrieked Barry, as he danced on the locker.

"Help—help!" roared Prout, clinging to the column.

The men were speechless. Suddenly Maddock smote his thigh.

"The heel, sir—the heel!"

"The what, Ben?"

"Of course!" cried Ching-Lung, "it is the eel! It's given them a shock!"

"An electric eel," said Rupert, the truth dawning on him.

"That's about the size of it. They swarm in many South

NEXT
TUESDAY!

"FRANK NUGENT'S GREAT WHEEZE!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.
Order Early.

American rivers and lakes, and there seems to be a few of them here. He was about defunct, or he might have hurt them badly. Here, lads, stop that row. It's all over."

Prout slid down the steel pole, and sat with his arms round it, staring wildly round. Barry still danced, and Gan-Waga still moaned. Maddock, who had met with electric eels before, chuckled cruelly. Rupert and Ching-Lung went to examine the brute more closely. There were several greyish spots on its ugly head, each spot the size of a shilling.

"Here, Maddock, get hold of my hand, and call up the other chaps. We'll try a shock. It can't hurt much going through the lot of us. Now, Ru, old chap!"

Very much against their will, Barry and Prout were made to join the line. Maddock, who was at the end, placed one finger on Gan-Waga's nose. Then Ching-Lung touched the ugly head.

They received quite a powerful shock, and when Gan-Waga felt it on his snub nose he roared again. The eel was dropped overboard.

"Bedad!" said Barry, "whin Oi felt the pins-and-needles, Oi thought Oi'd dropped into a bag full of fish-hooks! Oi just touched the thing to pull ut out of the way, and ut bit me all over. Niver agen will Oi touch an eel, av Oi live to the age of me Uncle Pether's donkey, which is afoive yet av ut ain't dead."

"And me was goin' to eat 'um!" groaned Gan-Waga.

"Troth," grinned Barry, "ut would have been a docthor and a few poultices yez wud have wanted!"

Prout had a dreamy, far-away look in both eyes for quite an hour afterwards. Moving steadily, and as close to the ground as possible, they passed over the spot where lay the ashes of Argal-Dinjat's fire—the fire that had saved the Afghan's life.

"If Argal found the way in, Ru," said Ching-Lung, "I don't see why we shouldn't find the way out, do you?"

"It all depends, old boy. The opening may be at the end of some long, winding gallery. If any light gets in we'll find it right enough. I've given up the idea of trying to make a plan of the place. After all, we'll never come here again, so what's the use? It would take a month to do it properly."

"You're a lazy ruffian!" laughed the prince. "If you can't work, let us eat. We'll descend here, and get some grub."

The aeronef settled lightly, and they had no difficulty in obtaining coal. Maddock enlisted the services of Gan-Waga as under-cook. Slices cut from the pike were soon sizzling, and these, with biscuits, frozen butter, coffee, and marmalade, made as good a meal as could be wished for.

"That coal has a strong smell," said Thurston.

"It's the sulphur in it. The place is half sulphur."

The enamelled plates, dishes, and cups were washed and stowed away, and the aeronef rose once more. The machinery was in perfect order, and behaved splendidly. Built as the aeronef had been, with so many difficulties to overcome, it was a triumph. The men called it the "Pup," the "King of the Skies," and the "Big Un." They had not extinguished the fire, but its light rapidly died away behind them.

"Let's try how high the roof is here," suggested Rupert.

The suspensory screws revolved faster as he gave the signal. "Eight hundred feet!" cried Ching-Lung, after a long pause.

Then his voice came again:

"One thousand!"

Still the watchers saw no sign of the roof of the cavern.

"Twelve hundred and fifty!"

They saw it at last, as smooth and polished as ever.

"What a vast place it is!" said Rupert. "If it covers the whole base of the mountain, it must be twenty miles across! Lower away, Ben. If we mean to follow the river, we'd better get along."

Once more the gallant little aeronef sank through the darkness, and once more the river gleamed below them. Then a dull, trembling roar swept through the gloom, growing louder as they advanced.

"That's a waterfall, Ru."

"I should think so, old chap!"

"I'll stake my pigtail on it!" answered Ching-Lung. "Go easy, Ben!"

The noise grew so tremendous that conversation was utterly impossible. The water, almost still and stagnant above, was now sliding downwards with ever-increasing velocity. Prout turned all three lights full ahead. A cry of wonder and delight broke from all as Maddock checked the aeronef.

The river fell into a mighty chasm, and one vast fan of spray rose five hundred feet into the air, each drop glistening in the light with a thousand-colours. They had seen the falls of the Zambesi and Niagara, but neither were so surpassingly beautiful as this.

"Here's a photograph for you, Ching!" cried Thurston, in Ching-Lung's ear.

"The other side will be better. Ru."

Ching-Lung sprang to the wheel. They soared over the

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 222.

Read the grand new story of the "THE SCHOOLBOY MUTINEERS!" in this week's "GEM" Library. Juniors of St. Jim's, entitled: Now on Sale. Price One Penny.

spray, and sank. Prout swung the searchlights round again. Here the water fell like a solid wall far into unknown depths. It was impossible to photograph it. It would have taken hundredweights of magnesium powder to illuminate the vast space sufficiently.

Slowly Ching-Lung allowed the aeronef to sink. The wild clamour that came up from the abyss compelled them to thrust their fingers into their ears. The grandeur of the sight thrilled them. Lower and lower still amid the chaos of noise! And then the aeronef was hovering over the most stupendous whirlpool mortal eyes had ever seen!

"Light! Light!"

Ching-Lung and O'Rooney give a Swimming Entertainment —A Mountain on Fire.

They looked astern. There was a dull-blue glimmer behind them. It turned from blue to white as the aeronef sailed over the whirlpool. Here again was a second chasm, into which the waters thundered, and beyond that—light.

"Trees!" yelled Prout.

The aeronef sped out into the sweet, warm air, and the light made their eyes smart. They were in a tremendous ravine, so high that only a thin streak of sky could be seen above. A silvery stream, full of darting fish, watered it. It was carpeted with soft grass and gorgeous flowers, and overhung by trees whose roots were embedded in clefts of the rock.

"A paradise," said Thurston.

"Chal-vadhoar," said O'Rooney.

"What's that, Barry? Is it something to eat?"

"No, yer Hoighness," answered Barry. "Ut manes the place of bliss. Oi've hearrd the dirrthy natives talk about ut, though not wan of thim sames to know where ut is. They think their sows come here whin they turnn up their toes, which is Frinch for doieim. Bedad, Oi've niver seen a luvlier spoot since Oi left Ould Oireland!"

"Nor I," said Ching-Lung. "This is a discovery. Thank goodness for a bit of real green grass again! This is where I get down, conductor."

Barry was so enraptured that he broke into poetry:

"Oh, for to pick the buttercups and chase the bumblebee!

"Oh, for to paddle in the strhame and get home late for tea!

"Oh, for to weave a daisy-chain and be a little child again!"

Prout grasped his shoulder, and shook him.

"Eh, what is ut?"

"Wake up, and have a seidlitz-powder," said Prout soothingly.

"Is the pore man ill?" asked Maddock.

"He's only wanderin' in his mind, Ben. Treat him gently. Barry, let me feel your pulse."

O'Rooney looked at him stonily.

"What does it want, Tom?"

"It wants to wear a daisy-chain, the little pet!" grinned Prout.

"And catch bumblebees!" said Gan-Waga.

"And come home late for tea!" added the steersman.

Barry said not a word, but he slowly began to peel off his coat. As actions speak louder than words, and Barry had two fists like coconuts, they let him alone.

"Be just what you like, old chap," said Prout. "We don't mind, do we, Ben?"

"Not a jot," said Ben.

"Thank yez, gintlemen. Oi'm much obliged. Ut's mighty kind of yez entiorely!"

The ravine was certainly a paradise. Ching-Lung took a number of photographs, and then produced his whistle. Barry and Ben Maddock danced a jig against each other for a new pipe and a pound of tobacco, and Barry won. After that they played cricket with an improvised bat and ball, Ching-Lung playing the whole party, and giving them three innings each. But the ball was alive when Ching-Lung bowled, and it did the most extraordinary things. And when Ching-Lung's first innings came, nothing on earth could get him out, so the game was abandoned.

There was a pool about ten feet deep, and as clear as crystal. They had a glorious swim, and Ching-Lung and Gan-Waga played all sorts of pranks under water—eating, smoking, drinking, and waltzing. So bright and pure was the water that every movement could be seen distinctly. Gan-Waga revelled. He clambered up the cliff, followed by Ching-Lung. Higher, higher they went, until the men held their breath. They looked like dolls.

"Allez, allez!" came the faint shout. "Prenz garde!" (take care).

It was the old circus cry.

One of the doll-like figures was rushing downwards through the air.

"Allez, allez!"

Splash!

Ching-Lung plunged headlong into the crystal pool, throwing up torrents of spray.

"Allo, allo, allo! Preppy good!"

Gan-Waga was imitating Ching-Lung's cry as best he could. Down he came, swift as an arrow, his body splendidly poised, magnificent diver and swimmer that he was. A shout of applause greeted the dive. He cut through the water like a knife.

Ching-Lung and Gan rose together, shook hands, bowed, and kissed each other.

"Bravo, bravo!"

"Me showd 'em somethin' elses, Chingy!" grinned Gan-Waga. "Come 'long and I tell yo'!"

"Don't do anything risky, Ching," said Rupert anxiously.

"You bet not, old chap. What is it, Gan?"

The Eskimo whispered in Ching-Lung's ear, and Ching-Lung nodded. Again they scaled the steep side of the ravine.

"By hokey!" gasped Prout. "They'll kill themselves!"

Far up on the height Ching-Lung was standing upon Gan-Waga's shoulders. Gan-Waga clasped the prince's ankles.

"Moy wurd," muttered O'Rooney, earnestly watching them, "they'll be pulped!"

"Allez, allez! Prenez garde! Allez!"

They were coming, diving like one person.

Splash!

The next instant two grinning faces appeared.

"We're going to pass round the hat after that lot," said Ching-Lung. "Professor Gan-Waga will now give you an imitation of the human eel. Professor, we are waiting."

Gan-Waga kissed his hand to the audience, waited for a moment for the current to wash the discoloured water out of the pool, and dived. He burrowed into the sand at the bottom, until every vestige of his body was hidden, and then began to blow up bubbles of air.

"I will now show you how to catch the eel," said Ching-Lung.

He plunged into the water, and burrowed after the eel. Mud and sand rose until nothing could be seen, but it was evident a tremendous struggle was going on below. The water cleared slowly. There was no sign of the two men.

"Great Scott," said Rupert, "they've been down four minutes!"

Another minute passed. Prout threw off his clothes.

"Six minutes!" gasped Rupert.

What man could live under water for six minutes? Prout was about to dive, when a voice behind them remarked:

"I've caught the eel, spectators!"

There was Ching-Lung, with Gan-Waga on his back.

"How on earth—"

"Not on earth, old chap, but in water!" laughed Ching-Lung. "We just kicked up a lot of dust—er—mud, and swam down stream in it. Naturally, mud being thick, you didn't see us. We crawled out just where the stream bends, and toddled back. Eel, get down, for you're no feather. We'd better be getting back now."

They dressed reluctantly. It seemed a sin to have to leave the beautiful ravine, and return to the black cavern, with its sulphurous air and perpetual gloom.

"Just want more smoke," pleaded Barry, "while I compose a little poem."

"Five minutes, then," said Ching-Lung.

"U'll do for me, sor. In foive minutes the first verse will be complete."

Barry stared at the thin streak of sky, and thought hard.

"Time's up!" shouted Ching-Lung. "Have you finished?"

"Yis, sor."

"Then, let's hear it."

"Yez'll croy, sor, av Oi tell ut."

Get your handkerchiefs out, then, lads, and get ready! Spout away!"

Barry wiped his eyes, and assumed a weary look as he murmured:

"An Eskimo and Chinaman wance cloimbed upon a rock,

And Oi knowed av they fell off ut they wud get a nasty shock.

These two bould bhoys cloimbed up that rock to doive into a pool,

And the man what plays a thrick loike that is what Oi calls a—"

O'Rooney stopped and scratched his head.

"Bedad," he said innocently, "Oi've forgot the last word!"

Ching-Lung strode across to the poet, while the men grinned.

"What's the last word?"

"Faith, isn't that what Oi'm axin meself, sor?"

"Is it 'fool'? Do you dare to call me a fool?"

"'Fool' does rhyme wid ut," said Barry thoughtfully, "doesn't ut?"

"Do you dare to call me—me a fool?" cried Ching-Lung, pretending to be very angry.

"Plaze, sor," said Barry, "is ut your pome or moine?"

"Yours, certainly!"

"Thin kindly be good enough, sor, to lave my property alone!" chuckled Barry, "and thank yez kindly!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 222.

EVERY TUESDAY, **The "Magnet"** LIBRARY. ONE PENNY.

"You must mean 'jooli,'" said Ching-Lung. "That's the way you pronounce 'jewel.'"

"So Oi did. That's ut—'is what Oi call a jooli.'"

All went well for a time. They passed up the shaft down which the torrent thundered, and sailed through the everlasting cloud of spray. Quite a long period elapsed before they could get rid of the white spots and patches which danced before their eyes after being so long in the daylight. The roar of the great waterfall became a murmur, and they could converse again without difficulty.

"Jove, Ching!" said Rupert. "I sha'n't forget that ravine for a bit! What a contrast to this dismal den of darkness! I was as merry as a ragged-school boy out in the country for the first time in his life."

"Well, old chap, it wasn't so dusty," admitted his Highness.

"Gan made me grin. He didn't like any of it, except the water, and he said that was 'bad 'nough nasty; too warm.' I asked him what kind of landscape he did admire."

"What did he say?"

"Nicebugs and showers," grinned Ching-Lung. "They are butterful, especially the nicebugs!"

Thurston laughed. After all, it was only natural for a child of the North to love the ice and snow which those born in more southerly latitudes detested. Barry was listening, and when he heard that Gan-Waga described an "ice-berg" as a "nicebug," he chuckled loud and deep.

"Phew!" said Ching-Lung. "I never smelled the sulphur so strongly before—did you?"

"No, I'm hanged if I did!"

Ching-Lung sniffed the air. The odour of sulphur was more than pronounced. They all began to cough and splutter as the noxious fumes dried their throats.

"Ut smells loike a place Oi'm too much of a gentleman to name!" growled O'Rooney, with a sneeze.

"Atchoo! Atchoo!"

Barry led off, and a whole chorus of sneezes followed. The fumes were more powerful. It was a torture to breathe.

"It's the fire we left!" shouted Ching-Lung. "There it is. Look how it has spread!"

Peering forward, they saw a mass of faint, bluish flame. It extended across the cavern for forty or fifty yards. The veins of sulphur that ran through the coal and slag were ablaze. There was an incline towards the stream, and the molten sulphur was trickling down the slope.

The air was impregnated with the noxious fumes. Though they were about six hundred yards away from the fire, it was an agony to draw in a breath. Their eyes smarted as if scorching.

"We've done a pretty thing, Ru!" gasped Ching-Lung. "What will it be like over the fire?"

A fit of coughing prevented Thurston from answering.

"Handkerchiefs, lads!" cried Ching-Lung. "Wet them in the water-keg, and tie them over your mouths and nostrils. Hurry up!"

They were sneezing and spluttering as if the air had been filled with snuff. They obeyed orders promptly. Gan-Waga had lost his handkerchief. So he sat down with the empty keg over his head. The fumes had gathered like a great cushion under the dome of the cavern, driven up by the heat below. Ching-Lung set the engines going at their best pace, and the aeroplane rushed forward.

When Ching-Lung removed the handkerchief the air was as sweet as it ever could be in that sunless pit.

"Now, Ru," he said, "we've started the fun, and we've got to stop it. If we don't, it might go on burning for years, and choke us out before we knew it."

"But it will take a long time for the fumes to reach the camp."

"How can we tell? Nothing rips along like fire when it once gets a start. The coal will go next, and it will burn like a furnace. We've got to stop it, old chap."

"But how can we?"

"There's plenty of water."

"We can't go with buckets, Ching. We'd be stifled off the map in two minutes, and we haven't got an engine or horse."

Ching-Lung chuckled. The aeroplane was falling steadily.

"I'm going to try, anyhow," he said. "You noticed where the water first began to run down to the falls—I mean, the place where we first noticed a current. I saw two big rocks there, one on each side of the stream. I'd be ashamed to go back and tell them what asses we'd made of ourselves. If we were driven out of the cavern by the fumes it would be all U P with Honour's motor-car, for the simple reason that we couldn't get the materials. I'm going to try and dam the water by blowing up those rocks. If the trick works the dam will fill and flood the cavern."

(Another long instalment of this thrilling serial story next week.)

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NEXT TUESDAY!

"FRANK NUGENT'S GREAT WHEEZE!"

By FRANK RICHARDS. Order Early.

My Readers' Page.



GRAND,
NEW,
WEEKLY
FEATURE.

"FRANK NUGENT'S GREAT WHEEZE!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.

Next Tuesday's grand, long, complete tale of the chums of Greyfriars will be presented under the above title, and for a really grand school story my chums, when they have read it, will pronounce it hard to beat. Magnetites have learned to expect something startling from Harry Wharton & Co. by this time, and next Tuesday they will not be disappointed. To make sure of getting next week's MAGNET Library without any unnecessary delay, my readers will find it advisable to

ORDER IN ADVANCE.

AN APT LETTER.

I have pleasure in publishing this week part of a chatty letter from a girl reader hailing from Broughton, who is particularly happy in the neat expressions in which she gives her opinion of her favourite paper. This is what she says:

"I have read your paper for a long time, in fact, we—I mean my brothers and sisters—have taken THE MAGNET ever since we can remember. I like it very much. My brother was once talking to our rector, and he asked him whether public schoolboys really did play such tricks as were recorded in the books; and the rector answered that they did, but that they did plenty of work as well. Where I work there are a lot of girls, and a good few of them read your papers, and the others say we—THE MAGNET readers—are more like boys; but we sail on, and never bother. All back numbers mother sends to the hospital, and they are, I have no doubt, as good as a dose of medicine.

"I will close now, wishing your papers lifelong success.

"Your sincere reader,

"Dorothy E."

I am interested to hear the opinion of the reverend gentleman, himself, no doubt, an old public schoolboy, on our famous school stories. I am also glad to hear of the sensible way in which Miss Dorothy E. and her friends reply to their critics. They simply "Sail on, and never bother!" Bravo, my Broughton reader! Your last remark about the back numbers of THE MAGNET Library being as good as a dose of medicine to the poor hospital patients is very apt, and I am sure will be confirmed by many of your fellow readers.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

Percy W. W., East Dulwich.—Thank you for long letter and suggestions. I will put the notice you request in the Back Numbers Column of "The Gem" in due course. The answers to your questions are: 1.—No; as far as I know, the Academy is not closed. 2.—No book under the title you mention has been published in the "B. F. 3d. Complete Library," or anywhere else, as far as I am aware. 3.—I am afraid I must plead guilty to ignorance in regard to this question. Next time you hear the expression used ask the user the meaning of it.

James S., "Auriga," and others.—To train for a midshipman in the Royal Navy it is necessary to enter the Royal Naval Training College at Osborne, for which nomination is required. The fees are £75 per annum, which in some cases is reduced to £40 per annum, for sons of officers. For the Mercantile Marine there are two training ships—the Worcester, in the Thames, and the Conway, in the Mersey. Fees for both these ships are £65 per annum. In addition to the foregoing, there is the ocean-going training-ship Port Jackson, owned by Messrs. Devitt and Moore, for which the fees are from £60 to £70 per voyage of nine months. If a course of training on any of the above ships is impossible, you can become apprenticed at the age of fifteen to a shipowner, at a premium of from £10 to £50, which is sometimes returned in wages. The cost of outfit should be set down as an additional cost of about £10 to £15.

J. C. B., Oldham.—Thanks for your letter. The answers to your questions are: 1.—Yes. 2.—Not at present. 3.—Blake is chief of the Fourth-Formers in the School House of St. John's; Figgins, of those of the New House.

Harry D., and Frank Nugent, Plumstead.—I am afraid your remarks are too much in the style of an advertisement to be published here, but I am interested to have heard from you. You will have seen the explanation of the closing down of the Correspondence Exchange in a previous issue.

"Magnetite and Gemite," Birmingham.—I am glad to have your suggestions. The cure of stuttering is largely a matter of will-power. Speak slowly, and think of what you want to say, making up in your mind that you will not stutter.

E. N., Stockport.—Thanks for your letter. In regard to your question about your handwriting, I prefer style No. 1 to any of the others. It is the most legible, and might well develop into very good handwriting.

BACK NUMBERS.

At the request of my readers, I have decided in future to set apart a small space every week on this page for notices concerning back numbers of THE MAGNET, "The Gem," and "The Boys' Friend 3d. Libraries," which may be offered for disposal, or wanted. Many of my chums have written to me to say that they have found the corner which is usually set apart for similar notices in the Chat Page of "The Gem" Library a great convenience, and they do not see why similar facilities should not be extended to MAGNET readers through the medium of their own journal. Well, my chums, neither do I. So here is the heading you desire.

HOW TO REPAIR A CRICKET BAT.

Many a cricket-bat will be found to drive better after a season's use than when it is new, and most cricketers find it quite worth while to doctor up an old favourite rather than invest in a brand new willow for the season. A little trouble and skill applied in the right way will be found to go far in repairing the ravages of previous use in your favourite bat.

The bat should first be oiled thoroughly; and to do this you should obtain some linseed-oil, and rub a small quantity into the wood with the fingers. If a bat has been used at all, on examination, it will be found to suffer from a number of dents, especially at the bottom. Round these dents there will be found tiny splinters of wood. In the oiling great care must be taken not to disturb these, or it will make the bat much harder to repair.

After rubbing the oil well into the wood, see that there is no deposit on the surface, and set it on one side to stand for an hour or two. If the bat is in need of repair there will be found down the surface a number of dark streaks, where the oil has soaked in. These are the parts that require "pegging." Examine the bat very carefully, and mark with a pencil the most serious cracks. These should be attended to without delay, as if it is left a day the bat will probably be forgotten until it is next to be used, and will be further spoiled.

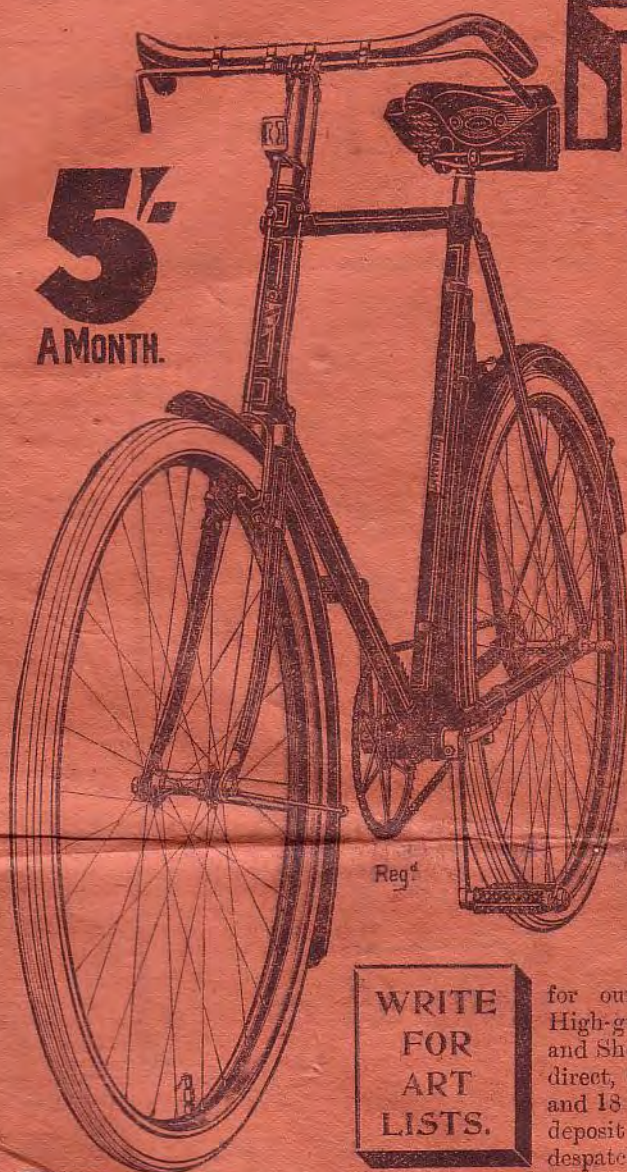
If the cracks run in one direction only, with the grain, they can be mended by simply pegging. Pegging is done in the following manner:

The pegs have first to be made. They should be of some hard wood, and shaped to about the size of a match. When these are all ready to hand, the actual pegging can be started on. A row of little holes have to be made, close to the marked places, with a very fine bradawl. The blade of the bat should be held uppermost while boring, and a finger should be pressed along the crack so as to force the jagged ends into position. Before boring see that the pressure of the finger has forced all the oil out of the crack. When satisfied that all is right, make the holes, and do not remove the fingers until the pegs have been driven home. Then with a sharp knife pare away the edges until they are quite flush with the surface of the blade, and also cut off any hair splinters that may project.

All the cracks running with the grain may be treated in the same manner, when the bat, unless it suffers from a compound crack, will be ready for use.

The method of binding a cricket-bat will be dealt with next week.

THE EDITOR.



5
A MONTH.

THE WORLD'S BIGGEST BICYCLE BARGAIN.

Write to us **TO-DAY** and we will gladly send you particulars of the most stupendous cycle bargains ever known. We have made sensational reductions in the price of all 1912 Gold Medal "QUADRANT" cycles, so that by buying **DIRECT FROM OUR FACTORY** you will now effect a saving of **POUNDS.**

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