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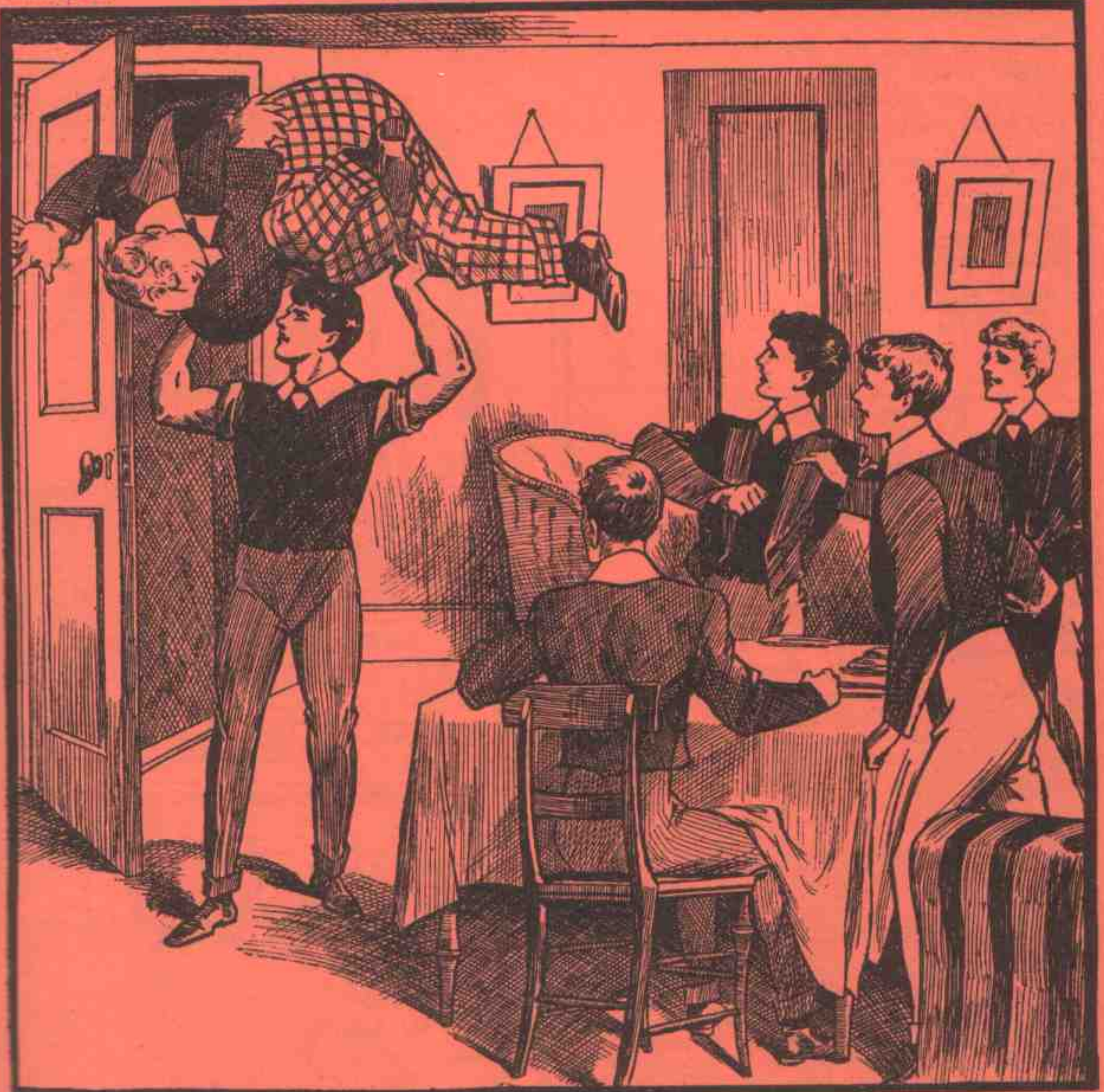
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School Tale of Harry Wharton &
Co. at Greyfriars.

- BY -
FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Too Good.

"**CAREFUL!**" said Bob Cherry.
"Awfully careful!" agreed Nugent.
"Awfully, fearfully careful!" said Harry Wharton,
the captain of the Remove Form at Greyfriars.
"Mind your P's and Q's this afternoon, you chaps."
"What ho!" said Johnny Bull emphatically.
And the chums of the Remove walked very sedately down
to the Remove Form-room.

As a rule, the Famous Four were not conspicuous for
exemplary behaviour. The Remove at Greyfriars were
indeed rather an unruly Form, and Harry Wharton & Co.
were very much like the rest. But on the present occasion
they had resolved to be good. They had resolved, in fact,
to be very, very good. Whether they would succeed in
carrying out their resolutions was another matter.

It might have been supposed from their good resolutions
and their sedate behaviour, that the Famous Four had been
reading "Derrick; or, Piece by Piece," or some other
encouraging literature of that sort, and that it had got into
their heads. But such was not the case. We should like to
state that the Famous Four had reflected upon the error of

their ways, and had resolved in future to be as good as
Good Little Georgie. But it would not be correct. The
fact of the matter was, that the chums of the Remove
wanted very particularly not to be detained that afternoon,
and the reason was that Hackenback's Circus had pitched
its tent—or, rather, its tents—within a cycle ride of Grey-
friars. And Harry Wharton & Co. wanted to go to the
circus.

It was a long cycle ride from Greyfriars to Fair Oaks, where
the circus was pitched; but the Famous Four were good
cyclists, and the weather was excellent for a long ride. But
if they should chance to be detained by their Form-master,
the idea would be "up." For that reason—a reason which
Good Little Georgie would have scorned—the four juniors
had resolved to be very, very good that afternoon in class.

Circuses did not often come to Greyfriars. It was a long
time since the chums of the Remove had had an opportunity
of seeing bareback riders and tumbling clowns and wonder-
ful acrobats. And they did not mean to miss this oppor-
tunity if they could help it.

Their faces were unusually grave as they walked solemnly
down the Form-room passage.

Tom Brown and Hazeldene, of the Remove, hailed them
cheerily.

"Tuck in your tuppenny!"

A dozen Removites were playing leap-frog in the Form-room passage, while the last few minutes before afternoon lessons elapsed. That amusement inside the House was forbidden, a fact which the juniors seemed to have forgotten. At any other time the Famous Four would have forgotten it, too; but just now they were very good. They fixed rebuking frowns upon the leap-froggers.

"Impossible!" said Harry Wharton. "Don't you know you're not allowed to play leap-frog outside the Form-rooms, you bad boys?"

Tom Brown staggered.

"Eh?"

"Suppose one of our respected masters came out of a Form-room, and you billed into him?" said Frank Nugent severely.

"I expect it would bowl him over," said Tom Brown, "and we should get licked! What's the matter with you?"

"Play up!" said Bulstrode. "Don't rot, you know!"

"As good boys, we are bound to respect the rules of the school," said Bob Cherry.

"M-m-my hat!"

"What's the matter with you?"

"Faith, and ye're off yer rocker!" gasped Micky Desmond. "Sure, it was only yisterday ye were playin' leap-frog here yerself!"

"I've seen the error of my ways since then!" said Bob Cherry loftily. "I've seen the light, and turned over a new leaf! Pray stand aside, you rough boys, and let us pass!"

"Mad!" said Tom Brown, the New Zealand junior, in a tone of perfect conviction. "Quite mad! When did you first feel it coming on, Cherry?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry waved his hand.

"Do be orderly, my dear boys!" he said. "You are disturbing our serenity. Come on, my dear schoolmates, and pay no heed to these rough persons!"

And the Famous Four walked into the Form-room, leaving the Removites gaping in wonder in the passage.

"Mad!" said Bulstrode. "Mad as hatters! Or else it's a rag!"

"Faith, and it's a rag intirely!" said Micky Desmond. The Irish junior followed Harry Wharton & Co. to the Form-room, and put his head in at the door. "I say, ye spalpeens, it ain't time for lessons yet!"

"Shoo!"

"Eh?"

"Shoo!" said Bob Cherry, waving his hand at Micky as if he were an intrusive chicken. "Shoo! Run away!"

"Faith, and I——"

"I entreat you, my dear schoolmate, to be good and orderly!" said Frank Nugent, in the manner of a finished prig, such as would have delighted the hearts of Little Georgie and his Kind Uncles. "Do not disturb our meditations!"

"Ye spalpeens!" roared Micky, exasperated. "Come and have a game before old Quelch——"

"Are you alluding to me, Desmond?"

Micky jumped clear of the floor as he heard the quiet voice of the Form-master behind him. He spun round, and blinked in dismay at Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, sir!" he gasped. "Yes, sir! No, sir! Oh, sir!"

"You are not very explicit, Desmond!"

"You—you see, sir—— Oh, sir—— 'Hem——"

"Go to your places, boys!"

The Removites went to their places. The Famous Four were already sitting at their desks, as good as gold. They had started well. They were early for lessons, and they were as quiet as mice.

Mr. Quelch gave them a curious glance for a moment. Perhaps he noticed something unusually exemplary in the behaviour of the chums of the Remove.

The other fellows glared at them.

They did not understand.

If it was a rag, they did not see the point of it; and if the Famous Four had indeed started in life as prigs of the first water, the Remove were quite certain to come down on them very heavily, and knock the nonsense out of them.

"I say, you fellows," whispered Billy Bunter, blinking round through his big spectacles—"I say, you know, what's the little game?"

The Famous Four were quite silent. They did not intend to be drawn into talking in class.

Bunter raised his whisper:

"I say, you fellows—— Yaro-o-oh!"

Bob Cherry hacked his ankle as a signal to be quiet, but it had the reverse effect upon Billy Bunter.

Mr. Quelch turned upon his class.

"What is that noise? Was that you, Bunter?"

"No, sir!" said Billy Bunter promptly.

"Bunter! It was your voice!" said the Form-master sternly. "Don't tell falsehoods, Bunter!"

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"Certainly not, sir!" said Bunter. "I hope you don't think me capable of such a thing, sir!"

"You called out, Bunter!"

"I—I didn't exactly call out, sir," said Bunter cautiously. "I—I felt a sudden pain, sir, and—and made a remark, sir!"

"If you make any further remarks of the same sort, Bunter, you will feel another pain, and more severely!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Ye-e-es, sir!"

Billy Bunter glared at Bob Cherry, and surreptitiously rubbed his ankle, but he did not make any more remarks.

The lessons proceeded, and the Famous Four devoted the most painstaking attention to them. Once or twice they almost caught themselves napping, but they pulled up in time.

Mr. Quelch's attention was drawn to them more than once, and his expression showed that he was surprised.

In the geography lesson, the chums showed a keen anxiety to know facts about populations and distances, and things of that kind which, as a rule, did not interest them in the least. In the mathematics lesson they acted as if their one desire was to revel in figures. In classics, they followed the fortunes of Caesar and Vercingetorix with an assiduity which both those gentlemen must have regarded as very flattering, if they had been present.

Mr. Quelch did not quite understand it. His first suspicion was that the Famous Four were "rotting." But their excellent and exemplary behaviour was kept up without a break, and he was convinced at last that the juniors meant business, and naturally he was pleased.

When the time came for the Remove to be dismissed, the Famous Four breathed sighs of relief. They had done wonderfully well, but the strain had been very great. There was no danger now of being detained, and in a few minutes they would be free—free to wheel out their bicycles and scorch away at top speed to Fairoaks and the circus.

"Dismiss!" said Mr. Quelch as the clock struck. "Wharton, Nugent, Cherry, Ball will remain a moment. I wish to speak to them."

"Yes, sir!" said the Famous Four in chorus.

They exchanged glances. There was no doubt that Mr. Quelch had noticed how extremely good they had been, and was about to bestow some words of commendation upon them. And the chums turned it over in their minds whether they could venture to spring upon the Form-master a request for a pass allowing them out late that evening. As they had been so good, surely he could not refuse!

The Remove marched out, and the Famous Four halted by Mr. Quelch's desk, with beatific smiles.

The Form-master coughed.

"You have been very attentive and very careful this afternoon, my boys," he said.

"Awfully careful, sir!" said Nugent.

"Awfully, fearfully careful, sir—I—I—I mean——" stammered Bob Cherry.

"What do you mean, Cherry?"

"I—I mean, yes, sir!"

"Very good! Now, as your behaviour has been so exemplary, I am about to entrust something to you, which otherwise I should have left to a prefect," said Mr. Quelch. "There is a new boy coming to Greyfriars this afternoon, and he arrives at Courtfield by the half-past five train. I have to send somebody to meet him and bring him to the school. He is a boy in very delicate health, and I wish him to be treated very kindly. He will be in the Remove, and I hope you boys will set the others an example of treating him with gentleness and forbearance. Your conduct this afternoon gives me great hopes of it. Will you oblige me by doing this for me? I should like you to fetch Banthorpe to the school."

They had evidently been too good!

Their goodness had borne fruit—unexpected fruit—and for a moment they suspected the Remove-master of having seen through them, and played this upon them as a little joke for their punishment. But his face was quite grave and kind. There was only one thing they could say—and they said it:

"Yes, sir!"

"Thank you very much!" said Mr. Quelch.

And the four unhappy juniors who had been too good walked out of the Form-room with feelings that were too deep for words.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Banthorpe Does Not Arrive.

"O HI!"

"Rotten!"

"Beastly!"

"Rats!"

Those were the remarks that the Famous Four made when

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The juniors stared at the scene, wild with delight. Loder and Carne swung round and round, Nobby turning just fast enough to keep them in motion. Inarticulate gasps and gurgles came from the unhappy seniors.
"Groo-oo! Lemme go!" exploded Loder. "Ow, I'm suffocated!" (See Chapter 10.)

they were safe in the passage. They paused there and looked at one another in utter dismay.

"Bang goes the circus!" said Bob Cherry dismally.

Johnny Bull grunted.

"This is what comes of being good! Yah!"

"Oh, it's rotten!" said Nugent. "Catch me being good and setting an example to the Form again! Grooh!"

"It was Wharton's idea to be good!" said Bob Cherry, with a gleam in his eyes.

"Yes, rather!"

"Dash it all, don't put it on me!" exclaimed Wharton, in alarm. "I didn't want to be gooder than anybody else. I thought it would work. It has worked—in a way."

"Yes—in this way!" roared Bob Cherry. "You ass!"

"You fathead!"

"You duffer!"

"Look here——" said Wharton.

"Oh, bump him!" said Bob Cherry, exasperated. "Bump him hard!"

"Hold on! Oh! Leggo! Yah!"

Bump!

The three exasperated juniors seized their leader and bumped him hard on the floor of the passage. Wharton mared.

Mr. Quelch stepped out of the Form-room and regarded the juniors in amazement.

"Dear me!" he said. "What is the matter?"

"N-n-nothing, sir!" stuttered Bob Cherry. "N-n-nothing

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of Harry Wharton & Co. next Tuesday:

at all! Wharton's just sitting down, sir. You prefer the floor, don't you, Wharton?"

Wharton gasped.

Mr. Quelch smiled.

"You will not be late at Courtfield, I hope?" he said.

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Wharton, scrambling up, looking very confused. "We're going at once, sir! We'll run over on our bikes."

"You will take care of Banthorpe?" said Mr. Quelch.

"Mind, I rely upon you not to play any jokes upon the new boy. He is very delicate, his uncle has informed Dr. Locke."

"Oh, certainly, sir!"

The juniors went dismally out into the Close.

"Never heard of anything quite so rotten as this!" said Bob Cherry. "If the chap's delicate, we can't even give him a ragging at the station. We're done all round!"

"Beastly!"

"I suppose we'd better go," growled Johnny Bull.

"Grrroo!"

The chums of the Remove wheeled out their bicycles. Instead of a long scorch over to Fair Oaks, and an entertainment at the circus, they were to ride to the railway-station at Courtfield, wait there for a totally uninteresting new boy, and bring him to Greyfriars—this side up with care, as Bob Cherry expressed it. It was a change in their programme which naturally exasperated them; and it all came from being good. But for that utterly uncalled-for goodness on their part, Loder or Walker or Valence of the Sixth might have

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been sent. It was really a thing for a prefect or a master to do; but they had been so good that it had been entrusted to them. If they could have had that afternoon over again they would have made a very different record.

They wheeled their bicycles out gloomily.

As they went down to the gates a good many of the Remove hailed them—still wondering at the extraordinary incidents of the afternoon in the Form-rooms.

"Goodness doesn't seem to agree with you chaps," said Bolsover, the bully of the Remove, scanning their gloomy faces. "You look down in the dumps."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Faith, and it's their consciences at work!" grinned Micky Desmond.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

And the Famous Four wheeled their machines out into the road and mounted.

"Going for a spin?" asked Mark Linley.

"Yes."

"Wait a few minutes, and I'll come with you, when I've got my jigger," exclaimed Lord Mauleverer.

"We're going to wait at a station to meet a bothering new kid."

"Oh! Begad! Thanks, I won't come!" said Mauleverer promptly.

And the chums of the Remove rode away.

They cheered up a little as they pedalled down the lane. They weren't going to Hackenback's Circus; but, after all, it was a glorious July day, and the roads were good, and the weather was perfect, and they were young and healthy, and they enjoyed the ride. They went round by way of the road, through the woods, and put on a good deal of speed at the finish to get into Courtfield in time.

Half-past five was chiming from Courtfield Church as they dashed up to the station.

"Hurray! We're in time!" said Bob Cherry, as he jumped off his machine.

They left the bicycles outside, and ran into the station.

There was the sound of a train whistle, and a whirr in the station. The 5.30 was coming in.

The four juniors planted themselves at the barrier and waited for the new boy to come out. They expected to know him at once—a new boy for a public school was not likely to be easily mistaken.

Three or four passengers came out, and then half a dozen more; but there was no boy among them.

The ticket-collector closed the gate.

"Hold on!" said Bob Cherry. "There's another passenger. We're waiting for a chap!"

The porter shook his head.

"No more here, sir!"

"My only hat! He's lost the train, then!"

"Or changed at the wrong station," said Harry Wharton.

"Or gone on to Friardale."

"Well, if this isn't ghastly!" said Johnny Bull, in utter disgust. "We've given up the giddy circus to meet him, and he hasn't come. I'll jolly well punch his silly head when he does come!"

"Better wait a bit, and see."

The juniors waited for ten minutes, in case the new boy should have lost himself in some wrong part of the station, instead of finding his way out. But he did not appear. Another train came in, but it did not bring Banthorpe.

"Disgusting!" growled Bob Cherry.

"Rotten!"

"I fancy I know what's the matter," said Bob, with a sniff. "The train comes through Fair Oaks, you know, and perhaps the young beggar has got out to see the circus."

"My hat! He wouldn't!"

"He might! Anyway, it's no good waiting here any longer! Let's get off! Oh, shouldn't I like to punch somebody's head?"

The juniors cycled back to Greyfriars very much out of humour.

"Where's the new chap?" asked Bolsover, as they came in.

"He hasn't turned up."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at, you silly ass?" demanded Bob Cherry, and he pushed his bike past Bolsover and wheeled it into the shed.

The Removites had to go to Mr. Quelch's study to report. The Form-master looked at them as they came in, as if in expectation of seeing another with them.

"You have brought Banthorpe?" he asked.

"No, sir," said Wharton; "he hasn't come."

"Dear me! Did he not arrive by the train?"

"No, sir."

"You waited for the next?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very extraordinary!" said Mr. Quelch. "Perhaps the

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boy has taken the wrong train. He may have forgotten to change at Fair Oaks, and gone on to London. It is very unfortunate. However, I am much obliged to you, my boys."

"Not at all, sir!" said Harry Wharton politely.

And the juniors left the Remove-master's study. It was too late to think of going over to the circus, and they had to content themselves with a row with Coker, of the Fifth.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The New Boy for Greyfriars.

"ARTHUR!"

"Yes, Uncle Henry?"

"For goodness' sake, look a little more cheerful!" said Mr. Henry Banthorpe irritably.

"Yes, uncle."

"What is the matter with you—anything?"

"No, uncle."

"Have you got your ticket safe?"

"Yes, uncle."

"Yes, uncle!" "No, uncle!" growled Mr. Banthorpe.

"I never saw such a boy! One might imagine that you had a cruel and hard-hearted uncle by your behaviour, sir!"

Arthur Banthorpe looked up timidly at the big, stout, overbearing man who stood by the carriage door with a frowning brow. Arthur Banthorpe was going to Greyfriars School, and his uncle and guardian was seeing him off at the station.

It was not affection that led Mr. Banthorpe to see his nephew off—he had some lingering idea in his mind that Arthur might bolt instead of going to the school. The delicate-looking lad sitting in the corner of the carriage did not look exactly as if he were suited for the life of a Lower Form in a public school. He was of frail physique, with a hesitating manner, and eyes that drooped before his uncle's frowning glance.

His timidity perpetually irritated Mr. Banthorpe, who was far from realising that he was himself chiefly the cause of it. He was a stern and hard man, and he did not know how deeply his sternness and hardness had scared and almost terrified the timid boy who was under his charge.

Arthur had grown up in the shadow of Mr. Banthorpe's frown, and he might have welcomed the prospect of going away to school as an escape from it. But his nerve and his energy had all gone under his hard training, and he looked forward with uneasy fear to his new life. At the same time, he would never have dreamed of incurring his uncle's wrath by disobeying him. He had to go to Greyfriars, and he went like a sheep to the slaughter.

Mr. Banthorpe pursed his heavy lips and growled. Arthur trembled a little, and shrank back further into his seat, as if he expected a blow. Mr. Banthorpe had never struck his nephew, and never thought of doing so; but he always gave an impression that he might do so next moment. Some men are born to be bullies, and Henry Banthorpe was one of them, though he would have been very much surprised if he had been told so.

"You will reach Courtfield at half-past five," said Mr. Banthorpe, in his peculiar grinding voice. "Don't forget to change at Fair Oaks!"

"No, uncle."

"You will have to wait there half an hour."

"Yes, uncle."

"I suppose you will have sense enough to take the right train?"

"Yes, uncle."

"Mind, no nonsense!" said Mr. Banthorpe, with a terrific frown. "I know you don't want to go to school, and you'd rather get away to your Aunt Alice."

Arthur sighed. There was no doubt about that.

"Mind," said his uncle raspily, "I shall write to Dr.

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Locke as soon as your train is gone, and he will write to me to-morrow to tell me that you have arrived at Greyfriars! If I do not receive his letter acknowledging your arrival, I shall know you have had the impudence to deceive me, sir!"

Arthur gasped. He wondered if the train would never start.

"And then," rasped on Mr. Banthorpe, "I shall know how to deal with you! I have never been strict enough with you; that is what is the matter."

"Yes, uncle!"

"Mind, you are to go straight to Greyfriars!"

"Yes, uncle."

"There! The train is going! Good-bye!" grunted Mr. Banthorpe.

"Good-bye, uncle!"

"And, for goodness' sake, look a little more cheerful!"

"Yes, uncle."

The train started.

Mr. Banthorpe's heavy figure and iron face and perpetual frown vanished with the station, and Arthur Banthorpe had started for Greyfriars.

He sat in his corner seat, motionless.

He was going to a strange place, where he would have to look out for himself. If he could only have gone to his Aunt Alice, the poor boy thought, as he sat there in dumb misery. Mr. Banthorpe declared that his Aunt Alice spoiled him and coddled him and made a spooney of him. It was probably true enough. But Mr. Banthorpe himself was making a coward and a weakling of him.

Arthur Banthorpe sat with a heavy heart while the train rushed on.

He was roused at last from a gloomy reverie by the name of Fairoaks shouted by the porters.

He rose hurriedly, remembering that he was to change there. He stepped out of the train, and found himself in a crowd of people. The noise and the crowd and the hurry and bustle scared him. He remembered that he had half an hour to wait, and he walked out of the station to seek a quiet spot, where he could brood undisturbed, and where people would not notice the tear stains on his cheeks. His box was registered through, and he did not have to trouble about that.

But there was unusual excitement in the little town of Fairoaks that afternoon.

As Arthur emerged from the station there was a roar of voices, a trampling of feet and hoofs, and the thumping of a drum.

Pom, pom, pom, pom!

If the boy had not felt so crushed and broken and utterly depressed in spirits, he might have taken a bovish interest in what he saw. A circus was marching through the town; it was the regular afternoon procession of Hackenback's Circus, to advertise the show they were giving that evening on the pitch outside the town.

Pom, pom, pom, pom!

A clown, seated backwards upon a horse, was beating the drum, to an accompaniment of laughter and cheers from the populace.

After the clown came a procession of horses and elephants and caravans gaily decorated, and after them, nearly all the more youthful portion of Fairoaks.

Pom, pom, pom, pom!

A lad in spangles, who was riding a barebacked horse, caught Arthur's eye. He was a lad of Arthur's own age and size, but otherwise, how different! His form was muscular, his eyes steady and strong, his manner cool and resolute. He had led a hard life, and it had hardened him and fitted him to face the world. Nobby Nobbs, the acrobat, bareback rider, and champion Strong Boy of the Universe, was a very different fellow from the delicate lad in Etons and shining silk hat who was looking at him timidly from the crowded pavement.

The circus lad caught Arthur's timid glance, and smiled. He reached out with his riding-whip and gave the lad a gentle tap on the nose.

"Cheer up, my son!" he said genially.

Then he passed on. The crowd grinned, and many of them stared at Arthur, who drew back with a crimson face at thus having public attention fastened upon him. He tried to get through the crowd, but everybody was following the circus procession, and he was rushed along with the rest.

Out of the town, down to the bare, breezy common, the circus and the crowd thronged on, amid a roar and a buzz. Arthur tried to disentangle himself from the throng in vain. When at last he was free he found himself on the common within sight of the circus encampment, where a curious crowd were staring at the big tent and the caravans and the horses. From the town came the chime of a clock.

Arthur started in terror.

Five!

It was time for the train!

He started to run madly back to the station, although he knew that he could never hope to reach it in time. There was a yell of warning from Nobby Nobbs, who was standing

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at the doorway of the big tent. Captain Corker, the Bareback Marvel, was riding a couple of horses across the common, amid shouts from the spectators, and Arthur, in his confusion and hurry, had started to run directly across their path.

"Look out!"

"Mind where you're going!"

"You young fool!"

Nobby Nobbs sprang out of the tent and dashed after Arthur. Captain Corker, his face going suddenly white under its paint, tried to make his steeds swerve in time. He almost succeeded, but as Arthur halted, terrified, confused, the shoulder of one of the swerving horses smote him, and he was hurled violently to the ground.

"My 'at!" gasped Captain Corker.

Nobby ran to the side of the fallen boy.

"You young duffer!" the circus boy exclaimed. "Did you want to be run over?"

Arthur made no reply.

"My word, he's fainted!"

Arthur lay insensible in the rough grass.

A crowd gathered round.

"It's all right, people," said Nobby cheerfully. "He was frightened, and he's fainted. Help me to carry him into the tent. My mother'll look after him."

Herr Hackenback, the proprietor of the world-famed circus, came up with a frowning brow.

"Mein Gott!" he ejaculated. "Tat poor poy! Garry him in, ain't it?"

"Lend a 'and, sir," said Nobby.

"Tat is right. It is all serene, shentlemen, ain't it? Vo looks after tat poor poy."

And Herr Hackenback and Nobby Nobbs carried Arthur into the tent.

And at Courtfield Station Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, waited in vain for the new boy who did not come. Bob Cherry had hazarded the suggestion that he had stopped at the circus at Fairoaks, but he little guessed in what way he had stopped there.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Nobby Knows a Way.

ARTHUR BANTHORPE opened his eyes.

He was lying in bed in a small room, which he soon discovered to be part of a caravan. He gazed wildly round him. The place he was in was small and barely furnished, but it was scrupulously clean. A motherly-looking woman was seated beside him, and his face was damp with bathing.

"He's come to," said Mrs. Nobbs, with great relief.

"Don't be afraid, young gentleman; you are all right here."

"Where am I?" gasped Arthur.

"You're in my caravan, bless your dear heart," said Mrs. Nobbs. "Don't you remember—you was knocked down by a horse on the common? But you're not hurt. The doctor's been to see you from Fairoaks."

Arthur made a motion to rise.

"I—I must go!" he gasped. "I—I shall be late at the school."

A gentle hand pressed him down again.

"You can't go yet, dear heart," said Mrs. Nobbs.

"Doctor's orders. You're not to be moved. You was in a very low state of health, my dear boy, and you must keep quiet. Perhaps in a day or two we'll see."

Arthur started.

"What—what time is it?" he gasped.

Mrs. Nobbs listened. The blare of music from the great tent had died away, and she knew the time by that.

"Ten o'clock."

"Ten o'clock at night?" stammered Arthur.

"Yes."

"Oh! I—I must get to Greyfriars. My uncle will know that I have not gone—he will think I have run away," shrieked Arthur. "I—I can't stay here—I dare not! He will write to the Head to ask if I have arrived. Oh, dear! I must go."

Mrs. Nobbs shook her head.

"You can't go," she said; "I'm looking after you, my dear. But we will send for your relations. Where is your mother?"

Arthur moaned.

"Mother? Mother's dead!"

Mrs. Nobbs's eyes were moist.

"My poor little fellow!" she said softly. "I'm sorry I asked you. Your father, then—"

"Father died a long time ago. I live with my uncle," said Arthur. "He's sent me to Greyfriars—I've got to get there to-night. If I don't get there to-night my uncle will know. Oh, dear—oh, dear!"

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"You mustn't take on like that, dear. Herr Hackenback will explain to your uncle—"

Arthur shook his head wildly.

"You don't know my uncle!" he gasped. "He is hard and cruel. He will think I am shamming because I don't want to go to school. I—I—I'm afraid of him. I dare not stay here. Let me go."

Mrs. Nobbs looked very distressed.

"Doctor said you wasn't to talk when you woke up," she said. "My dear boy— Oh! Here you are, Nobby!"

Nobby came into the caravan.

"Hallo! Woke up?" he said cheerfully. "'Ow do you feel now?"

"I must go!" cried Arthur.

Nobby stared.

"You're all right 'ere," he said.

"I've got to get to school. You don't understand. I've got to get to Greyfriars, or my uncle will think I've run away."

"Greyfriars," said Nobby thoughtfully. "I know where that is—that's over near Courtfield and Friardale. You belong to Greyfriars?"

"I am going there."

"Well, you can't go to-night, kid—"

"I must—I must!"

"Can't be did!" said Nobby, shaking his head. "But I'll tell you what, young shaver. I'll see if I can get a telegram sent saying you can't come, and explaining."

"Yes, that will be all right," said his mother.

Arthur gave a cry.

"No—no—no!"

"Why not?" Nobby asked, in surprise.

"My uncle! He knows I don't want to go to Greyfriars—he will think I'm shamming. I—I—I don't dare to do it! I must go!"

"Cheerful kind of uncle you've got, I must say!" murmured Nobby. "Look 'ere, kid, don't you worry, and we'll set this all right. I ain't nothing to do to-morrow—we're taking a three days' rest after this show—and I'll go and see your uncle, wherever he is, and explain."

"No—no—no! He would not believe you! No—no!"

Nobby's eyes gleamed.

"If he didn't, I should take the liberty of givin' 'im an upper-cut which would make him see stars," he remarked.

"Nobby!" said Mrs. Nobbs reprovingly.

Nobby grinned.

"All right, mother."

Arthur sank back in the bed. He began muttering wildly to himself, and Mrs. Nobbs bent over him with a white face.

"Run for the doctor, Nobby," she said. "He said he would come again to-night. The boy is going to be really ill."

"Right-ho, mum!"

Nobby disappeared. And when the medical gentleman came from Fair Oaks he pronounced that the boy certainly was going to be ill.

"He is in a low state, and has been on the verge of a breakdown for a good many months, I should think," he told Mrs. Nobbs. "The shock to-day has simply brought it on, and he seems to have a great fear of somebody on his mind. See that he isn't moved, and reassure him in every way if you can."

And Mrs. Nobbs said that she would, and the physician departed. Arthur was lying unconscious in the bed, moaning to himself. While Nobby ate his supper in the other compartment of the caravan, he could hear all that the suffering boy said, and he was very grave.

Arthur's fear of his uncle came out in all his wildly-muttered incoherences. The burden of his mutterings was that he must appear at Greyfriars that night, or his uncle would know, and his uncle would not believe that he had been kept away by accident.

"Bit rotten, this, mum," said Nobby, when his mother joined him at supper. "We shall have to look arter the kid for a bit if he can't be moved—"

"I'm sure we don't mind that, Nobby," said Mrs. Nobbs. "He is a dear little fellow, and he has been harshly treated and frightened."

"Course we don't mind it!" said Nobby. "'Tain't that. He can 'ave my bed and welcome, and I can doss in the tent. 'Tain't that. The trouble is 'bout his goin' to that blessed school. You see, it worries him, and that makes him bad."

Mrs. Nobbs nodded.

"We shall have to send them a message, Nobby," she said.

"He seems to be more afraid of that than of anythin' else," said her son.

"But what else can we do, Nobby?"

Nobby looked very thoughtful.

Arthur came to his senses a little later. Nobby sat beside his bed and looked at him, and Arthur turned a terrified gaze upon the circus lad.

"I must go!" he moaned.

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"Old on!" said Nobby cheerfully. "Take it calmly, and let's 'ear about it, and we'll see wot's to be done. You can trust me to 'elp you."

"Thank you! But I—I—I must go!"

"You was due at Greyfriars to-day, eh?"

"Yes, at half-past five."

"Ever been there before?"

"No."

"Got friends there?"

"No," said Arthur miserably. "I don't know a soul at the school. The whole place will be strange to me."

"You're expected, I suppose?"

"Yes, by the half-past five train at Courtfield. My box will have gone on already. They will think some accident has happened to me."

"Your uncle is a hard-fisted old gentleman, eh?"

"Yes," gasped Arthur.

"You're afraid to let him know you can't go to Greyfriars?"

"Yes, yes! I dare not!"

"But if he came and saw you ill—"

"He wouldn't! He's gone to London now, and he wouldn't come all this way. Dr. Locke's going to write to him in London to tell him I've arrived at the school."

Nobby gnawed his under-lip thoughtfully.

"Looks a difficult matter," he said. "You can't go to Greyfriars, and you think that it's no good explaining the case. It's rather 'ard. Look here, kid, I want to help you, and I ain't got anything to do for the next three days."

"Yes," said Arthur hopefully.

"S'pose I was to go in your place?"

Arthur stared blankly at the circus lad.

Nobby grinned, evidently well pleased with his idea.

"You see, you say nobody at the school knows you; so they wouldn't know that I wasn't you," he said. "I'm your size, and I could dress in your clothes, and take your name. You could put me up to all the tips you could. I'll get to the school, and tell 'em I stayed at the circus 'ere this evening—that's true enough. The 'Ead will take me for you, and write to your uncle that you've arrived. That will fix it all right with your uncle. When you're well enough to move you can go to the school; and I'll confess about it to the 'Ead, and explain that it had to be done to set your mind at rest, 'cause you'd ha' gone into a fever. If I get licked, I can stand it. Wot do you say?"

"You—you would do this for me—a perfect stranger?" gasped Arthur.

"What ho!"

"It would be all right. So long as the Head thinks I've come, and writes to my uncle, everything will be all right."

"Well, I can fix it, kid."

"Thank you!" gasped Arthur. "If you will—"

"I will! Now set your mind at rest; if you keep on worrying like this you'll be serious ill, I tell you."

Arthur groped out with a feeble hand, and Nobby grasped it.

"Mind, not a word to the old lady!" grinned Nobby. "I'll borrow your clothes, and I'll tell mother I'm going on a holiday for a few days. That'll be true. You go to sleep, and keep yourself quiet and get well."

"God bless you!" murmured Arthur.

And when Mrs. Nobbs came back to the caravan she found her patient sunk into a deep, peaceful sleep, and marvelled at the improvement in him.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Late Arrival.

TING-TING-TING-TING!

Gosling, the porter of Greyfriars, rose to his feet, with a grunt.

Who on earth could be ringing the bell—and ringing it so loudly—at that time of night mystified Gosling. So far as he knew, everybody belonging to Greyfriars was indoors and in bed. Gosling ought to have been in bed himself, but he had stayed up by the fire negotiating an extra glass of whisky-and-water—a good deal of whisky, and a very little water—and he was enjoying it to the full when the sudden ring came at the bell.

Gosling started as he heard it, and spilled some of the precious fluid over his knees, and grunted with annoyance.

"Drat 'em!" murmured Gosling. "Wot I says is this 'ere—can't they let an honest man 'ave a rest when his day's work is done? That's wot I says! Drat 'em!"

And Gosling went out of his lodge, lantern in hand, and went down to the gate.

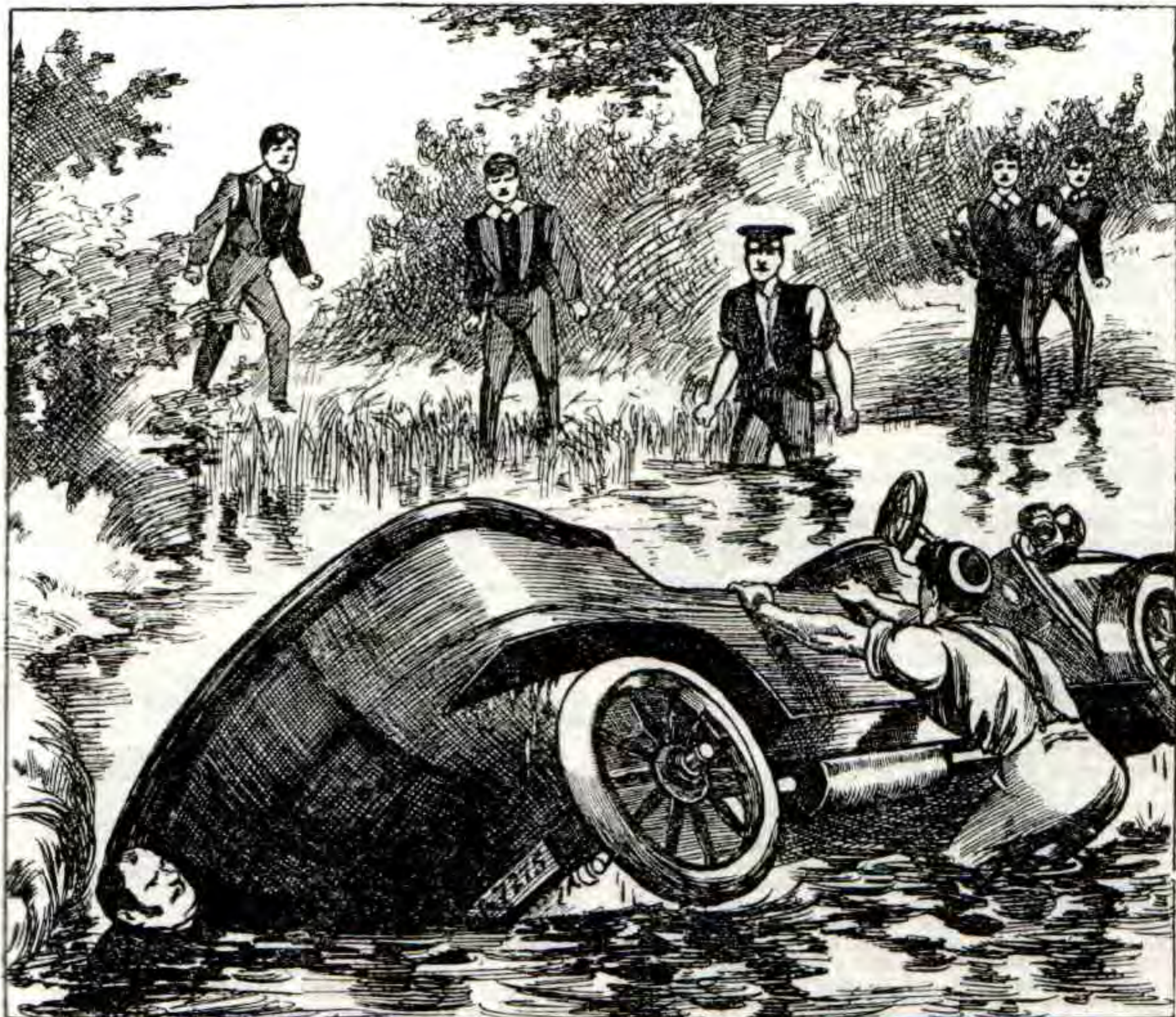
It was close upon midnight, and Gosling wondered who had rung the bell. It could not be a runaway ring at that time of night. Possibly one of the fellows had been breaking bounds, and had been unable to get in again, and so had rung up Gosling. If that were the case, Gosling would at

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Every ounce of strength that Nobby possessed he was bringing to bear now. The downward pressure of the car was arrested. Then, hardly perceptible at first, the great mass rose slowly—slowly—but the man pinned down by the weight made an effort—and his face came out of the water again. (See Chapter 13.)

least have the satisfaction of reporting him. There would be a great deal of pleasure in marching him into the School House and delivering him over to the hands of a disturbed and angry master.

At the first glance, through the bars of the gate, it seemed as if this hypothesis of Gosling's was correct. Outside, in the dim night, appeared the form of a lad in Etons and a silk hat with an open overcoat. It might have been any fellow in a junior Form at Greyfriars till Gosling saw his face.

But as the light gleamed upon the youth's face Gosling saw that the new-comer was a stranger.

The boy looked at him through the bars of the gate, with a cheerful grin.

"Hallo!" he ejaculated. "You've come at last, have you? Do you know that you have been keeping my royal nibs waiting, my man?"

"Oo are yer?" demanded Gosling. "You don't belong to this 'ere school."

"I'm a new boy."

"Ho!" said Gosling, who had been told that a new junior had been expected that day at Greyfriars and had failed to arrive. "You're Master Banthorpe—hey?"

"You've hit it, Pink Nose!"

Gosling glared.

"You let my nose alone!" he growled.

"Certainly!" said the new boy cheerfully. "I'll let it alone. I've been taught not to play with fire, you know."

Gosling was at a loss for words. He had heard that the

new boy was going to be a delicate lad, but it looked to him as if this particular new boy was decidedly lacking in delicacy of any sort.

At all events, Gosling was quite unable to sustain a war of words with him, and he grunted, and opened the gate.

The new boy walked in.

"I s'pose my box has come?" he remarked.

"Yes!" growled Gosling.

"Good!"

Gosling slammed the gate and relocked it. Then he fixed a grim look on the new boy, who was watching him, with his hands in his overcoat pockets.

"Nice goings hon, I must say!" said Gosling.

"Dunno why you must say anything of the sort," said Master Banthorpe cheerfully. "What business is it of yours, anyway?"

Gosling choked.

"You come erlonger me," he said. "I'll take you hin."

"Never been taken in in my life, cocky. But if you mean you'll show me to my caravan, I'm on."

"Your what?" ejaculated Gosling.

"My quarters, I mean," said the new boy, a little abashed for the first time. "Go ahead!"

"Wot I says is this 'ere—you'll 'ave to explain wot you're so jolly late for," said Gosling. "That's wot I says!"

"Certainly!" said Master Banthorpe. "You are not the headmaster, are you?"

"Me? I'm the porter!"

"Then I won't explain to you, if you don't mind. Show me the way in."

Gosling gave Master Banthorpe a look as if he could have eaten him, and led the way across the shadowy Close to the School House.

The new-comer followed him with cheerful coolness.

The School House was very dark; even the light in the Head's window was extinguished, and it was evident that all Greyfriars had gone to bed. Master Banthorpe was probably the first boy in the history of the school to arrive at midnight, but he did not seem in the least put out by the circumstance.

Gosling rang the School House bell, and they heard it buzz away inside the silent house with many echoes. He rang again and again, and a window above was opened.

The head of Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was projected into the dim July night.

"What is that?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch tartly. "Who is there?"

"Me, sir!"

"Gosling!"

"Yes, sir! I—"

"What do you mean by disturbing the house at this time of night, Gosling?" rapped out the Remove-master. "Is anything on fire?"

"No, sir!" growled Gosling.

"Is anything the matter?"

"No, sir. I—"

"Then I presume that you are intoxicated!" said the Remove-master, evidently very much annoyed at being awakened from slumber. "Go back to your lodge at once!"

"Which I ain't intoxicated, sir!" roared the indignant Gosling. "I'm a toteetaller, sir—which I mean a teetotaller. It's the noo boy."

"The what?" ejaculated Mr. Quelch.

"The noo boy, sir!"

"What about the new boy?" asked Mr. Quelch testily.

"He's come, sir."

"What, the new boy has arrived at this time of night?"

"Yes, sir. He's 'ere. And wot I say is this 'ere, sir—I

"Wait a minute, and I will come down."

"Werry well, sir! Wot I says—"

Mr. Quelch interrupted Gosling by slamming down his window. A light was seen to glimmer within, and Gosling turned to the new boy with some satisfaction.

"Which he's in a ragin' temper," he remarked. "You'll get it 'ot, that's wot you'll get—and serve you right! All boys oughter be drowned, in my opinion—drowned dead! And boys who come to school in the middle of the night oughter be 'ung as well!"

There was a gleam of light in the hall window, and then a sound of a lock being turned, and a chain being removed. Then the door swung open, and Mr. Quelch, in dressing-gown and slippers, was revealed, with a lamp in his hand.

"Thank you, Gosling!" he said. "You may go now. I will take charge of this boy."

"Wot I says, sir, is this 'ere—I—"

"Exactly! Good-night! Come in, Banthorpe!"

The new boy entered, and Mr. Quelch closed the door. Gosling retired to his lodge, muttering to himself; and Mr. Quelch, in the dusky hall of the School House, held up the lamp, for its light to fall upon the new boy's visage.

He saw a good-looking, strong, plump face, and a pair of bright and cheery eyes. It was not exactly the face he had been prepared to see. He had heard that Arthur Banthorpe was delicate; and this lad looked anything but delicate. A boy in more splendid condition physically Mr. Quelch had seldom or never seen.

"You are Banthorpe?" he said. "How is it that you did not arrive at the time specified by your uncle?"

"There was a change of trains at Fair Oaks, sir, and I was on the common when the second one went, sir," said the new boy.

"You missed the train at Fair Oaks? It was very careless of you, Banthorpe. I sent some juniors to meet you at Courtfield, and they had their journey for nothing."

"I'm sorry, sir."

"But surely you could have arrived earlier than this, even after missing the train?" said the Remove-master. "There was surely a later train?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Did you not inquire?"

"No, sir."

"That was very stupid of you, Banthorpe."

"Thank you, sir."

Mr. Quelch breathed hard.

"How did you get here, Banthorpe?" he asked.

"I got a lift across country, sir," said the new boy meekly.

"It was rather a long time, sir. And—and there was a

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circus at Fair Oaks, sir, and I stayed there till—till after the performance, sir."

Mr. Quelch jumped.

"Do you mean to say that you stayed at a circus, and allowed that to make you so late in arriving at the school?" he exclaimed.

"No harm, I hope, sir."

"No harm!" fumed Mr. Quelch. "You young rascal! I—I— But go to your dormitory. I will speak to you about this in the morning. It was utterly reckless of you to stay out late, when you are in delicate health, even if there were no other considerations."

"I'm sorry, sir."

"You do not look delicate, certainly," said Mr. Quelch, scanning the boy's healthy, ruddy face. "But your uncle informed the Head that you were in delicate health, and I suppose he must have had medical authority for the statement. I only hope that you have done yourself no injury by this foolish freak. Follow me."

He led the way up to the Remove dormitory. Master Banthorpe followed him quietly, with a suppressed grin on his chubby face. Mr. Quelch opened the door, and the lamp glimmered into the dark dormitory.

"Your bed was prepared, in expectation of your arrival," he said. "Your box is here. Go to bed at once, and I will return for the light in a few minutes."

"Thank you, sir."

The new boy was left alone, and he undressed quickly. Two or three juniors woke up and looked round sleepily.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" yawned Bob Cherry. "Who's that?"

"Me!" said the new boy cheerfully.

Bob's eyes opened wider.

"Eh? Who are you?"

"New boy."

"My hat! So you've come?"

"Looks like it, doesn't it?"

"I'll punch your silly head to-morrow for keeping me waiting at the station for nothing," said Bob Cherry drowsily.

"Thanks!"

Bob Cherry chuckled, and went to sleep again. The new boy turned in, and Mr. Quelch re-entered the dormitory and took away the light. Once more the Remove dormitory was plunged into darkness, and all but one were sleeping there—and the one that was wakeful was the new boy. He did not go to sleep at once. The change of surroundings was quite sufficient to keep awake for some time, in suppressed excitement, the boy who was to be known at Greyfriars as Arthur Banthorpe, but who was advertised on every hoarding and dead wall in Fair Oaks as Nobby Nobbs, the acrobat and bareback rider and Champion Strong Boy of the World.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Nobby Banthorpe.

CLANG, clang!

The rising-bell rang out on the sunny morning air, and the Removites of Greyfriars awoke.

A bright July morning was shining in at the high windows of the dormitory.

The new boy sat up in bed.

In his peculiar profession, Nobby was accustomed both to late hours and to early rising, and he was quite fresh at seven in the morning, after going to bed at considerably past midnight.

He looked round the dormitory with great interest.

The high walls and white ceiling, the rows of white beds, were a great change from the scene that usually met his gaze when he awoke in the morning—the little apartment in his home on wheels.

But a life on the road, with its constant change and many vicissitudes, had made Nobby philosophical, and he had a habit of taking things as they came, and feeling quite at home wherever he might happen to be.

Nobby was an adventurous youth, and had a great spice of fun and mischief in him, and he intended to enjoy his peculiar impersonation. He was doing the absent junior a good turn, and incidentally providing himself with an interesting experience which could not otherwise have fallen to his lot.

The fact that there was a new junior in the dormitory only became apparent to the Remove when they turned out of bed. Only two or three had awakened when Nobby was shown into the dormitory the previous night. The juniors stared at him in surprise.

"Where on earth did you spring from?" demanded Bolsover.

"Dropped from the clouds," replied Nobby cheerfully.

"You are Banthorpe, I suppose?" said Bulstrode.

"You can call me anything you like, but I answer to the name of Banthorpe," said Nobby. "But any old thing will do."

"Well, you're a pretty cool customer for a new kid, I must say," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "What time did you get in last night?"

"Soon after twelve."

"My hat!"

"We waited for you at Courtfield Station," said Johnny Bull.

"Sorry, my sons. Of course, I didn't know."

"Did you miss the train?" asked Nugent.

"Well, I didn't catch it."

"But what made you so late, you gossoon?" asked Micky Desmond.

"I stayed at the circus for a bit."

"You had the nerve to stay at the circus at Fair Oaks?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, in astonishment.

"You bet!"

"Well, of all the cheek!"

"Begad! You'll get licked for that, you know," said Lord Mauleverer.

"Yes, rather," said Bolsover; "and serve the cad jolly well right, too! Why, nobody here would have had the cheek to do it."

"Born cheeky," said Nobby serenely. "Well, here I am, you see, turned up at last."

"What was the circus like?" asked Nugent eagerly. "We were going over to see it yesterday, only Quelch asked us to go to Courtfield to meet you, so we had to give it up."

"My 'at!" ejaculated Nobby.

It occurred to him that if the Removites had carried out their intention of going over to the circus at Fair Oaks, his present impersonation would have come to a sudden termination as soon as they saw him.

"You're a lucky young bargee," said Bulstrode. "What was the circus like?"

"Oh, ripping!"

"Did you see the Strongest Boy on Earth?" asked Harry Wharton. "I saw his name on a poster. They said he can lift awfully heavy weights, and walk round the ring with a grown-up man under each arm. Is that true?"

"Quite true."

"You've seen it?"

Nobby chuckled.

"You bet!"

"Oh, rats!" said Bolsover. "I don't believe it. You're yarning, you young rotter!"

Nobby looked at him. Bolsover, the bully of the Remove, was head and shoulders taller than Nobby, and he had heard that the new boy was in very delicate health. There did not seem to Bolsover, therefore, to be any reason why he should not rag the new-comer to his heart's content. Nobby smiled. He thought to himself that it would surprise Bolsover if he felt the grip of the Strongest Boy on Earth upon him.

"Who are you calling a rotter?" he demanded.

"You, you young sweep!" said Bolsover. "And don't give me any of your cheek, or I'll bump you across that bed before you can say knife!"

"Oh, rats!"

"What!"

"Deaf?" asked Nobby. "Rats, my son! Rodents, if you like that better! You're a gas-bag, you know. You couldn't bump a white mouse."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bolsover glared at the new boy for a moment. He was too taken aback to answer. Then he doubled up his big fists.

"I'll jolly well show you!" he roared.

He rushed at the new boy. Nobby placed himself in an attitude of defence, but it was not necessary. Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry ran between, and Bolsover was grasped and dragged back before he reached Master Banthorpe.

"Let me go!" roared Bolsover furiously.

"Oh, cheese it!" said Bob Cherry scornfully. "If you want trouble, start on me. That new kid is delicate, and he's not going to be ragged."

"No fear!" said Harry Wharton emphatically.

"Oh, let him come on!" said Nobby. "I'm not very delicate."

"Faith, and he doesn't look delicate, intirely!" exclaimed Micky Desmond.

"Well, he doesn't," agreed Bob Cherry. "But Mr. Quelch says he's delicate, and he's asked us to see that he's not rotted, and we're going to see it."

"Lemme go!" yelled Bolsover.

"You can go," said Harry Wharton. "But if you lay a finger on the new kid, we'll bump you till you're black and blue. Let him alone."

Bolsover glared at them, and glared at Banthorpe. Then he turned to his washstand with a growl. The Famous Four had promised Mr. Quelch to look after the delicate new

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boy, and they meant to keep their word. And Bolsover realised that it would not do.

Nobby grinned, and washed and dressed himself, and went down with the rest of the Remove. Mr. Quelch called him into his study, and regarded him with a stern brow.

"Banthorpe," he said, "you were guilty of a piece of recklessness last night which calls for condign punishment."

"I hope not, sir," said Nobby meekly.

"As you are a new boy I shall overlook it," said Mr. Quelch, "but take care that nothing of the kind occurs again. You will be visited by the school doctor this morning, who will examine you and advise us whether you are strong enough to take part in the school sports, etc."

"Oh!" said Nobby.

"You may go! You must be careful not to get into any fighting, and if you need protection you must speak to Wharton, who is the captain of your Form."

"Thank you, sir!"

Nobby left the study. Harry Wharton was waiting in the passage for him.

"I'm Wharton," he said. "Mr. Quelch has asked me to take you under my wing a bit, and I don't mind. If there's any trouble, just sing out to me!"

Nobby grinned.

"Thanks!" he said. "You're very good! By the way—"

He hesitated. "What Standard do you belong to?"

Wharton smiled.

"We have Forms here, not Standards," he said. "It's the same thing, you know. We're in the Remove—the Lower Fourth Form. You are going to be in the Remove, I understand?"

"Yes," said Nobby. "He told me—"

"What!"

"I—I mean," said Nobby, turning a little red, "I had a tutor, and he prepared me for the Lower Fourth Standard—I mean, Form—here! There won't be any examination for me to go through here, will there?" he asked anxiously.

"Not if you've been prepared specially for the Remove."

"That's all right, then," said Nobby, in great relief.

"Mr. Quelch may ask you a few questions," Nobby's face fell again, and Wharton smiled encouragingly. "But that's all right; he won't be hard on you. You'll like Quelch when you come to know him; he's a really good sort!"

"Right-ho!" said Nobby.

"And if Bolsover—that's that big chap—bothers you at all, mind you don't forget to sing out, you know!"

"Oh, I think I could handle 'im!"

Wharton looked at him curiously. For a fellow who had been specially prepared to enter the Lower Fourth at Greyfriars, Master Banthorpe was singularly careless with his aspirates.

"Better not tackle him," said Harry. "If you're delicate—"

"Do I look delicate?"

"Well, you don't; but your uncle—"

"Oh, never mind my uncle!" said Nobby. "I'm not delicate, and I could handle Bolsover all right! Don't you worry!"

And he walked cheerfully out into the sunny Close.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

From Circus to School.

THE new boy came in for a good deal of interested attention at breakfast.

By that time all Greyfriars knew that Banthorpe, of the Remove, had stayed at the circus at Fair Oaks instead of coming on to Greyfriars as he should have done, and that he had awakened the porter and the Remove-master by arriving at midnight.

A youth who could do these things, and look perfectly unconcerned afterwards, was something rather new in the experience of the Greyfriars fellows, and they stared at Nobby.

Master Banthorpe endured their staring with great calmness.

He ate breakfast with a good appetite, and did not hesitate to ask for more when he wanted it; and he made it quite clear that if he was at all delicate, his appetite, at least, was in a perfectly healthy state.

He was so utterly unlike what the fellows had expected, that they could not help wondering.

The Head, too, wondered, when he had a short interview with Master Banthorpe after breakfast. But Master Banthorpe did not appear to notice it. He went on the even tenor of his way with beautiful coolness.

But, in spite of his coolness, he was looking forward to the Form-room with some uneasiness. In the keenness with which he had entered upon this adventure, the circus lad had not had time to think of everything, and now he realised

that there were other difficulties to face that he had not taken into account.

Nobby's education had been of the most rough-and-ready kind. It was ample for his needs; but of superfluous knowledge he had little, and he knew that there were many kinds of knowledge driven into the heads of public school-boys, of which he had only the most hazy conception.

That there was such a language as Latin, for instance, and that it was taught at expensive schools, he knew; but he was quite innocent of any knowledge of that mysterious tongue, and, at the same time, he knew that he was supposed to be grounded in it, at least. He wondered what would happen when he faced it in the Form-room.

When the bell rang for morning classes, the general movement of the Remove towards their Form-room warned Banthorpe what it meant, and he went in with the rest.

He took his place cheerfully in the Form, and as luck would have it, he was next to Bolsover, who gave him a glare. The bully of the Remove had taken an unreasonable dislike towards the new boy, for no better reason than that Harry Wharton & Co. had prevented him from bullying Banthorpe in the dormitory.

"Oh, so you're here, you rotter?" said Bolsover, in a whisper.

Nobby looked at him coolly.

"Yes; I'm 'ere!" he said.

Bolsover stared.

"Have you lost anything?" he asked.

Nobby looked surprised.

"Lost anythin'?" he asked. "Not that I knows of."

"Not dropped something?"

Nobby looked on the floor under the desk.

"No," he replied. "What are you getting at?"

"Oh, I thought you might have dropped an 'h'!" said Bolsover.

Some of the boys near giggled, and Nobby turned red.

Mr. Quelch looked round sharply.

"Silence!" he said, with a frown. "Bolsover, this is not the place for retailing jokes and making your Form-fellows laugh! You will take fifty lines!"

Bolsover almost choked.

"Yes, sir!" he gasped.

Then he gave Nobby another glare. Nobby smiled. Bolsover's sneer had cost him dear, and he mentally promised the new boy the biggest licking of his life when morning lessons were over.

Much to Nobby's relief, Mr. Quelch passed over him very lightly in lessons, and he was not called upon to construe. But he heard the other fellows construe with great uneasiness. When Mark Linley stood up and started "Apud Helvetios longe nobilissimus fuit et ditissimus Orgetorix," Nobby felt like despair, and when Mark turned it into English he marvelled.

"My 'at!" murmured Nobby. "I shall 'ave to steer clear of that, somehow!"

Third lesson that morning was French, and little Monsieur Charpentier came in to take the Form.

"Wot's this?" Nobby murmured to Bolsover.

Bolsover stared at him and did not reply.

Nobby shrugged his shoulders, and turned to Russell, who was on his other side.

"Wot's the game now?" he asked.

Russell grinned.

"French," he said. "That's Mossoo."

Nobby groaned.

"My eye! French! Arter Latin!"

Russell looked at him curiously.

"Ain't you ready for the lesson?" he asked.

"No fear!"

"Better not catch Mossoo's eye, then!"

"Oh, good!"

And the circus schoolboy kept his eye very carefully on his desk, in the hope of escaping Monsieur Charpentier.

But as it happened, the little French gentleman singled him out. Monsieur Charpentier was a very dutiful master—he had a stern sense of duty which, in fact, made the juniors long to bump him sometimes.

"Ah, zat is ze new boy!" he said, with a genial smile to Nobby. "Banthorpe, I zink?"

"Yes, sir," said poor Nobby.

"You vill stand up, Banthorpe!"

Nobby stood up.

"I take you first," said Monsieur Charpentier. "You tell me vat you know."

It would have been very easy for Nobby to do that. It was all comprised in the one word "Nothing." He had a vague idea that Frenchmen were called "Mounseer," and that they said "Wee-wee" when they meant "Yes." That was the whole extent of his knowledge of the great language of Moliere and Voltaire.

Monsieur Charpentier, in order to be very easy with the

new boy, chalked a very simple sentence on the blackboard, and called upon Nobby to construe it.

Nobby looked at the sentence in despair.

"You will read him," said Monsieur Charpentier encouragingly.

"Yes, sir."

"Read him, zen!"

The line was "Vous n'avez pas ni pain ni vin."

Nobby made a desperate attempt, and read it out with phonetic pronunciation:

"Vowse navezz pass nigh pain nigh vinn!"

Monsieur Charpentier jumped—as well he might.

The Remove giggled.

That any fellow coming into the Lower Fourth at Greyfriars could be so utterly ignorant of French pronunciation seemed to them impossible; and they could only conclude that the new boy was ragging the French master. It was a decidedly cool proceeding for a new boy, but quite in keeping with his staying out late the previous night.

"Vat!" shrieked Monsieur Charpentier.

"Ain't that right, sir?" said Nobby, realising that he had blundered somehow, though for the life of him he could not have told what was the matter.

"Right!" shrieked Monsieur Charpentier. "Vous croyez que vous avez raisin! Ciel! Zat is not stupidity—zat is sheek—vat you call sheek!"

"I—I don't know what that is, sir!" stammered the unhappy Nobby, and he whispered hurriedly to Russell: "What's sheek—quick, for goodness' sake!"

Russell chuckled.

"He means cheek, you ass! It's his beautiful accent."

"Oh!" said Nobby. "Not at all, sir. I wasn't cheeking you, sir. I'm doin' my best!"

"Ah, non, non! Zat is not so! Is it zat you have never learn ze French?"

"No, sir!"

"Ah, zat alter ze case," said Mossoo more calmly. "It is very singulier zat you come into zis Form if you know not ze rudiments of ze Francois. Mais, zat is not my affair. Listen to me, garcon! Say affair me—Vous n'avez pas ni pain ni vin."

"Voo navvy par nee pang nee vang!" said Nobby.

The class smiled. Nobby's pronunciation was not Parisian.

"No, no!" said Mossoo. "Say vunce more—Vous n'avez pas ni pain ni vin."

"Voo navvee pah nee pong ni vong!"

"Mon Dieu! I zink zat I leaf you now, and talk to you in my study afterwards," said Monsieur Charpentier, with a sigh. "You come into my study after ze lessons."

"Oh, dear! I mean, yes, sir!"

And Nobby was not troubled any more that morning; but he realised very clearly that there were troubles ahead.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bolsover is Surprised.

THE Remove were grinning when they left the Form-room. The new boy had surprised them, and they did not know in the least what to make of him. Some of the juniors fancied that he was elaborately ragging the French master, and others believed that he knew no French at all.

This latter theory was consistent with the undoubted fact that he dropped his h's in the most reckless manner, and made other little blunders in speaking which the Remove had noticed already.

But as Banthorpe was supposed to have been specially prepared by a tutor for the Lower Fourth at Greyfriars, it was certainly very surprising if that was the case.

After lessons, Nobby was called into the French master's study. Monsieur Charpentier was as surprised as anybody else that such a lad should have been admitted to the Lower Fourth. But that was not his business, as he had said; and the kind-hearted little Frenchman meant to give the backward boy a leg-up, so to speak, and plant the rudiments of the French language in his head.

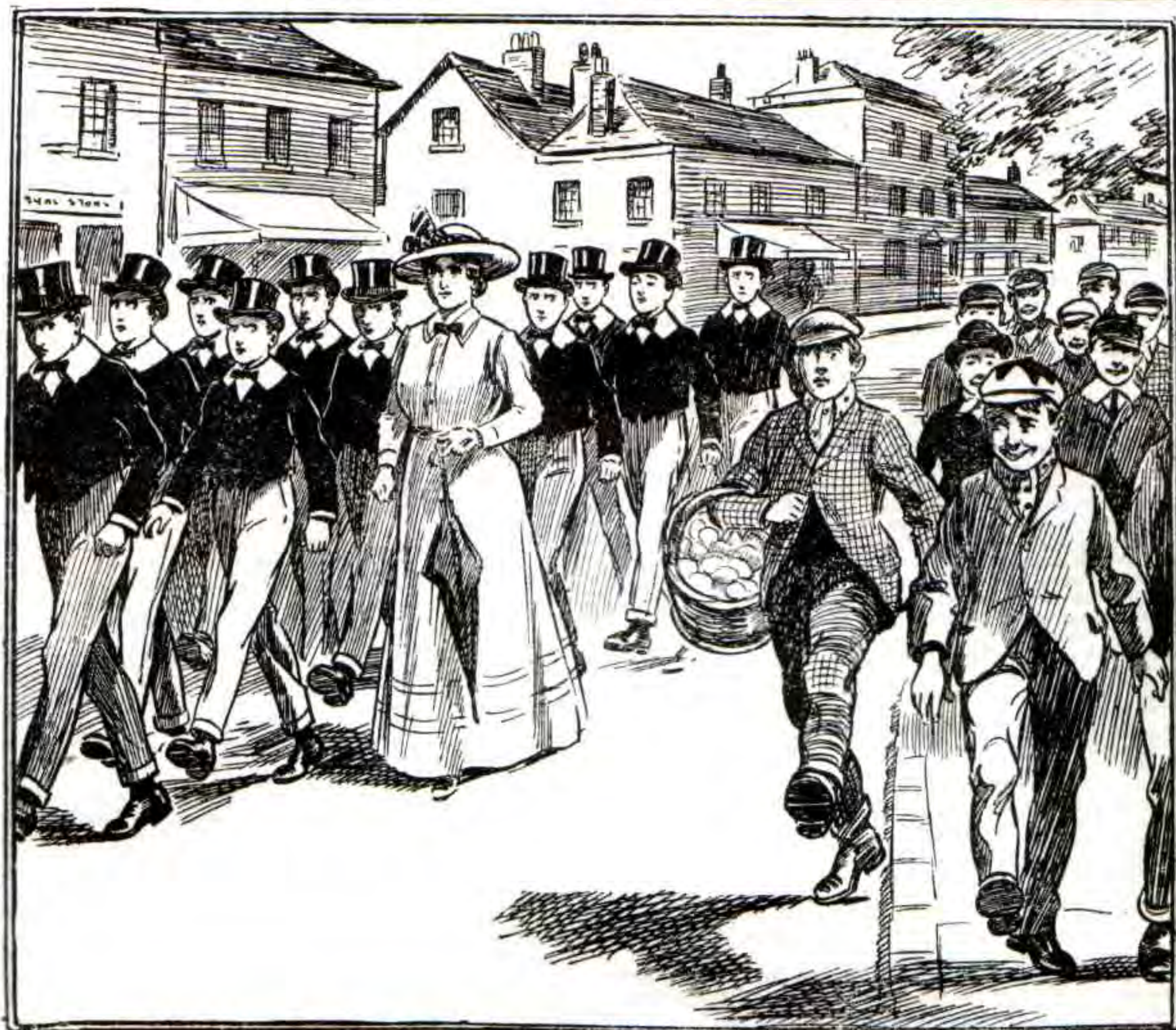
Nobby did not have a happy time in the French master's study. He could have ridden the wildest horse in the country, and he could have lifted weights that any half-dozen fellows in the Remove could not have shifted with their combined efforts, and he could have performed tricks upon the high trapeze which would have taken the Greyfriars fellows' breath away. But he was not gifted with a gift for tongues, and he wrestled with "J'ai, tu as, il a" in a hopeless fashion.

"The fellow doesn't know anything," Bolsover declared to a group of Removes in the Close. "Blessed if I know how they let him into the Remove. I think it's rotten!"

"He had a tutor, they say," Bob Cherry remarked.

Bolsover sniffed.

"Ripping sort of a tutor, I don't think. He drops his 'h's.'"



Grimes led the village urchins along the street, marching abreast of the enraged Tom Merry & Co. Miss Ponsonby turned very pink and shook her parasol at the village boys. "Go away at once, you rude children," she exclaimed. (For the above humorous incident see the grand, long, complete story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, entitled "THE LIMIT," by Martin Clifford, which is contained in our popular companion paper "The Gem" Library. Out on Thursday. Price One Penny.)

"People do that from habit sometimes," said Russell.
"Oh, rats! How does he come not to know a word of French if he's been prepared by a tutor?"
"Well, you don't know more than a dozen words yourself," said Nugent.

"There's something fishy about it," said Bolsover. "I don't believe he's had a tutor, or been educated at all, for that matter. He's taken Quelchy in."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he comes!" said Bob Cherry.

The new boy came out of the School House, looking less cheerful than usual. His wrestle with the beginnings of French had not been agreeable to him, and he could have dispensed with the kindness of Monsieur Charpentier with a very good will.

"Here he is!" said Bolsover, with a sneer. "I say, Banthorpe!"

"Hallo!" said Nobby.
"How did you get into the Remove?"

"Walked in," said Nobby.
"You don't know any French."

"You don't know any manners, for that matter," said Nobby.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "He's got you there, Bolsover!"

Bolsover scowled.

"Do you want me to wring your neck, you cheeky young bouncer?" he asked, advancing threateningly upon Nobby.

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Nobby nodded.

"You bet!" he replied, with reviving cheerfulness. "Go ahead!"

"My hat! I'll——"

"Hold on, Bolsover!" said Harry Wharton quietly. "You know that you're to let the new kid alone."

"Do you think I'm going to let him cheek me?" roared Bolsover.

"Well, you started it."

"Oh, let him come on!" said Nobby. "If he's looking for trouble, I don't mind. I'll promise not to hurt him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You young ass, he'll squash you!" said Johnny Bull.

Nobby laughed.

"I should take a lot of squashing," he said. "Look 'ere, he won't be 'appy till he gets it, so you may as well let him come on."

"Well, just as you like," said Harry Wharton doubtfully. "But if he hurts you, you've only got to sing out, you know!"

"He won't hurt me!" chuckled Nobby.

Bolsover rushed at him.

His intention was to collar the new boy, and wipe up the ground with him, and generally leave him feeling as if a steam-roller or a lawn-mower had passed over him.

But it did not work out exactly like that.

Nobby waited until the bully of the Remove was very close

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to him, and then he made a spring backwards. Bolsover's fists lashed out into space, so sudden was the retreat of the circus boy, and the Remove bully almost over-balanced himself. As he stumbled, Nobby leaped upon him, and threw his arms round him, catching Bolsover's arms down to his sides.

Bolsover struggled furiously to break his grip.

The onlookers expected to see Nobby's grasp thrown off in a second. But he wasn't. The Remove bully struggled, but he struggled in vain. Nobby's arms might have been a couple of bands of solid iron, for all the use Bolsover's struggles were. Bolsover wrestled and wriggled, gasping, but he could not break the clutch.

Nobby did not seem to be making any effort.

He looked up with a cool grin into the red, furious face of the Form bully, which glared down upon him from Bolsover's great height.

"Go it!" he said encouragingly.

Bolsover "went it" with all his strength. But the iron grasp upon him grew tighter and tighter, and his struggles died away in gasping.

"Leggo!" he muttered faintly. "Ow, you beast! Leggo!"

The juniors looked on in blank amazement.

There were two or three fellows in the Remove, perhaps, who could have stood up to Bolsover, but there was none who could have held him a prisoner in this way. They simply stared at Nobby. Where did the strength come from that evidently reposed in the arms of the new boy?

"My only Aunt Semproni!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Is it a giddy boa-constrictor, or what? Why don't you chuck him off, Bolsover?"

"Ow!" gasped Bolsover.

"Pitch him off, Bolsover!" said Snoop.

"Yow!"

"Break away!" grinned Ogilvy.

"Yowp!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gerororororoo! Leggo! Ow!"

"Had enough?" asked Nobby, with cheerful calmness.

"Groooh!"

"Goin' to keep the peace?" said Nobby.

"I'll—I'll smash you!" snorted Bolsover.

"Then I reckon I'll give you another squeeze!"

"Yaroo!" gasped Bolsover, as Nobby's arms compressed him more tightly. "Ow! Dragimoff, you chaps! He's suff-suff-suffocating me! Ow!"

"Make it pax, then," said Harry Wharton. "You can't expect him to let you go and have his head punched for it."

"Ha, ha! No fear!"

"Gerroooh! Leggo! Ow! I'll m-m-make it p-p-pax!"

"Good enough!" grinned Nobby.

And he let go Bolsover so suddenly that the Remove bully, who was quite out of breath, dropped like a deflated bladder to the ground, and sat there gasping.

"Ow, ow, ow, ow! Woop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry linked arms with Nobby and strolled away with him, leaving Bolsover gasping on the ground.

"My dear fellow," said Bob Cherry, "I'm going to be your chum. A chap who can give a grizzly bear hug like that is better as a chum than otherwise. I like you immensely."

Nobby laughed.

"I didn't hug him," he said; "that was only a little squeeze."

"Phew! Could you have squeezed harder?"

"Yes, rather! Shall I show you?"

"No fear!" said Bob Cherry promptly. "I'll take your word for it."

Two or three juniors were urging the breathless bully of the Remove to follow Nobby up and "wallop" him. Bolsover received their advice with grunts. He did not take it. He had had quite enough of the new boy—in open conflict at least.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Carried Out.

BILLY BUNTER came into his study in the Remove passage; and paused, and blinked through his big spectacles at what he saw. Bunter's study was a small, corner room, and he had it to himself—partly because the room was small, and partly because nobody was at all anxious to share the room with him. Bunter was somewhat surprised, therefore, to find a new-comer installed in his study, sitting in the armchair, with his feet on the table. The new-comer was taking things very easy, and the fat Removeite blinked at him in great wrath, without, however, disturbing his serenity in any way.

"I say, you know," said Bunter—"I say, Banthorpe!"

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Nobby looked round.

"Hallo! What do you want here?" he asked.

Bunter glared.

"It's my study," he said.

"Oh, your study, is it?" said Nobby cheerfully. "All right, you can come in!"

"I should rather say I can come in, in my own study," snorted Bunter. "What are you doing here, you boulder—that's what I want to know?"

"It's my study, too," Banthorpe explained.

"You don't mean to say that Quelch has shoved you into my study?"

Banthorpe nodded.

"Well, what rot!" said Bunter. "I've always had this study to myself. There ain't room for two fellows in it."

"Not two fellows your size certainly," said Banthorpe; "but I'm not quite so broad in the beam, you know."

"Don't be a cheeky ass," growled Bunter. "You've got too much to say for a new boy. I think it rotten to have my study invaded in this way." Then Bunter paused, a new idea apparently coming into his mind. He scanned the new boy carefully through his big spectacles, and noted that his clothes, though they did not appear to fit very well, were well-made and good, and that he wore a gold watch and chain.

"I say, Banthorpe, I don't mind letting you stop in this study, when I come to think of it."

"Thank you for nothing," drawled Nobby, "it would be all the same if you did."

"Oh, really, Banthorpe!" Bunter closed the door, and came towards the new boy in a very confidential manner. "Look here, as you're in this study with me, I really want to be hospitable, you know. What do you think of the idea of having a study brew, and asking some of the fellows?"

"Good idea," said Nobby, at once.

"I'm expecting a postal-order this evening," Bunter explained. "It ought really to have arrived this morning, but there has been a delay in the post. It will be for ten shillings, and as soon as it comes we'll have the feed."

Nobby looked at him a little suspiciously. Bunter's sudden change of front was somewhat surprising.

"Oh, good!" said Nobby dubiously.

"Perhaps it would be better, though, to have the feed at once, and not wait for the postal-order," said Bunter, in a thoughtful sort of way.

"Quite agree with you," assented Nobby.

"It might possibly be delayed till to-morrow morning, you know. I'll tell you what I'll do," said Bunter, in a burst of confidence. "You can lend me the ten bob, and have the postal-order as soon as it comes. That will be all right, won't it?"

Nobby grinned.

"You're short-sighted, ain't you?" he asked apparently irrelevantly.

"Yes," said Bunter, in surprise, "a little. What's that got to do with it?"

"Can you see my eye?"

"Your eye? Yes."

"Can you see any green in it?"

"You—you rotter!" said Bunter, understanding that the new boy was making fun of him, at last. "Look here, will you lend me the ten bob or not?"

"Not!" said Nobby promptly.

"Just what I might have expected of a rotter like you," said Bunter. "This is what I get for being generous towards a new boy."

"Blessed if I see anything generous in asking a fellow to stand himself a feed, and you one at the same time."

"Oh, really, Banthorpe! Look here, if you're going to act like a cad, you'd better get out of my study. I don't want you here."

"Well, I don't want you here, if you come to that," said Nobby cheerfully; "but I'm going to put up with you, and you must do the same."

"I jolly well won't!" roared Bunter. "Look here, new fellows are expected to stand a feed. Are you going to stand a good tea?"

"Not unless I choose, anyway," said Nobby.

"You'd better choose, then," said Bunter threateningly, taking the new boy's reply as a sign of weakness.

Nobby laughed.

"Well, I won't, then," he said.

"Then I'll shift you out of this study, jolly quick."

"Go ahead!"

Bunter rolled upon Nobby. He was much bigger than Nobby, and he was certainly three times the weight of the new boy. He had not seen Nobby's encounter with Bolsover, or he might have hesitated; but as it was, he had no doubts whatever about his ability to throw the smaller fellow out of the study.

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He grasped Nobby, and Nobby rose cheerfully to his feet and grasped him.

Then Billy Bunter had a shock.

The new boy handled him as if he had been a lightweight instead of the heaviest heavy-weight at Greyfriars.

Bunter was lifted off his feet, and Nobby sat him down upon the study table with a bump. The table was not planned to stand such a weight suddenly deposited upon it. There was a crash, and the table collapsed, and Bunter rolled on the floor among the wreckage.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Nobby.

"Ow!"

"Jump up and have some more."

"Yow!"

Bunter sat gasping among the ruins of the table.

He set his spectacles straight on his fat little nose, and glared in amazement and dread at the new boy. Even Wingate, of the Sixth, would have found it difficult to lift Billy Bunter off the floor, and the new boy had swung him up with the greatest ease.

"What—what—what are you?" gasped Bunter. "You—you—I—I say, you know, how did you do that?"

Nobby chuckled.

"I'll do it again and show you," he said.

Bunter scrambled out of his way.

"No, you won't!" he roared. "Yowah! Yaroop! Hands off, you beast!"

He dodged towards the door.

Nobby caught him under the arms, and swung him into the air. Bunter found himself elevated in space, his head swimming, and his eyes blinking. Nobby held him at arm's length above his head.

"Ow!" roared Bunter. "You'll let me fall, you ass! You'll break my glasses, you fathead! If you damage my spectacles you'll have to pay for them, you idiot! Yow! Lemme down!"

"You were going to chuck me out," said Nobby cheerfully. "I'll do the same for you. One good turn deserves another, you know."

"Yaroo!"

Nobby walked out into the passage with the greatest ease, holding the fat junior high above his head, his arms and legs flying wildly.

There was a shout from the fellows in the Remove passage.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Great Scott!"

"Here's a giddy Goliath!"

"My hat!"

Nobby walked down the passage calmly with his enormous burden. Study doors opened on all sides, and fellows stared at the new boy as he passed. Bunter, in momentary terror of crashing down on the floor, yelled for help. But only yells of laughter answered him.

Nobby looked into No. 1 Study, and Wharton and Nugent jumped up in amazement, as they saw the circus schoolboy and his burden framed in the doorway.

"Great Scott!" yelled Nugent. "Here's a giddy miracle!"

"My aunt!" ejaculated Wharton.

"Can you tell me where the rubbish is chucked in this school?" asked Nobby politely. "I've got this rubbish to throw away. I don't want it in my study."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah-ah-ah! Lemme geroff!"

"Take it downstairs and chuck it out into the Close, and the porter can sweep it up," said Nugent.

"Good!"

Nobby walked on to the stairs. A crowd of amazed juniors followed him. They had never seen Bunter lifted by anybody before. Whenever Bunter was bumped—a punishment that was frequently inflicted upon the fat junior—it required several fellows to bear a hand together. The strength of the new boy was astounding.

"My only hat!" exclaimed Nugent. "And that's the chap we were told to be careful with, because he's delicate!"

"Delicate! My word!"

Nobby walked downstairs with perfect calmness, with Bunter's arms and legs beating the air. He walked out into the Close, and on the school steps he encountered Wingate and Courtney, of the Sixth. The two prefects stared at him.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Wingate. "Here's a giddy Samson! What are you doing with Bunter, young Banthorpe?"

"I'm chucking this rubbish away."

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. "Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Nobby descended the steps and dropped Bunter lightly

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into the Close. Then he went into the house again. He was not at all flushed from his exertion, and he was breathing quite calmly. The two seniors regarded him with something like awe.

"How on earth did you do that?" demanded Wingate. "I can't lift Bunter!"

Nobby laughed.

"Oh, it's a way of doing it," he said. "I'll lift you, if you like."

Wingate backed away a step.

"Thanks; I'll take your word for it," he said. "Don't trouble."

And Nobby grinned and went back to the Remove passage. He met with quite an ovation there. The fellow who could carry Bunter above his head with perfect ease was evidently something very much out of the ordinary, and the juniors hailed him as a hero.

"My hat!" Nugent exclaimed. "What a surprise-package for Coker & Co! If the Fifth would only raid us now—"

And the Remove yelled with delight at the idea.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Trouble in the Dormitory.

BANTHORPE, alias Nobby, the Strongest Boy on Earth, received much attention from his Form-fellows after that queer exhibition of amazing strength. His fame spread beyond the Remove. And Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth, came to see him and stare at him, and Hobson, of the Shell, who was a great fighting man, invited him to wrestle. Nobby accepted the challenge, and stood the big Shell fellow on his head without the slightest difficulty, and after that he received no more challenges. Hobson was satisfied. The juniors were amazed, and they rejoiced over Nobby as a rod in pickle for the Fifth. The rivalry between the Remove and the Fifth was very keen, and although the Remove, as Wharton remarked, had all the brains, the Fifth had the advantage of size and strength. In the endless rows between the two Forms, the Fifth often finished with the advantage on their side, for that reason. But with Nobby in their ranks, the chums of the Remove felt that there were surprises in store for Coker & Co.

In the dormitory that night Nobby was the observed of all observers. Some of the fellows wanted to see his muscles, and they were surprised when they saw them. The new boy seemed to be simply a mass of muscle, all hard as iron and in the best of condition.

"And they said you were delicate!" Harry Wharton exclaimed, in amazement.

Nobby grinned.

"I'm not what you'd call exactly delicate," he remarked.

"Mistakes will 'appen, you know."

And Nobby's "'appen" was allowed to pass without a grin. It was felt that a fellow who was as strong as a prize-fighter could drop as many h's as he likes, and that it would not be prudent, anyway, to make fun of him.

"Now, then, you whelps, turn in!"

It was the pleasant voice of Loder, the bully of the Sixth, at the door. That was Loder's pleasant way of addressing the Remove when it was his duty as prefect to see the lights out in their dormitory. Carne and Walker, two of the shining lights of the Sixth, were waiting in Loder's study to finish a game of nap, which had been interrupted by the necessity the prefect was under of seeing the Remove to bed. Consequently, Loder was in a hurry and a bad temper.

"Any hurry?" asked Bob Cherry independently.

Loder scowled angrily.

"You'd better buck up!" he said. "If I come back with my cane, you'll hear of it. You new kid, Banthorpe, you had better get a move on! You haven't got your boots off yet!"

Nobby looked at him.

"What's that got to do with you?" he demanded.

The prefect glared.

"Shut up, Banthorpe!" muttered Nugent. "Loder's a prefect, and he has to see lights out!"

"No reason why he should slang us like that!" said Banthorpe. "I don't like it!"

"Well, nobody exactly likes it," grinned Nugent; "but we have to stand it, you know. Prefects are monarchs of all they survey."

"That's all very well—" began Nobby.

"Will you get into bed, Banthorpe?"

"Yes, certainly!" said Nobby. "But I ain't 'urrying. If you don't like to wait, you can buzz off. I don't like bein' called names."

Loder could scarcely believe his ears. He was checked sometimes by the Removites, but an answer back like this from a new boy was something novel. He clenched his fists and strode towards Banthorpe.

ANSWERS

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"You cheeky young cad!" he exclaimed. "I'll teach you to jaw to me! Take that!"

He reached out to box Nobby's ears.

Nobby made a backward spring, and jumped clear over his bed backwards. There was a gasp of amazement from the juniors. There was not a fellow in the Remove who could have made such a backward jump, though there were a good many active fellows among them. It was nothing to the acrobat of Haackenback's Circus, but it was amazing to the juniors of Greyfriars.

Loder stopped short, in blank astonishment. He stared at Nobby across the bed, hardly able to believe his eyes.

"You—you—you eel!" he gasped. "Come round here at once!"

"What for?" asked Nobby.

"To be licked, you cheeky whelp!" yelled Loder.

"Thank you; it's not good enough!"

"If you make me catch you I'll make it warm for you!"

"Oh, you can't catch a sheep!" said Nobby.

That was too much for Loder. He rushed round the bed to collar the junior. Nobby jumped lightly over the next bed. Loder was not quite equal to jumping over it, but he scrambled over, and scrambled after Nobby. Nobby cleared each bed with perfect ease, the infuriated prefect scrambling after him, gasping and red with rage, till they reached the end of the dormitory.

There Nobby appeared to be cornered. Loder closed in on him, with clenched hands and gleaming eyes.

"Now I've got you, you young whelp!" he said, between his teeth.

But he had not quite "got" the circus schoolboy.

Nobby backed away, and as Loder rushed upon him he made a sudden leap and cleared the prefect's head, passing clean over him, and alighted on the floor behind Loder.

"My hat!"

"Bravo!"

"Well jumped!"

The Removites yelled with glee.

Loder swung round, with an expression of almost idiotic amazement on his face. Nobby was sitting on a bed, regarding him coolly. The rest of the Remove were staring, wide-eyed.

"You young villain!" gasped Loder. "Are you a blessed acrobat?"

"Something of the sort," chuckled Nobby.

"Come here!"

"Some other evening," grinned Nobby.

Loder made a rush at him. Nobby dodged round the beds, and the prefect had simply no chance. Loder strode to the door, and opened it, and called along the dormitory passage:

"Carne! Carne, come here!"

Carne, of the Sixth, entered the dormitory in a minute or so. Carne was not a prefect, and really had no right to come into the dormitory at all; but he was a bully—a little worse than Loder in that respect. He was only too willing to lend Loder a hand if any bullying was required.

"Hallo! What's the trouble?" he asked.

"Help me catch that young cad!" said Loder, gasping—"young Banthorpe. I'm going to give him a thundering good hiding!"

"Right-ho!" said Carne readily.

Nobby eyed the two Sixth-Formers warily as they advanced upon him. He did not seem to be in the least alarmed. Although Loder and Carne were a pair of black sheep, and never troubled to keep themselves in condition, they were big and powerful fellows, and could have handled almost any number of juniors in the ordinary way. But they soon discovered that they had to deal with a very extraordinary junior.

The Removites looked on silently. They had an idea that Banthorpe would be able to take care of himself, but if he wanted help, Harry Wharton & Co. intended to interfere, whatever might be the result to themselves.

Loder and Carne rushed upon Nobby, cornering him between two beds, and they grasped him at the same moment.

Nobby returned grip for grip.

He seized Loder's collar with his right hand and Carne's with his left,

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and the two seniors, to their utter amazement, were swung off their feet.

Nobby stepped out into the wide space between the beds and the door, where there was plenty of room for him, dragging the two Sixth-Formers after him.

"Oh!" roared Loder. "Let go!"

"Groo!" gasped Carne. "I'm chok-chok-choking!"

The Remove roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Banthorpe!"

Nobby smiled serenely. He intended to "go" it.

Tightening his grip upon the back of the seniors' collars, he swung them round, so that the motion lifted them from the floor. With his two arms extended to their full length, Nobby turned round and round like a teetotum, swinging the two seniors at full length round him in a circle. The swiftness of the motion lifted their feet from the floor and kept them in the air, and the new boy's grasp upon their collars never slackened.

It seemed like an awful dream to Loder and Carne.

The juniors stared at the scene, wild with delight.

Loder and Carne swung round and round, Nobby turning just fast enough to keep them in motion.

Inarticulate gasps and gurgles came from the unhappy seniors.

"Groo! Oh!"

"Leggo!"

"Grug—grug—gug!"

"Gerrrrroooch!"

"Oh, my only summer bonnet!" yelled Johnny Bull.

"Go it, Banthorpe! Hurray!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Keep 'em going!"

"Lemme go!" exploded Loder. "Ow! I'm suffocating! Groo! Oh!"

Bump! Bump!

Nobby let his prisoners go at last, and there were two bumps as they landed on the floor. They lay there, dazed, giddy, and gasping, and the circus schoolboy looked down upon them with a cheerful smile.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Lesson for Loder!

"BRAVO, Banthorpe!"

"Hurray!"

"Ain't he a giddy Samson?" roared Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha! How do you like it, Loder?"

"How do you like it, Carne?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The two Sixth-Formers sat up, still panting for breath.

Their experience had been so strange, so incredible, that they could hardly believe it yet. They stared at Banthorpe stupidly.

"Have some more?" asked Nobby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Loder staggered to his feet at last.

"You—you cheeky young bound!" he stuttered. "I—I don't know how you did that, but I'm going to lick you for it! Come on, Carne!"

Carne shook his head without getting up.

"I've had enough!" he said faintly. "The young villain's nearly dislocated my neck! I'm not going to touch the young ruffian!"

"Oh, you're a coward!" snarled Loder.

"Tackle him yourself, then!" said Carne sullenly.

"I'll smash him!"

Loder fairly leapt upon the new boy, hitting out furiously. Banthorpe certainly ought to have been swept away and smashed up by that terrific charge. The real Banthorpe certainly would have been. But the circus schoolboy was a harder nut to crack. He met Loder's wild rush with perfect coolness. Loder found himself grasped, he hardly knew how, and swept off his feet.

Bump!

The prefect was standing on his head, and it was the impact of his skull upon the hard floor which had made the bump.

NEXT
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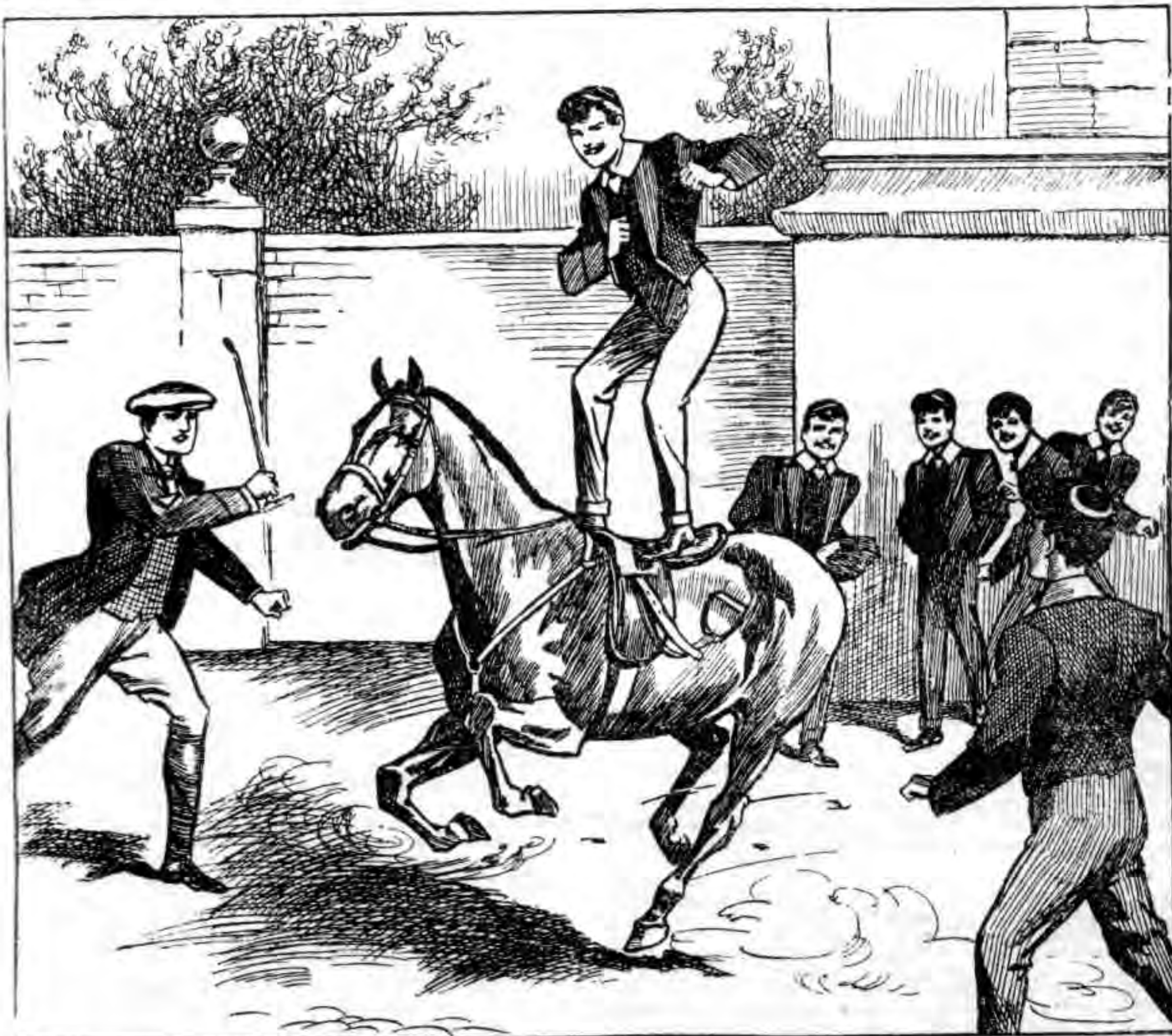
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"Get off my horse!" roared Coker, rushing out into the Close. Nobby did not heed; he did not even hear. He was guiding the pony in some way with his disengaged foot, for the animal now was galloping in a circle round the green Close. Coker rushed to intercept them. "Stop!" he roared. (See Chapter 13.)

For a single second Loder stood there, upside down, his legs swaying, and then he went over with a crash and landed beside Carne again.

He lay dazed for several minutes, while the Remove cheered Banthorpe wildly. Even Bolsover joined in the cheering. The whole Form were delighted at the rough handling the bullies of the Sixth had received.

Loder sat up at last, and blinked at Carne, and blinked at Nobby, and blinked at the laughing Removites.

"Oh!" he gasped.

"Give 'em some more, Banthorpe!" yelled Ogilvy.

"Go it!"

"You—you keep your hands off me, or I'll report you to the Head!" panted Loder. "I'm not going to touch you again, you young ruffian!"

"Discretion the better part of valour!" grinned Johnny Bell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess Banthorpe takes the hull cake!" remarked Fisher T. Fish, the American junior. "How on earth do you do it, Banthorpe?"

"I guess it was rather slick—eh?" said Nobby, with a beautiful imitation of Fisher T. Fish's charming Transatlantic accent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Loder and Carne staggered up. They made a movement

towards the door; but the circus schoolboy planted himself in their way, and they halted.

"Hold on!" said Nobby cheerfully. "I'm not finished with you yet, you know."

"Get aside, you young scoundrel!" roared Loder.

"I'm going to teach you not to call us fancy names," said Nobby. "You want to learn manners, my son. You ordered me to take my boots off some time back. Well, you're going to take them off for me! See?"

"Wh-what?"

"Get over there by my bed!" said Nobby commandingly.

"I—I won't!"

"I'll jolly soon make you, then!"

Nobby stepped towards the seniors. Loder and Carne exchanged a hopeless glance and backed away towards Nobby's bed. They had already learned that they had no chance against that amazing junior, and they were not anxious to tackle him again—in fact, they were very anxious indeed not to tackle him. They backed away step by step as Nobby advanced upon them, until he had driven them into the space between his bed and Wharton's. The Remove looked on breathlessly.

Nobby sat on the edge of his bed and stretched out his legs.

"Take my boots off!" he commanded.

"I—I won't!" gasped Loder.

"Never!" yelled Carne.

The two seniors made a rush for the door. It was a most ignominious flight, certainly, from a single junior, but they had no time to think of that. They knew that if they remained in the dormitory Nobby would make them take his boots off, and they wanted to escape.

But there was no chance for them. Nobby was after them in a flash, and he seized the two by their collars and knocked their heads together.

Bang!

"Oh!"

"Yow!"

They turned upon him like tigers. In a moment they were bumping on the floor, and Nobby stood over them, with his hands in his pockets, grinning.

"Oh!" groaned Loder. "It's—it's magic! You young demon!"

"Oh, my head!" groaned Carne.

"Are you going to obey orders?" asked Nobby calmly. "Because if you don't, I shall be compelled to be rather rough with you."

"Rather rough!" murmured Bob Cherry. "I suppose what he's done so far is rather gentle!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Loder and Carne rose to their feet, looking excessively sheepish. There was no escape for them, and they realised it. The shame of obeying a junior's orders before a whole crowd of grinning Lower School boys was terrible, but it was not quite so terrible as being handled roughly by the extraordinary new boy.

"Are you going to obey orders?" rapped out Nobby.

"No—no. Yes!"

"Buck up, then!"

Loder and Carne obeyed like lambs.

Nobby sat on his bed, and Loder and Carne knelt at his feet. Loder took the right boot, and Carne the left, and they humbly unlaced them.

"Mind the laces!" said Nobby. "If you break them you'll hear of it!"

"All r-r-right!" mumbled Loder.

"I'll be careful!" groaned Carne.

And Nobby's boots were taken off carefully.

"Thank you!" said Nobby. "Now you can go! You needn't trouble about the light; we'll turn that out ourselves."

And Loder and Carne gladly went.

There was a shout from the Remove, and they crowded round Nobby, clapping him on the back till his shoulders ached.

"He's a giddy Samson!" said Bob Cherry. "Best thing that's happened to the Remove for a jolly long time! Come to my arms, my beloved friend."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Faith, and it's a broth of a boy he is!" said Micky Desmond. "But I'm thinking there will be trouble over this. They'll report to Quelch."

Nobby shook his head and grinned.

"No fear!" he said. "They won't own up in public that they've been handled like that by a kid! No fear!"

"Faith, and ye're right!"

"Begad, that's jolly deep, you know!" said Lord Maul-everer. "You're right, Banthorpe! Loder and Carne won't say anything."

"I guess not!" grinned Fisher T. Fish. "Look here, we needn't go to bed; let's play leapfrog instead, and blow the prefects."

"Hear, hear!"

But Harry Wharton shook his head.

"Can't be did!" he said. "We should have Quelch up, and we can't let Banthorpe handle a Form-master. Better turn in."

"That's for Banthorpe to say, not you, Wharton," said Snoop, the sneak of the Remove. "Banthorpe could lick you easily. Couldn't you, Banthorpe?"

Wharton flushed. But Nobby quickly showed that he was not in the least inclined to use his amazing strength to "back up" against the captain of the Form. He took Snoop's ear between a finger and thumb with a pressure that made Snoop yell.

"Ow! Oh! Leggo! Yowp!"

"You keep your 'ead shut, then!" said Nobby. "Don't you try to set folk by the ears, you cad! Going to shut up?"

"Ow! Yes! Yow!"

And Snoop retreated, rubbing his ear furiously.

"I'm going to bed," said Nobby, yawning.

"You're a jolly good sort!" said Wharton heartily. "I suppose there's no doubt that you could lick any fellow in the Form, or any three or four, for that matter. And it's jolly decent of you not to put on any swank about it, Banthorpe. We know how Bolsover, for instance, would act if he were as strong as you are. You're a good chap! Now, turn in, you fellows, before Quelch comes up about the light."

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And the Remove went to bed, but it was a long time before they slept. Long they lay awake, discussing the prowess of the amazing new boy, and chuckling over plans for "springing" Banthorpe on Coker & Co. at the first opportunity.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

A Rise for Coker.

COKER of the Fifth came out of the School House after dinner the next day and stood on the steps, slapping his calf with a riding-whip. Coker was in coat and riding-breeches, and had a bowler hat tilted on one side of his head. Coker, who rather prided himself on being doggish, looked very doggish indeed just now. It was a half-holiday, and Coker was going out for a ride, and he was waiting for the pony to be brought. A crowd of fellows gathered round, gazing at Coker in great admiration and some envy. Coker rolled in money, and could afford all sorts of little luxuries that were denied to the other fellows, and hiring horses for riding was one of them. And Coker did not satisfy himself with the wretched hacks which an enterprising merchant in Friardale sometimes hired out to the boys at a low figure. Coker paid a good price at the livery stables in Courtfield town, and always had a good mount. He called it a "gee." It was considered very sporting to call a horse a gee.

"See the Conquering Hero comes!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Have you got the padlock, Coker?"

Coker stared at him.

"Padlock? What do you mean?" he demanded haughtily.

"Ain't you going to chain yourself on the pony?" asked Bob innocently. "You'll fall off, you know, if you ain't careful."

The Removites grinned, and Coker turned red. He made a motion with his riding-whip, and Bob Cherry prudently backed away.

"Here, young Bolsover!" called out Coker to Bolsover minor of the Third. "Go and see if my gee's come. Ask Gosling."

"Can I ride him if I do?" inquired Bolsover minor.

"Ride him? Of course you can't!"

"Then I'm jolly well not going!" said the fag cheerfully.

Coker frowned.

"Do you want a licking?" he roared.

"Thanks, no!" said Bolsover minor. And he departed before Coker could get near him. The Fifth-Former snorted with anger, and looked round for a messenger. Potter and Greene of the Fifth were standing with him, intending to admire Coker's horsemanship very much, and hoping to get a turn themselves on the pony afterwards.

"There's that new kid there," said Potter. "Send him."

"Oh, good! You new kid—what's your name—Pancorpse?"

"Eh?" said Nobby, who was with Harry Wharton & Co.

"Come here, Lancourt!"

"My name isn't Lancourt or Pancorpse," said Nobby cheerfully; "and you can go and eat coke! Wharton says we don't fag for the Fifth."

"No fear!" said Harry Wharton emphatically.

"If you ask me nicely I'll go," said Banthorpe, "and if you'll let me have a turn on the horse. I'm just longing to get on a horse again."

Coker snorted.

"Catch me trusting a fag on my gee!" he exclaimed. "Go and tell Gosling to send the man round with that horse at once. I expect it's waiting in the stableyard."

"Can I ride the horse round?"

"No!" roared Coker. "You can't!"

"Then you can take the message yourself, Croker," said Nobby.

"My name's Coker, you young rascal!"

"I don't care whether it's Coker, Croker, or Stoker, or any other kind of an 'oker!" said Nobby. "Go and eat coke!"

Coker came down the steps. The juniors were all chuckling, and Coker felt that his dignity was impaired. And, as a matter of fact, he really wanted an excuse for making his riding-whip whistle round a fag's legs. Coker was in the same frame of mind as the savage in the story who went to war, not because there was any special reason for war, but because he had a new club.

"I'll jolly soon teach you not to cheek me!" he exclaimed.

"Go ahead!" said Nobby cheerfully.

And the Removites gathered round joyously to see the fun. They had been yearning to see an encounter between Coker and Nobby, and, behold, the big Fifth-Former had thrown himself into the hands of the Philistines, as it were. After the way Banthorpe had handled Loder and Carne the previous night, the juniors had no doubt whatever about his ability to handle Coker, big and powerful as the Fifth-Former was.

"I hear you've been cheeking the prefects and carrying on generally," said Coker, taking the new boy by the collar with his left hand and swishing the riding-whip in his right. "You

want a lesson badly. Now, are you going to take that message?"

"Nix!"

"Then you'll take a licking!"

Coker was rather surprised that the Famous Four did not rush in. As a rule they were ready for trouble, and always prepared to stand up for a member of their own Form against the Fifth. He concluded that he had succeeded at last in inspiring them with the terror and respect that were his due. He was quite mistaken. Harry Wharton & Co. were quite content to be spectators, for they knew that the laugh would be against Coker if he attempted to deal with the amazing new boy.

"Ands off!" said Banthorpe calmly.

Coker chuckled.

"Did you lose your 'h's' on the way to school?" he asked, and Potter and Greene laughed heartily. They always laughed heartily at Coker's little jokes. It was not a high price to pay for the gorgeous feeds in Coker's study, and Coker was as secure of his "laughter in court" as any judge with a turn for feeble humour.

Nobby flushed.

He did not reply to Coker in words, but as Coker did not remove the grasp from his collar, the circus schoolboy replied in deeds. He suddenly grasped Coker with both hands, just as he was raising the riding-whip. Coker, to his utter amazement, found his feet leaving the earth, and for a dizzy moment he was held high in the air at arm's length by the new junior.

Coker, with his brain swimming, gazed down at the crowd of astounded fellows. There was a shout of amazement.

"My hat! This beats Samson!" said Bob Cherry.

"Bravo, Banthorpe!"

"The—the young cad's as strong as a horse!" gasped Potter of the Fifth. "Coker had better let him alone, I think."

Coker struggled wildly in the air, his arms and legs waving wildly. The riding-whip had fallen from his hand. Nobby had a firm grasp upon his collar and upon the seat of his riding-breeches, and he held the burly Fifth-Former above his head as though Coker were a featherweight.

"Ow!" roared Coker. "Lemme down! You'll drop me! Ow!"

"No hurry!" said Nobby, with perfect calmness. "Don't you chaps interfere, or I may drop him, though, and he'll get hurt."

Potter and Greene backed away.

"Now," said Nobby, "you're a cheeky ass, Bloker—"

"Coker, you young sweep!"

"Yes, I meant Croker," assented Nobby. "You're a cheeky young ass, Croker. Do you want me to let you down?"

"Ow! Yes! Oh!"

"Going to behave yourself?"

"Yow! No!"

"Then you'll stay up there!" said Nobby calmly.

"My hat!" Johnny Bull exclaimed. "You can't keep that weight up long surely, Banthorpe?"

"As long as you like," Nobby laughed. "This is nothing to the weights I have lifted in my time. You should see me at—" He paused just in time. He was just going to say "at Hackenback's Circus," but he remembered himself before he made the slip.

Coker roared and wriggled.

"Don't kick!" said Nobby cheerily. "If you do I shall let you drop. Are you getting on all right up there?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Remove.

"Ow! Lemme down! Y'ear? Lemme down at once!"

"Will you promise to be good?"

"No! Ye-e-es! Yes!"

"And let me ride your horse?"

"No!" roared Coker.

"Then you can stay up there!"

"Here comes the gee!" called out Potter of the Fifth.

A groom was leading a handsome little pony towards the house. It was the man from the livery stables at Courtfield. He stared in astonishment at the strange scene in progress outside the house, as well he might.

"Master Coker 'ere?" he asked.

"Here he is!" said Nobby.

The groom grinned.

"My heye! Haw, haw, haw! 'Ere's your 'orse, Master Coker!"

"Let me down!" gurgled Coker sulphurously.

Nobby obeyed—rather suddenly. He swung Coker down, and dumped him into a sitting position on the lowest step. Then he ran towards the pony. Coker jumped up, brandishing his fists.

"Keep off that pony!" he roared.

"Oh, rats!"

Nobby made one leap, and was upon the pony's back. He did not sit down, but stood upon the pony's back with one foot, and gave the animal a flick with the other. The pony started off across the Close, and there was a yell of amazement from the Greyfriars fellows as they watched the circus schoolboy go.

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THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

An Unlucky Recognition!

Nobby's eyes were blazing with excitement.

In the couple of days he had spent at Greyfriars, the circus boy had sorely missed the surroundings of his old life, and especially the horses. Nobby loved horses, and could do almost anything with them. And he was longing to get back among horses, as keenly as a sailor longs to get back to sea, or a plainsman to the prairie. Nobby had almost forgotten where he was in his keen delight at being on the back of a horse again.

Certainly, when he came to Greyfriars in the name of Arthur Banthorpe, he had had no intention of performing bareback riding feats in the Close. But he forgot all that now. It was a glimpse of the old life again, and Nobby enjoyed it.

With his voice, and touches of his foot, he urged the pony to top-speed, standing with only one foot planted upon the saddle.

The Greyfriars fellows looked on with starting eyes.

What kind of a boy was this who could ride a galloping horse standing up on one foot on its back?

Bob Cherry rubbed his eyes.

"Is it a giddy dream?" he ejaculated.

"Faith, and it's drammin' I am!" said Micky Desmond.

"Sure it's as good as a circus, me boys!"

"Better!" gasped Harry Wharton. "I say, Coker, you couldn't do that, could you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get off my horse!" roared Coker, rushing out into the Close.

Nobby did not heed; he did not even hear.

He was guiding the pony, in some way, with his disengaged foot, for the animal now was galloping in a circle round the green Close. Coker rushed to intercept them.

"Stop!" he roared.

"Get aside!" shouted Nobby.

"I won't! Get off my horse!"

"Get out of the way, Coker!" yelled the juniors. "Don't interrupt the show! Go and bury yourself! Get away!"

But Coker made a rush at the pony instead. Nobby suddenly dropped into a sitting posture on the horse's back, and leaned down and caught Coker, and swung him off the ground. The Fifth-Former, in amazement and alarm, almost too dazed to know what was happening to him, was swung off the ground and tossed across the horse in front of Nobby, with his legs wildly lashing the air.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Johnny Bull. "Take him to the fountain!"

"Go it, Banthorpe!"

Nobby grinned, and guided the pony to the fountain. There was a loud splash as he pitched the unfortunate Coker into the marble basin, and a yell of laughter from the juniors.

Then Nobby dashed off again at top speed.

Unfortunate Coker dragged himself out of the fountain, drenched and dripping, with his beautiful riding-breeches clinging to his legs. Yells of laughter met him as he tottered towards the house, and hurried in to dry himself.

But the crowd wasted no thought upon Coker after he had gone in. All their attention was bestowed upon Banthorpe. Banthorpe seemed born to "witch the world with noble horsemanship." The spirit of the thing had caught hold of Banthorpe now, and he was quite reckless. The shouts and cheers of juniors brought back to him the row on row of cheering spectators he was accustomed to in the ring, and it seemed to him that the green Close at Greyfriars was the old tent he was accustomed to.

"Go it, Banthorpe!"

"Hurrah!"

Nobby jumped up on the horse's back again, and rode with a leg at right angles. Then he turned a somersault upon the galloping horse, and came down with his hands upon the saddle, and his feet in the air, and rode round the Close in that way, upside down, and as firm as a rock on the galloping pony.

"My hat!" gasped Frank Nugent. "He must have learned to do that, you know!"

"Never seen anything like it outside a circus!" said Harry Wharton. "Go it, Banthorpe!"

Nobby allowed his head to rest upon the saddle, and elevated his hands, and rode on at top-speed, standing on his head.

The juniors cheered terrifically.

They had certainly never seen such a sight before in the old Close of Greyfriars. The cheering was tremendous.

But there was a sudden exclamation from Potter, in the doorway.

"Cave! The Head!"

"Oh!"

"UNDER SUSPICION!"

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Dr. Locke, the Head of Greyfriars, came out with rustling gown. The loud noise in the Close had disturbed him, and he had come to see what it was all about.

"What is all this noise, my boys?" the Head asked mildly, looking round. "I— Good heavens!"

The Head staggered.

The pony was just dashing towards the schoolsteps, with Banthorpe standing on his head on its back.

Dr. Locke gasped for breath. For the moment he could not believe his eyes. The pony came to a sudden halt, and the rider turned a somersault and landed on his feet at the steps with a grin on his face.

"Coker can have the pony now!" he remarked. "I— Oh! Great Scott!"

He had just caught sight of the Head.

Dr. Locke gazed at him speechlessly.

"What—what—what does this mean?" the Head ejaculated at last. "Did my eyes deceive me? I—I am amazed!"

Banthorpe turned red.

"I—I beg your pardon, sir! I didn't mean to startle you!"

"I—I— What were you doing, Banthorpe?"

"Riding, sir."

"But—but in such an extraordinary fashion!"

"It's a good exercise, sir," said Nobby meekly.

"Extraordinary!" gasped the Head. "You must not do this again, Banthorpe! It is too dangerous! But I must say that you seem to be an extraordinarily good rider!"

"Yes, sir," said Nobby. "Thank you, sir."

"My heye!" said the Courtfield groom, looking at Nobby. "I thort I knowed 'im! It's 'im!"

Nobby turned a startled glance upon the groom. The man winked familiarly.

"I thort so!" he remarked.

"Shut up, you ass!" murmured Nobby.

Dr. Locke glanced at the groom sharply.

"Fancy seein' you 'ere, sir, arter the circus!" said the groom, in amazement. "I thought I knowed your face!"

Nobby was scarlet. Dr. Locke looked suspiciously from one to the other.

"What do you mean, Phillips?" he asked.

"Oh, nothin', sir!" said Phillips, realising that he had put his foot in it. "Nothin', sir! Only—nothin' at all, sir!"

"That will not do, Phillips!" said the Head sharply. "Your words bear only one interpretation—that you fancy you have seen Banthorpe performing in a circus."

"Well, yes, sir," said the groom, with an apologetic glance at Nobby, who was crimson. "I'm sure the young gent meant no 'arm, sir."

"What! You actually state that you have seen this young gentleman performing in a circus?" exclaimed the Head. "Impossible!"

"E can tell you, sir."

"Banthorpe! Is there anything in this extraordinary statement?"

"Oh, let him run on!" said Nobby. "He can tell you, sir."

"You admit it?"

"Well, yes, sir."

"When did you see him, Phillips?"

"Monday evening, sir," said the groom.

The Head uttered an exclamation.

"The night you arrived here, Banthorpe," he said.

"Yes, sir," said poor Nobby.

He felt that the game was up now, but he still hoped to escape from the dilemma somehow.

"Indeed! I heard that you had stayed out the evening to go to the circus, but I did not know that you were guilty of the great impropriety of taking part in the performance!" said Dr. Locke, with great severity.

"I—I couldn't help it, sir!"

"You could not help it! What do you mean?"

"You—you see, sir, I—I'm fond of riding, sir," said Nobby, with an inspiration, "and I was glad of the chance, sir."

"Indeed!" said the Head. "You will be very careful, please, not to do such a thing again so long as you remain at Greyfriars."

"Very well, sir," said Nobby.

Dr. Locke turned back into the house.

"You fat 'ead!" said Nobby to the groom. "You've give me away!"

Phillips stared at him very hard.

"Then you was only doin' it for a lark, sir?" he stammered.

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Nobby.

"Blessed if I didn't think you was Nobby Nobbs, the Boy Rider and Strongest Boy on Earth, as they says on the circus bills," said the groom. "There wasn't nothing on the posters about an amachoor takin' the reg'ler feller's place. I thought you was Nobby Nobbs, and no mistake, and so did my pal who went over with me to the circus."

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"Well, I suppose you've found out your mistake now?" said Nobby.

"I—I s'pose so," said the groom, still very much bewildered. "I suppose you can't be Nobby Nobbs as you're 'ere, sir, and the doctor knows you."

"You're an ass, my man!" said Nobby.

And he turned away.

The groom went to catch the pony for Coker, muttering to himself, still evidently in a very dubious and bewildered frame of mind.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Nobby Plays Cricket.

HARRY WHARTON & CO. marched Banthorpe down to the cricket-field amid cheers. Nobby had made himself the hero of the hour. A fellow who could ride as Nobby rode, and hold Coker, of the Fifth, unaided above his head, was a wonderful person in the eyes of the juniors, and the absence of any "swank" from his manner made them more than ever inclined to do him honour. And the strange news imparted by the groom from Courtfield that Banthorpe had taken the part of the circus rider for an evening performance, gave the final touch to his glory.

As Bob Cherry said, a chap who could do that was a real chap, and no mistake.

The juniors all talked about it, but Nobby said nothing, which was put down to his modesty, a quality he was becoming famous for.

"You play cricket, of course?" said Harry Wharton, taking it for granted that the amazing new boy could do that, as he could do so much more wonderful things.

"Well, I can bat," said Nobby, "and I've bowled. Only in a way, you know. I ain't had much chance of playing cricket in my line."

"In your line?" said Nugent, in surprise. "What line?"

"I—I mean at 'ome," said Nobby.

"Well, let's see what you can do," said Harry. "A chap like you ought to be a regular slogger of a bat, at all events. Temple and Dabney are going to bowl to us, and we'll see what they can do at you."

Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth, were on the cricket-ground. Temple & Co. had been at practice, and they had offered, in a condescending way, to give the Remove some bowling, as there was no match on that afternoon; and the Removites had accepted with the intention of knocking the ball over the field, and showing the Fourth-Formers that they could not bowl so well as they fancied.

There was a buzz of applause at the idea of putting Banthorpe on the pitch to bat against the Fourth. If he could bat at all, his amazing strength certainly ought to enable him to give Temple & Co. some good drives.

"Ready for you chaps," said Temple.

"Banthorpe's going to bat," said Harry Wharton. "Try my bat, Banthorpe."

"Thanks!" said Nobby. "I 'it rather 'ard, you know!"

Temple sniggered.

"Dropped anything?" he asked.

"Oh, shut up!" said Bob Cherry. "Banthorpe could knock the whole Fourth Form out with one hand, if he liked, so you'd better not cheek him!"

Nobby went to the wicket, bat in hand. He stood there, grasping the cane handle of Wharton's handsome bat as if he knew how to handle it. As a matter of fact, Nobby was fond of the great summer game, and he played as much as circumstances allowed in the busy life of the circus.

Temple took the ball with a superior smile. The fact that his bowling was generally knocked to all corners of the earth when he played the Remove, had not eliminated from Temple's mind that he was a wonderful bowler, and, indeed, not far short of the form of county champions.

"That new kid seems to be a strong beast," he remarked to Dabney. "But I don't fancy he can bat—not against my bowling, anyway. I'll give him a twister, and take him down a peg!"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

And Temple prepared to send down a really telling ball. The ball came whizzing down, and broke in true enough for the middle stump, but the willow was there.

Crack!

The ball flew, and half a dozen Fourth-Formers, who had gathered round to catch the new boy out, looked for it, and didn't see it. The stroke was a terrific one, and the juniors wondered where the ball had gone to, when there was a sudden terrific crash in the distance.

"My only Aunt Janette!" shrieked Bob Cherry. "Look!"

He pointed.

In the window of the Head's study, far, far away from the cricket-ground, there appeared a rough, jagged hole in one of the panes.

The juniors gave a yell of amazement.

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Wingate, of the Sixth, could not have hit a ball two-thirds of the distance with his mightiest stroke.

"The Head's window!"

"Busted!"

"My hat!"

"Phew!"

Nobby looked round.

"Where's that ball?" he asked.

"Ha, ha! Look!" yelled Bob Cherry.

The Head's window was thrown open, and the Head himself appeared in sight, with a very pink face and an angry frown. He had a cricket ball in his hand.

His frowning gaze was directed upon the boys near the House. He did not imagine for a moment that the ball could have been sent from the cricket-field across the Close.

"Who threw this ball through my window?" he exclaimed.

The fellows outside did not reply. They were staring towards the cricket-field, but they looked round as the Head called out.

"Who was it? I insist upon an answer!" rapped out the Head.

"If you please, sir, it came from the cricket-ground!" said Hoskins, of the Shell.

The Head stared.

"From the cricket-ground! Impossible!"

"Yes, sir; Banthorpe's batting!"

"Banthorpe!" exclaimed the Head. "Do you mean to say that Banthorpe has driven this ball from the wicket as far as my window?"

"Yes, sir," said Dabney, panting up to field the ball. "Would you mind throwing it out, sir? We're sorry about the window, sir. Never thought it would come so far."

"Extraordinary!" exclaimed the Head, in amazement. "Banthorpe must be a most remarkable boy. As it was an accident, I shall say nothing about the matter; but kindly tell Banthorpe not to bat in this direction again!"

"Certainly, sir!"

The Head tossed out the ball, and Dabney caught it and scudded off to the cricket-ground with it.

"You're not to bat at the Head's window again, Banthorpe!" he called out.

Nobby grinned.

"I'll be careful," he said.

"Play up!" roared Bob Cherry. "My hat! This beats Jessop and Fry and Grace!" Go it, Banthorpe!"

Temple prepared to bowl again with some misgivings. He realised that he was dealing with a batsman who was worthy of a little more than his steel. Nobby faced the bowling with a cool grin. The ball came down again, and it was an easy one for Nobby. He fairly let himself go.

Clack!

Some of the onlookers threw themselves in the grass in case the ball should come in their direction. It went like a cannon-shot. From the distant Cloisters—quite a new direction, for Nobby was very careful—came a wild howl.

"Ciel! Mon Dieu! I am keel!"

It was Monsieur Charpentier, the French master. The little gentleman had been walking in the Cloisters, reading a paper he had received from Paris as he ambled to and fro, and certainly he had never dreamed that he was in danger from the cricket-field.

Monsieur Charpentier was wearing a big white hat, and the ball had caught it, and his hat flew away so suddenly that the French master felt for the moment as if his head had been knocked off.

"Ciel! 'Elp! Mon Dieu! My head! Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "Frenchy's got it!"

"My hat! He may be hurt!" Harry Wharton exclaimed.

There was a rush of juniors to the spot.

Monsieur Charpentier was holding his head in both hands, as if to make sure that it was still upon his shoulders.

"Are you hurt, sir?" gasped Nugent.

"Mon Dieu! I am keel!" gasped the little gentleman. "I am keel dead viz a cannon-ball! Ze brains are knock out, I zink! Mon Dieu!"

"Impossible, sir!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Vat! Vat you say?" demanded Monsieur Charpentier, as the juniors chuckled.

"I—I mean—ahem—"

"You are sheeky, Vernon-Smeet! You take fifty lines!" said Monsieur Charpentier. "Who was it zat trow zat ball at me, zen?"

"It wasn't thrown, sir!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "We've got a new batsman, sir, who's a giddy wonder! It was batted!"

"Ciel! Zat garcon is very strong, zen!" said Monsieur Charpentier. "I zink zat it is not safe to let him use ze hat, zen!"

Monsieur Charpentier had discovered by this time that his head was in its usual place, and that it was not even damaged. He calmed down somewhat. But he looked as if he were going to have a fit when his hat was brought to him. It had been a high white hat, and now it looked like a very

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roughly handled concertina. He gazed at it almost speechlessly.

"So sorry, sir!" murmured Wharton. "Quite an accident, viz."

"Oh, run away viz you!" said Monsieur Charpentier. "Ze chapeau is ruin, n'est-ce pas! I zink zat you boys are not safe! I not yalk here viz myself any more, is it not?"

And the little gentleman ambled off to a safer quarter to read his paper. The juniors found the ball and returned chuckling to the cricket-field. But Banthorpe of the Remove did not bat any more. He had shown the Remove what he could do and, as Bob Cherry remarked, they did not want the afternoon to finish up with an inquest, and the amazing new boy was taken off the crease. Nobby was quite content to look on, however; and after cricket practice was over, he enjoyed a famous feed in Study No. 1. As many fellows as could crowd into the study came to that feed, and Banthorpe was the guest of honour—and a queer experience it was for the circus lad, and he wondered what the crowd of enthusiastic public school fellows would have said if they had known that their honoured guest was Nobby Nobbs of Hackenback's Circus!

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Nobby to the Front.

"LETTER for Master Banthorpe!"

Trotter, the page, brought the letter into No. 1 Study with much respect in his manner. Banthorpe of the Remove was as great a hero to Trotter as to everybody else. Trotter was only too pleased to bring Banthorpe a letter; juniors generally liked getting letters. But Banthorpe did not seem to be pleased.

"Letter for me!" he repeated.

"Yes, sir!"

Trotter laid it on the table.

Nobby looked at the letter. It was addressed to Master Banthorpe at Greyfriars, and was evidently intended for the boy who was at that moment lying under medical care in the circus caravan. Nobby turned very red. He had, at Arthur Banthorpe's request, taken his name and borrowed his clothes, but he felt a great repugnance to opening a letter addressed to him. That perhaps was part of the game he was playing; but the letter might contain private matters, and Nobby was by no means of an inquisitive nature where the affairs of other fellows were concerned.

"Thank you, kid!" he said.

"Don't stand on ceremony, Banthorpe," said Harry Wharton. "You can open the letter, you know."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Nobby.

"We're generally rather keen to open our letters," grinned Nugent. "Might be a tip from some respected uncle or aunt."

"Any time will do," said Nobby. He slipped the letter into his pocket, intending to keep it there until he could hand it to Arthur.

Which was the reason that Nobby did not learn that Mr. Henry Banthorpe intended to pay his nephew a visit at Greyfriars.

There was another letter from Mr. Banthorpe by the same post, and it had been delivered to the Head. Dr. Locke was reading it in his study at that very moment. He was a little surprised by it.

"Dear Sir," Mr. Banthorpe's letter ran—"I was very much obliged by your letter notifying me that my nephew had arrived safely at Greyfriars. What you say about him, however, surprises me very much. He is certainly a delicate and timid lad, and I cannot understand how he has made an impression upon you so different from what I expected. Your description of him amazes me, and I cannot understand it in the least. It is very surprising that so great a change should have come over a boy in so short a time. I shall have the pleasure of coming to Greyfriars to-day to see you and my nephew at the same time.—Yours sincerely,

"H. BANTHORPE."

Dr. Locke handed the letter to Mr. Quelch, who was in the study. The Remove-master glanced through it.

"The boy is indeed extraordinary!" Dr. Locke remarked, with a puzzling knitting of the brows. "I don't think I ever saw quite so remarkable a boy. His uncle's description of him was to the effect that he was extremely delicate and very timid, and that he would require special attention. At the same time he stated that he was very well advanced in his studies, and indeed, the report I had from his tutor, a gentleman of my acquaintance, was very favourable. Yet our experience of this boy had contradicted everything that his guardian had said."

The Remove-master nodded.

"Quite so!" he remarked. "Banthorpe is anything but advanced in his studies. The English he speaks is very curious, to say the least of it, and his ignorance of common subjects is amazing. I should have placed him in the Second Form, rather than in the Lower Fourth, if the matter had been in my hands. He is certainly willing to learn; and he is a very intelligent lad, but he most assuredly does not seem to have had an education fitting him to come here."

"Yes, it is very surprising—but more surprising still is the statement that he is a delicate lad. He has shown the most amazing strength—a strength of which few full-grown men are possessed."

"It is true. As for timidity——"

The Head smiled.

"His horsemanship to-day certainly does not seem to indicate any lack of courage or energy," he remarked.

"Decidedly not. And I have heard that he has had disputes with Upper Form boys, and has gained the upper hand every time."

"It is extraordinary," said the Head. "I shall be very glad for Mr. Banthorpe to come, and I will see Banthorpe in his uncle's presence. It seems to me that there is something very mysterious about this, and I shall be glad to have it cleared up."

"I feel the same, sir."

If Nobby had heard that chat in the Head's study he would probably not have been quite so cheerful that afternoon. As it was, he finished his tea in Harry Wharton's study in the highest of spirits, and when the chums of the Remove proposed a stroll out after tea, to show Banthorpe the sights round the school, he assented with cheery alacrity. The Famous Four and Banthorpe and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh strolled out of the School House together, and sauntered down the lane towards Friardale in the bright July sunlight.

"I've got an idea," Bob Cherry remarked, tapping Banthorpe on the arm. "You don't like being in Bunter's study, of course?"

"Not very much!" grinned Nobby.

"Well, suppose you ask Mr. Quelch to change you into mine? We should be rather crowded, but we'd be jolly glad to have you!"

"Oh, rats!" exclaimed Frank Nugent warmly. "You've got four in No. 13 already. I think Banthorpe ought to come into No. 1. Wharton and I have talked it over."

"Yes, rather!" said Wharton.

"Now, look here——" said Bob Cherry argumentatively.

"The lookfulness is terrific," said Hurree Singh. "We shall be gladfully welcome to receive you to take the esteemed Banthorpe into our honourable study."

"Hi, hi! Look out!" roared a voice behind the junior.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes Coker!"

Clatter, clatter, clatter!

The juniors crowded to the side of the road.

Coker was coming up the road, mounted upon the pony, and it looked as if Coker had very little control over his steed. The pony was at a gallop, and Coker was trying to hold him in. But the pony apparently intended to please himself about that.

"Stick on!" roared Bob Cherry. "You ought to have had that padlock after all, Cokey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The pony thundered by in a cloud of dust.

Zip, zip! Toot-toot!

A big motor-car had swung out of the village, and was coming down the road at a good speed. Coker was dashing straight towards it, and in the narrow lane there was little room to pass. The noise of the motor startled the pony, already in an excited state. He reared for a moment, and then dashed on wildly, Coker in his excitement letting go the reins and clinging wildly to the animal's neck.

"My hat!" exclaimed Wharton, turning pale. "There'll be an accident!"

A gentleman with a hard, stern face showing under his silk hat was sitting in the car. He glared at the oncoming rider and yelled to the chauffeur. The chauffeur did all he could. He jammed on his brakes and turned the car close to the ditch at the side of the road. But it was too sudden. The wheels skidded over the soft edge of the ditch, and the car turned a half-somersault. Coker went flying by in a cloud of dust, and the car crashed over into the hedge across the ditch, and crashed down.

"Good heavens!"

The juniors dashed to the spot, their hearts in their mouths, in fear that there had been a serious accident.

The chauffeur had fallen into the hedge, and he scrambled out, very much shaken, but otherwise unhurt.

The car was on its side across the ditch, and in the soft mud at the side of the ditch lay the hard-faced gentleman, and the car was over him.

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He was yelling for help in stentorian tones which showed that as yet, at all events, he was not injured.

"Help! Williams, move the car instantly! Help!"

The chauffeur gasped.

"Move the car, sir! Ten men couldn't move it, I fancy. I'll have to get 'elp!"

The juniors raced up.

"Can we help you?" panted Wharton. "Keep still, sir; don't struggle, or you may bring it down on you!"

"Help! I demand help!"

"Keep still!"

"Don't move, sir!" gasped the chauffeur. "You'll 'ave the whole bag of tricks on you if you do, sir."

And the unfortunate motorist realised the fearful danger of his position, and lay quite still, the colour fading out of his face.

The juniors gazed at the scene in horror.

Coker, who had succeeded in stopping the pony at last, had jumped off, and he came running back as he saw that there had been an accident. But Coker, powerful as he was, was not likely to be of much use here.

The motorist lay in the ditch, which was half-full of water. His body had disappeared under water, and only his head was above the mingled mud and water he was embedded in.

The car had fallen across the ditch, blocking it from side to side, and it lay above the fallen man.

Had he had firm earth beneath him the weight of the car would have smashed him; but he had sunk into the water, and for the moment the high sides of the ditch were supporting the car, which stretched across it from side to side.

But the soft mud was yielding under the great weight, and the car was sinking visibly lower every minute.

It did not hurt the fallen man, as the pressure from above was pushing him deeper into the mud and water. But it pinned him down, and he could not move more than to wriggle feebly, and his movements, by disturbing the mud around him, only made the downward pressure of the car swifter and harder.

In five minutes, at the most, the heavy pressure would drive him completely below the surface.

The juniors felt their hearts stand almost still as they saw it.

When the pressure had driven him below the mud and water, the man was doomed. No power on earth could save him. The ditch, which had saved him so far from broken bones, would be his grave.

As they realised that a human life was in fearful peril under their very eyes, beyond their power to help, the juniors became as pale as death.

The motorist realised his danger, and his face was like chalk.

"For mercy's sake, get help!" he groaned faintly, and all the bluster was gone out of his manner now. "Will you leave me to die?"

"What can be done?" muttered Wharton.

The car was stuck in the clinging mud—a dozen men could not have dragged it out. And it was so placed that there was barely room for one man, stepping into the ditch, to put his shoulder beneath it. A giant in that position could have turned the car over or lifted its weight so that the fallen man could crawl out. But there was room only for one, and no man's strength was equal to such a strain. The chauffeur looked at it, and shook his head hopelessly.

"I couldn't move it an inch!" he muttered.

"Try—try!" shrieked the fallen man. "Will you let me perish here?"

The chauffeur plunged into the ditch, and knelt in the muddy water in the middle, and put his shoulder under the car. He strained desperately to move it, but it did not rise a fraction of an inch. He gasped at last and drew out, wet from head to foot, smothered with mud, and utterly exhausted by the tremendous effort he had made. He sank down, gasping, on the bank.

"I can't shift it, sir!"

"Help! Oh, help!"

Nobby stepped forward.

"Let me try," he said.

The chauffeur stared at him.

"You! You young fool! Do you think you can move it when I can't!" he panted.

"I can try," said Nobby quietly. "I'm only a boy, but I'm stronger than most chaps."

"Good!" gasped Bob Cherry. "You can do it if anybody can! Try—try!"

And Nobby plunged into the ditch.

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"HELP! For mercy's sake, help me!" groaned the fallen man.

"I'll do my best, sir."

But the man gave a groan of despair as he saw that it was a boy who was coming to his aid. Where the thick-set, powerful chauffeur had failed, what was a school-boy likely to be able to do? But there was a grim and determined expression upon Nobby's face. What an ordinary schoolboy could not dream of doing, might be possible to Nobby Nobbs, the Strongest Boy on Earth and the star of Hackenback's Circus.

Nobby plunged waist-deep in the mud and slime of the ditch, and put his shoulder under the car.

The juniors on the bank above laid hold of it, to help all they could, though dragging was not likely to have much effect on the embedded car.

The time that had elapsed had made a difference. The car had sunk lower, pushing the fallen man deeper and deeper into the thick ooze of the ditch.

Only his face was above the water now, and once, as Nobby disturbed the water, it washed over the white face, and he spluttered and choked.

It was up to his mouth now, and only by a great effort did he keep his face above water, and now his lips were tightly closed, and he was breathing through his nose.

Unless help could be given, all would be over in two minutes at the most, and the terror of death was in the man's eyes.

He could speak no longer, for he dared not part his lips; but there was an expression of mute agony and appeal in his eyes that went to the juniors' hearts.

Nobby braced himself for the effort.

He was bent almost double in the ditch, and the water was up to his chin as he bent beneath the weight of the car.

The juniors could see his face become strained and drawn as he exerted his strength against the crushing weight.

His teeth were set, his lips tight over them, his nostrils expanded, his eyes gleaming with a hard, grim light.

Every ounce of strength that Nobby possessed he was bringing to bear now.

The downward pressure of the car was arrested.

Then, hardly perceptibly at first, the great mass rose—slowly—slowly; but the man pinned down under the weight felt the relief, and he made an effort, and his face came well out of the water again, and he could speak.

"It's giving!" he gasped. "God bless you, lad—God bless you! Keep at it!"

Nobby did not reply.

He needed all his breath for the task he was engaged upon.

Slowly the car yielded, and the great mass rose higher and higher.

"Try to crawl out, sir!" gasped the chauffeur. "Get out while he's 'olding it up, sir! He can't 'old it long!"

The fallen man struggled to free himself from the mud.

The car rose higher, inch by inch.

The chauffeur and two or three of the juniors, plunging into the ditch, grasped the shoulders of the fallen man and dragged at him.

The pressure of the car removed from above him, he was dragged out from the thick and clinging mud.

Right out they dragged him, and he was hauled up in triumph on the bank.

"Right-ho, old fellow!" cried Harry Wharton. "You can let go now."

There was a gasp from the passenger, and he lay in the road in a dead faint. But all eyes were upon Nobby for the moment. The circus schoolboy had saved the man's life, but his strength was almost spent. He yielded to the weight above, and allowed the car to sink back to its position, and jerked himself out from under it.

Bob Cherry and Hurree Singh dragged him out of the ditch.

"Oh!" gasped Nobby. "That was a twister!"

"I should say it was!" said Harry Wharton. "You've saved the man's life, Banthorpe! My only hat, where did you get that strength from?"

"You ought to go into a giddy show as the Strong Man of the World when you grow up!" said Johnny Bull.

Nobby grinned breathlessly.

"I fancy I shall!" he remarked.

"Give us your fin, old son!" said Coker, of the Fifth.

"I say, you're a splendid chap! Look here, you can ride my pony back to Greyfriars if you like. Even you must be a bit fagged after a twister like that!"

"Thanky!" said Nobby, shaking hands with Coker very cordially. "I'll be glad to. I feel a bit done in, and I should like to get some dry clothes."

And Coker caught the pony, which was browsing along the lane, and Nobby mounted and rode away contentedly to Greyfriars.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 232.

A Grand, Long, Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. next Tuesday:

EVERY
TUESDAY,

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ONE
PENNY.

The chauffeur was attending to his employer. The unfortunate man was conscious again now, and he sat up in the road gasping faintly.

"You're not hurt, sir," said the chauffeur, who had felt over his employer for damages. "You are all right, sir. It's only the shock."

"I have had a fearfully narrow escape," said the man feebly. "Where is that brave lad who saved my life? He might have been crushed under the car if it had slipped. Where is he?"

"He's gone back to Greyfriars, sir," said Wharton. "He was wet through."

"Greyfriars! I am going there, so I shall see him again! I am going to Greyfriars to see my nephew," said the gentleman. "Will one of you boys fetch me a conveyance from the village?"

"Certainly, sir! We'll have the hack here in a jiffy!"

And leaving the gentleman sitting in the road, leaning on the chauffeur, the juniors sprinted away towards Friardale, and in ten minutes the station hack arrived upon the scene, and the unfortunate motorist was conveyed on his way to Greyfriars.

The juniors walked after the hack towards the school.

"Banthorpe will be a giddy hero after this!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Look here, we're going to have him in our study, you chaps!"

"Rats!" said Wharton warmly. "We're going to have him in No. 1!"

"Look here——"

"Look here——"

"Why not referfully leave it to the esteemed Banthorpe?" suggested Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "That is the good-eggful idea!"

And the Famous Four decided that they would.

By the time they reached Greyfriars, Banthorpe had changed his clothes, and was looking quite fresh and cheerful again.

He had said nothing of his exploit at the school. But Harry Wharton & Co. soon made up for that, and the Greyfriars fellows crowded round Nobby and shook hands with him, and slapped him on the back, and cheered him till the old Close rang again.

Trotter came pushing his way through the enthusiastic crowd.

"Ead wants to see Master Banthorpe in his study, please," he said.

"More glory for you, Banny, old son!" grinned Bob Cherry. "The chap you saved has told the Head. Go and be glorified!"

"Oh, rats!" said Nobby. "Do chuck it!"

"Rats! Hurrah! Let's take him to the Head's study shoulder-high!"

"Good egg!"

"Hands off!" roared Nobby, in alarm.

But he was not heeded. The juniors laid hold of him, and he was hoisted upon the strong shoulders of Wharton and Bob Cherry, and borne off in triumph, with the rest of the Remove—and a crowd of fellows of other Forms—following behind and cheering wildly.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Nobby Owns Up.

"DEAR me!" exclaimed Dr. Locke. "What is that dreadful noise?"

Dr. Locke was in his study with his visitor. The visitor had given his name as Mr. Banthorpe, and he was waiting in the Head's study to see his nephew.

Mr. Banthorpe had been accommodated with a change of clothes, and he had cleaned off the mud and slime of the ditch, but he still looked very pale and shaken. The fearfully narrow escape he had had from death had left a deep impression upon him—an impression which was likely to last.

"It sounds like cheering," said Mr. Banthorpe. "Perhaps the boys are cheering the lad who saved my life. I should like to see him, Dr. Locke, after I have seen my nephew. You should be proud to have such a noble lad in the school."

"I am indeed!" said the Head. "I am very anxious to know his name. But dear me! The boys are cheering your nephew, sir!"

"My nephew!"

"Listen!"

Loudly from the passage outside came the trampling of many feet and a roar of cheering.

"Hurray! Hurray!"

"Bravo, Banthorpe!"

There was a knock at the door.

"Come in!" said the Head rather grimly.

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry came in, with Nobby on their shoulders, and set him down, very flushed and confused, on the Head's carpet. Outside, in the passage, the Removites crowded, still cheering.

The Head started up.

"Wharton, what does this—"

"He's a giddy hero, sir!" said Harry Wharton. "We thought you'd like us to show that we appreciate him, sir. He might have been crushed under the car."

"Banthorpe, what—"

"That is the brave lad who saved my life," said Mr. Banthorpe. "Give me your hand, my lad! How can I thank you?"

"It's alright, sir!" mumbled Nobby.

The Head wondered if he was dreaming.

"Banthorpe! Did you save your uncle's life?" he exclaimed.

"His uncle!" ejaculated the juniors, in amazement.

"His uncle!" repeated Mr. Banthorpe.

"Uncle!" groaned Nobby. "My 'at! It's all up now, and no blessed error!"

"Did you not know that this gentleman was your uncle when you saved him?" asked the Head, in wonder. "Surely you know your own uncle by sight?"

"Ow!" groaned Nobby.

"What does this mean?" exclaimed Mr. Banthorpe, as amazed as the doctor. "This is the boy who saved my life. He is a stranger to me."

"Your nephew is a stranger to you! What can you mean, sir?"

"My nephew!" shouted Mr. Banthorpe.

"Certainly!"

"This boy my nephew?"

"Undoubtedly! That is the boy who arrived here on Monday evening in the name of Arthur Banthorpe," said the Head. "Do you mean to say that he is not your nephew?"

"Certainly he is not! He is nothing whatever like my nephew. I only wish that my nephew were like him!" said Mr. Banthorpe. "There is some mistake here. Is it possible that this lad has been passing himself off as my nephew here?"

"Undoubtedly! He is the boy who has been known here as Banthorpe, and he arrived at the time that I was expecting your nephew, and he has clothes marked with your nephew's name," said the Head, in bewilderment. "If this boy is not your nephew, what has become of him? Where is he?"

"This boy can tell us! My nephew must have been spirited away if an impostor has come to the school in his name and in his clothes! Yet it is impossible for me to believe that this lad, who risked a terrible death to save me, can be a villain."

"You're right there, guv'nor!" said Nobby cheerfully. "I s'pose the game's up now, so I may as well own up. I ain't Banthorpe!"

"My hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Who are you, then?"

"I'm Nobby Nobbs, of Hackenback's Circus, the Strongest Boy on Earth," said Nobby coolly.

"Great Scott!"

"My hat!"

"That accounts, then!"

"Then where is Arthur Banthorpe?" demanded the amazed Head.

"He's all right!" said Nobby. "I 'ope you'll excuse me for this little game, sir. No 'arm was meant. Master Arthur is at the circus, and my mother's takin' care of him. He ran into a boss at Fairoaks, and fainted, and got into a fever. He ain't 'urt, you see; but he was in a run-down state, the doctor says, and knocked up easy. Doctor thinks he's been kep' in a state of fear by somebody he's afraid of, and it's acted on his nerves."

Mr. Banthorpe turned scarlet.

"He was simply in the 'errors at the idea of not comin' on to the school," explained Nobby. "He couldn't possibly come; but he was afraid not to, and he was getting into a fever about it, and it might have turned out dangerous for him. He said as how his uncle would think he was shamming if he didn't turn up at the school, and there would be trouble, and he hadn't the nerve to face it. He was in such a state of mortal funk, and makin' himself so ill about it, that I thought of this dodge—comin' to the school in his name—and I done it. No 'arm intended, sir."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Dr. Locke. "Then you are—"

"Nobby Nobbs, sir. And when we begin again at the circus I'll be 'appy to send you a pass for the best seat there, sir, if you care to come," said Nobby.

"Dear me!"

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Don't miss the Splendid New School Story, entitled,

"THE LIMIT!" In the

"And if you, Mr. Banthorpe, sir, would be a bit kinder to that poor kid you'd find 'im get on better," said Nobby cheerfully. "Don't think me cheeky, sir; but I always talk right out. The poor kid daren't call his shadder his own. Go easy."

Mr. Banthorpe bit his lip.

"You saved my life, my lad," he said. "Before that, I think I should have wished to punish you for this trick. Now, I thank you! You are a noble lad—circus boy or schoolboy or whatever you are! My nephew is safe?"

"Quite safe, sir. My mother's takin' care of 'im!" said Nobby proudly, with the evident belief that anybody whom his mother was taking care of was very well off indeed.

Mr. Banthorpe smiled.

"Very well!" he said. "I will see to this at once, and—and I shall be very kind to him, Master Nobbs. You saved my life! Is there anything I can do for you in return?"

Nobby shook his head.

"No fear, sir! Only—only—"

"Anything you may name," said Mr. Banthorpe—"if it is in my power."

"Well, go easy with Arthur, sir."

Mr. Bancroft smiled and coloured.

"You may rely upon that," he said, as he grasped Nobby's hand. "I have learned a lesson from you to-day, my boy, and I shall not forget it."

And Dr. Locke shook hands with Nobby, too.

"I forgive this extraordinary trick, as your motive seems to have been a good one," he said. "Banthorpe must come to the school as soon as possible. And you—"

"I'll be glad to get back to the circus, sir," said Nobby.

"I've had a good time here, and the chaps are splendid; but now they know I'm a circus boy, I 'spect they'll give me the cold shoulder, anyway—"

There was a roar from the juniors:

"No fear!"

"You ass!"

"Collar him!"

And Nobby was snatched up and carried out of the study in a triumphal procession.

The Head smiled as he heard the thunder of cheering without. It was pretty clear that the Greyfriars fellows knew how to appreciate pluck wherever they found it; and Nobby, to his surprise and delight, found that he was not a whit less a hero in their eyes.

And a hero Nobby remained during the short time he stayed after the revelation; and when he went he went regretted by all.

Banthorpe came to Greyfriars, and the fellows were very kind to him, as much for Nobby's sake as anything else. But, as Bob Cherry remarked, Arthur Banthorpe was a nice fellow enough, but he was a very poor substitute for Nobby; and it was a long time before the Greyfriars juniors ceased to talk of the wonderful exploits of the Circus Schoolboy.

THE END.

(Next Tuesday's splendid, new, long, complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co., by Frank Richards, is entitled "UNDER SUSPICION!" Order a copy of "The Magnet" Library well in advance.)

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THE STORY OF THE
GREAT MAN-HUNT
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Ferrers Lord, millionaire, and owner of the Lord of the Deep.



Prince Ching-Lung, Adventurer, Conjuror and Ventriloquist.



Nathan Gore, Jewel collector, and multi-millionaire, Ferrers Lord's terrible rival.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

"BY FOUL MEANS OR FAIR, I'LL WIN."

Nathan Gore, millionaire and jewel-collector, clenched his hands furiously and raved like a madman on the deck of the liner Coronation. He had started specially from America in order to be present at the sale-room in London where the costly diamond, "The World's Wonder," was to be put up for auction, and now it seemed that this thick fog which had suddenly fallen over the Channel was to spoil everything. For the great sale was to take place at midday, and already the captain had told Nathan Gore that it would be impossible to reach Southampton before that time. "A telegram for Mr. Gore," a voice rang out through the darkness. The American was told the message, and, as he listened, his face came over deathly pale, and he gave vent to a terrible oath. The message was: "Ferrers Lord purchased 'The World's Wonder' privately. No bidders. Price unknown." "I'll win yet," shrieked the man. "By foul means or fair, I'll win!"

"THE WORLD'S WONDER."

In the magnificent drawing-room of Ferrers Lord's house in Park Lane was assembled a varied collection of individuals. First of all there was the celebrated millionaire himself, and close to him sat Ching-Lung, a Chinaman, busily engaged in making paper butterflies. Hal Honour, the great engineer, was sipping tea, and Rupert Thurston yawned in a chair. "How much did you pay for that great diamond?" he enquired of the latter. The millionaire smiled. "Money and fair words, Rupert," he replied. "By the way, you have not seen it yet?" The priceless gem passed from hand to hand. A thousand fires burned in its crystal heart; a thousand colours, ever changing, leaped from every facet. "I guess it would have been more money and less fair words if old Gore had turned up," remarked Ching-Lung sagely.

"I'LL TAKE THE CHALLENGE!"

The millionaire's house was wrapped in silence. A faint light shone from the drawing-room. Ching-Lung pushed open the door, then a cry broke from him. A man lay face downwards on the floor. There was a ghastly crimson stain on his collar. The man was Ferrers Lord. "Ching—the diamond!" came in a hoarse voice. Ching opened the drawer, which Lord indicated, but there was no diamond there. But a message had been left behind: "To Ferrers Lord,—Knowing that you would not sell 'The World's Wonder,' I have taken it. Do your worst. I defy you. The stone is mine—Nathan Gore." The millionaire rose to his feet. "I take the challenge, Ching," he said. "I'll hunt him down and win back my diamond." He travels down to the cave where the Lord of the Deep is hidden, only to find that this wonderful submarine vessel has been destroyed by Nathan Gore. He begins the chase after the diamond thief, and rushes across Germany in a special train. The train is wrecked by Gore's agency, but Ferrers Lord presses forward. Crossing a wide stream, however, Gan-Waga and Barry O'Looney fall into the water, and the party is compelled to stop at a village inn while Ching-Lung procures clothes for the two soaked men.

(Now go on with the story.)

A Strange Outfit for Barry and Gan Waga.

Ching-Lung was hardly the right person to send on such a mission. The landlord lighted him across the yard, and they roused the gentleman from his bed of straw. It took some time before he understood what was wanted of him. Finally he grasped the situation, and led the way to a spring-cart.

From the cart he took a trunk. It was filled with various theatrical costumes, most of them in a very faded and threadbare condition. The innkeeper held the lantern, and Ching-Lung, chuckling under his breath, made his selection. He chose two ordinary suits, and then discarded the coats. In place of the coats, he took two long black cloaks, such as the stage villains of melodrama usually wear. To these he added a couple of black, wide-brimmed, slouch hats.

Two pieces of gold changed hands, and both seller and buyer were equally satisfied.

A fire had been lighted, and Gan and Barry squatted before it, wrapped in blankets, while their undergarments dried. Ferrers Lord was impatient to continue the pursuit. The nearest station at which they could hope to find a special train was Durantz, fourteen miles down the line. They could not wait until the heavy suits dried.

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A Grand, Long, Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. next Tuesday:

"You obtained clothes, Ching?"

"Yes, old chap."

"Then make up the fire!"

The underclothes dried rapidly.

"You'll find your togs in the other room, boys," grinned Ching-Lung. "I've done my best for you."

"Much perblyged, Chingy!" said Gan. "Yo' not bad chap, 'cept fo' yo' face!"

"Hurry up!" growled Joe. "By hokey, we ain't come 'ere to take root!"

Ching-Lung kept his eye on the door. It burst open, and Barry thrust out an angry and fiery face.

"Luk here," he howled, "Oi ain't goin' to wear these duds! Oi ain't a Anarchist!"

"Then put on your own clothes!" said Ching-Lung. "I like your gratitude after all my trouble."

"Joolius Saizer," roared Barry, "ivry dog in Jarminy 'll go for me!"

"Put on your own suit, then."

Barry shivered at the thought of his own clammy garments. He could not face those. The door opened again. They screamed. Even Ferrers Lord laughed as two typical

"UNDER SUSPICION!"

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stage villains, heavily cloaked and heavily hatted, strode into the room.

"Hist!" said Barry.

"His-s-st!" said Gan.

Two knives flashed from under the cloaks. Shoulder to shoulder they advanced with stealthy tread, the hats pulled low over their eyes. Then they muttered together, through clenched teeth:

"Hist! A-r-r-rh! We are the villains of the piece! A-r-r-rh! Ha, ha!"

"Hencore!" cried Joe. "By hokey, you needn't have told us. Yer faces are enough, and a chunk over!"

Ferrers Lord tossed down twenty marks, and, beckoning to Honour, walked out into the night. Gan was mighty proud of his new attire. Ching-Lung remained talking to the delighted and overpaid landlord. Ching left with two curious articles in his pocket.

"Put your best foot first, lads," said the millionaire, "for a fourteen-mile spin."

"An engine coming, sir."

The engine was conveying a breakdown gang to the scene of the accident. They stood aside to allow it to pass.

"Couldn't you have commandeered it, old fellow?" asked Rupert.

"Oh, yes, had I wished. Ru! We must get away. Even millionaires cannot lightly trifle with the German police system. An inquiry would delay us. Our aim now is to cross the frontier."

"Have we passports?"

Ferrers Lord merely laughed. Thurston had crossed the Russian frontier before, and he knew the difficulties of the task. He had stood behind the grating that separated the two railway stations, with swarms of Russian officials on one side and Germans on the other. The Russian officials—those of lower rank especially—are the most suspicious and interfering rascals on earth. They are not satisfied that even a fountain-pen is innocent and not loaded with nitric acid or some explosive. But the millionaire's laugh assured him. The bars of the frontier would fall away before Ferrers Lord's "Open, Sesame!"

They were splendid walkers, and the miles swiftly dropped behind. Trained to perfection, without a single ounce of superfluous fat, and as merry as schoolboys, they footed it over the sleepers. They had lost all their baggage, and saved their lives only by a miracle; but they were so accustomed to stand face to face with King Death and give him a look, that they could snap their fingers at him every time they eluded his clutch.

The moon began to wane and grow pale. As they crossed a bridge, a waggon with two horses was being drawn out of a farmyard on to the road beneath.

"Go down and see if you can hire it, Barry!" said Ching-Lung.

"Bedad, sor, ut's a roide Oi'd luv!" said Barry; "but Oi can't spake the derryth yelgin' they has the cheek to call a language!"

"But the man is certain to speak English. All the German schools are bound to teach English by law."

"Are they, bedad, sor? Is that thrue, Mither Thurston?"

"English is compulsory in the German State Schools," answered Rupert.

"Thin I'll palaver wid him, sor."

"Keep low!" whispered Ching-Lung.

The German labourer took a bucket to water his horses, and strode towards a green and murky duck-pond.

Barry, quite forgetful of his costume, scrambled down the embankment and gained the road. Grinning faces watched him. He strode up behind the man.

"Axin' yer pardon, sir," began Barry. "Oi am riquisted to inquire av yer brougham is to lit?"

There was no answer. The man went on rinsing out the bucket.

"Dif as a post!" muttered Barry. "Sor," he thundered—"sor, av yez plaze!"

The man turned, and his face turned as white as milk. Then, uttering a yell, he flung the bucket away, and fled up the road at a pace that made his fat legs twinkle again. Barry looked after him grumpily.

"Good-boie," he said. "Oi hope yer'll be in toime. Bedad ut's me git-up that scared him. He must have tuk me for a Fenian. Good-boie, darlint, good-boie! Arrah, whoy did yez lave me widout wan kiss?"

He went back to his grinning comrades. Ferrers Lord and his engineer were far ahead, and they had to sprint briskly to catch them up. In less than three hours they were at Durantz.

Nathan Gore was five hours ahead. The time they had gained they had lost again.

No time was wasted. Early as it was the millionaire wired to Cracow for arms, clothes, and ammunition. He had still

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control of the line. The sun was high and hot when they steamed into Cracow, and saw the shining Vistula. The platform was crowded. Busy officials hurried up.

"Gan," said Ching-Lung, "do you mind carrying that for me?"

"Carry anyting, Chingy," said the Eskimo. "What was him?"

"Mostly wind," said Ching-Lung.

It was an inflated sheep's bladder, daubed over with blacking.

Ching-Lung sprang out.

"Go on, silly," said Gan. "Yo' all in de ways."

"Oi'm toiein' up me bootlace," growled Barry.

"Why you not tie him round yo' thick neck, and strangle yo'self," said Gan.

Railway officials, military men, police, and inquisitive civilians were attracted by the arrival of the special train.

Barry stepped out in his weird attire, and there was a sudden gasp. There had been several Anarchist outrages of late.

The crowd recoiled.

"Anarchists!" screamed a fat officer. "Arrest him!"

Two soldiers rushed at the astounded Barry.

"Hi! Yo' let him 'lone, fat faces!" yelled Gan fiercely.

He bounded out, brandishing the bladder, which was exactly like a terrible bomb.

Shrieks of horror rang through the air.

Nobody waited for that bomb to explode. Soldiers, police, railway-men, passengers, and loungers shrieked, and ran as if pursued by a pack of ravenous wolves.

Ching gave one flying leap, and kicked the bladder away.

"Shoot!" roared Prout.

"Pass!" cried Maddock.

"Tackle him!" bellowed Joe.

Then the mad rascals were playing football up and down the platform until Ching-Lung scored the first and winning goal by driving the bladder clean across the line, where it bounced off the spiked helmet of a policeman, and exploded with a bang that made the man of law run a mile, under the impression that he had been blown to bits.

Still Ferrers Lord did not protest, for he was not there.

Ching-Lung sat on the footboard, and held his sides.

"Who says refreshments?" he asked.

"Who doesn't say 'em?" grinned Prout.

"Come along, boys," said Ching-Lung. "Have what you like, and I'll pay."

"Cangles!" grinned Gan, smacking his lips. "I eat peckes of cangles."

"Get on, then! That's the place."

Gan hurried in. Then he stopped. There was a man behind the counter. The man didn't like Gan's looks, and Gan didn't like the man's.

For that man had a couple of revolvers pointed at Gan-Waga's head. Gan smiled a sad and sickly smile, and began to edge out backwards. He fancied he was not wanted there—that he had intruded.

"D-don't shoot," he murmured sweetly. "Me—me not s-staying, t'ank you! N-nice day, wouldn't it?"

For a person who followed the peaceful calling of drawing pints of lager, and providing hungry travellers with sandwiches and buns, the gentleman with the six-shooter was remarkably fierce. He had fierce moustaches curled upwards like the Kaiser's, and he was fierce in every way except for his paleness. Perhaps the horrid thought that the revolvers might go off accounted for that. Anyway, he intended to guard the till from the awe-inspiring Anarchist, and Gan did not wish to interfere with him.

The refreshment-room had swing-doors. One of them was bolted. Gan came out backwards, and collided with Barry.

"Hallo," said Barry. "Yez have got yer oies on the other soide, ain't yez? Koindly luk where yez are gallopin'."

"Sorrays, sorrays," said Gan mildly.

"What have you come out for, Whaleoil?" inquired Joe.

"Dey not serves me," sighed Gan. "De ole pig not give me cangles."

"Arrah, the impudint thafe," said Barry. "Won't sarve a gintleman and a pal o' moine! Shift yer anatomy, and, throth, Oi'll spake to him. Av he gives me any lip Oi'll play the Weddin' Marrch on ivry rib he's got, and choke civility into him with his own watch-chain. Ut's noice, this is; won't sarve yez! Lit me git at the spalpeen."

"Oh, de braves Barry," said Gan. "Yo' not 'fraid of nobodies. Yo' punch hims, Barry."

"Oi'll mince him!" roared the Irishman. "There was niver a forriguer that Oi cudn't swaller at wan gulp."

Barry's estimate of foreigners was not a high one, and the time he had spent in Tibet, where he was nothing less than a sultan, had made him somewhat of a tyrant.

He rushed in like a mad bull, intending to strike terror to the heart of the gentleman in charge.



"Sor!" thundered Barry. "Sor, av yez plazel!" The man turned, and his face went as white as milk. Then, uttering a yell, he flung the bucket away, and fled up the road at a pace that made his legs twinkle. (See page 24.)

"What does yez mane, yez thavin' reprobate?" he howled. "Oi'll clarify yez for yer impudence, Oi will!" "Blitzen!" yelled the man. "Oi'll tear the whiskers—"

Barry stopped quickly. The savage expression left his face, and was replaced by an oily and ingratiating smile. He rubbed one leg against the other, took off his hat, bowed to the ground, and kissed his hand. No sugarstick was ever sweeter.

And the cause of the sudden and miraculous change was the sight of two upraised revolvers.

"Excuse me," said Barry in honeyed accents, "Oi—Oi think Oi have come through the wrong dure. Oi humbly apologise, me lord. Ut was the booking-office Oi wanted. Ut rains incloined to be wet av ut rains, unless ut howlds foire. Yes, yes, Oi understand. Ut is cowlid widout a foire. Forgive me, av I run away. Ah, to be sure, to be sure, Oi'll be delighted to dhrink wid yez! A bottle of Olrish whisky and a small soda split. Beer, did yez say? Sartinly, me lord. A barrel of beer and a biscuit—two barrels, av yez loike. Oi'll pay—ah, yes! Oi'll pay wid joy. G-g-good, best."

Barry got outside in crab fashion, and mopped his brow. They had been watching the scene through the glass door. Though on the verge of hysterics, the men managed to look grave, and to pretend they had seen nothing.

"Hopes yo' not quites killed him," said Gan. "N-not quite," answered Barry. "Oi—Oi didn't loike to hurt him too much whin he towld me there was heart disease in the family."

"Yo' getted my cangles, den?" "W-will," stammered Barry, "yez—yez see—oh, bedad, they don't kape them! Ut's scandalous, but they don't."

"Dey got somes in the canglesticks. Seen dem."

"Imitations," said Barry; "made of china."

"Maid of Athens!" laughed Ching-Lung, "and therefore made of grease."

"Splendid!" said Barry. "Ha, ha, ha! The finest joke Oi iver heard. Maid of Athens, made of grease! Faith, ut's wondherful! Ha, ha, ha, hah! Ho, ho, ho, hoh! He, he, he, he, heh. Oi'll laugh myself to dith! Ut fairly tickles. Made of—ha, ha, ha, ha, ha—aa-ah!"

The Eels and the Mud—The Anarchists—A Flash of Red

A roar of laughter drowned Barry's forced mirth.

"Coward!" said Gan.

"Craven!" said Ching-Lung.

"Kid!" grinned Prout.

"Cat!" chuckled Joe.

"Funk," remarked Maddock.

Barry glared round. He could not fight them all. He was not very proud of himself. Without a word he crawled away with some hazy idea of buying a time-table, and of finding out when the next train left for his native land and Bally-skinion, the village in which he was born.

Then Ching-Lung glided into the refreshment-room, and the others followed him in solemn file. Ching-Lung put down a coin, and they ranged up before the counter. The man looked at them wildly.

"Buns and sandwiches," said Ching-Lung. "Get ready!"

Five hands were extended.

"Seize!"

Ten fingers and thumbs closed over the dainties.

"Eat!" said Ching-Lung.

The man never moved. He practically stared himself blind. Ching-Lung approached the lager-beer tap, and filled five glasses.

"Get ready!" he said.

The foaming glasses were passed along.

"Seize!"

The glasses were lifted.

"Drink!"

They were emptied.

"Retire!"

The men marched out in single file, and the door closed. The gentleman who presided over the bar uttered a hollow groan, bolted the door, pulled down the blinds, and fortified himself with a big brandy-and-soda.

Hardly were the men outside before the voice of Barry O'Rourke was heard raised in tones of altercation and protest. Barry could hardly have raised his voice higher with a balloon.

"Methinks," said Ching-Lung, "that our fair Irish youth is in trouble."

"Methinks yo' thinkses plenty good 'nough, Chingy!" grinned Gan. "Trouble's 'nough, hunk?"

"Hiat?"

There was no need to be silent to catch the sweet tones of Barry. They came from the interior of the waiting-room.

"Av yez laya wan finger on me," roared Barry, "'tis meself will make a wreck of yez for loife! Chase away, and lave me afore yez rouses the slapin' lion. Anarchist, d'ye say? Bedad, O'im Anarchist enough to blow yez into the next county wid wan puff! Floy, Oi tells yez, and lave me!"

Ching-Lung ran to the scene of strife. There was a whistle. Half a dozen soldiers dashed past.

"Luk out for the biggest blizzard that iver athruck the airth," yelled Barry, "for O'im going to unchain ut! Hurroo! O'im untarin' meself for the charge! Onward for Oireland is me motto! Charge!"

There was a sound of scuffling and yells. The soldiers were inside, and the door was shut. Ching-Lung leapt up, and leaned through the window. Barry stood at bay, armed with the leg of a table. Keeping well out of harm's way, a thin and pale-looking officer urged on his men to the attack.

"Charge, Cheshire, charge!" roared the warlike Barry. "On, Stanley, on!" were the last words of Marmalade. Come on, and O'll give yer Cheshire cheese! Chase me, and O'll make more soights dince afore yer oies than iver Stanley seed whin he crossed Cintral Africky! 'Come wan, come all, this wall shall floy from its firm base as soon as Oi! O've got me bit blackthorn, and, be jabers, ut's longin' to foind out how thick yer heads are! Erin go bragh! Whoosht! Hurroo! Bang at 'em, me son of ould Oireland!"

"Excuse me, Barry," said Ching-Lung, "what is it all about?"

"Nothin', yer Hoighness; nothin'. O'im just goin' to start playin' skittles."

"I beg your pardon," said Ching-Lung in German; "but there is apparently some mistake here."

"An Anarchist?" said the officer.

Ching-Lung smiled blandly.

"A mistake, sir—a sad mistake. You have been deceived by his costume. I am Prince Ching-Lung of Kwai Hal, and he is one of my servants, and wears my livery as soup-maker-in-ordinary. I am sorry that it should resemble the attire patronised by certain law-breakers and bomb-throwers."

"If this is true, give me your passport."

"You must ask my friend Mr. Ferrers Lord for that," smiled Ching-Lung. "I see he is on the platform."

Barry still stood in an attitude of defence. With a muttered order to his men, the officer unlocked the door. When he came back he bowed courteously.

"I apologise to your Highness for the mistake!" he said. "May I advise your Highness to obtain a different livery for your servants? As you are crossing the frontier it will be wiser! The Russians have stringent methods."

"Thanks!" said Ching-Lung. "Now, Barry?"

Barry sighed wistfully.

"Plaze, zor, mayn't Oi christen the beautiful weppin' boi unitin' wan o' thim?"

"You may not."

"Iver so gently, sir. Oi'll not hurt him much!"

"Put that thing down, and come away," said Ching-Lung.

"Just wan paste, sir!" pleaded Barry. "Just enough to knock a floy off him!"

"Come away when I tell you."

Barry sadly kissed the table-leg with a fond farewell caress, and followed his Highness.

"When do we start, old chap?"

"In thirty-five minutes, Ching."

"That will give me time to get Gan and O'Rourke a new rig-out. Will you stroll into the town with me, Ru?"

A porter told them where they could obtain what they wanted. They took Prout with them, but wisely left Gan and Barry behind.

In the early afternoon they were beyond the Russian frontier.

"This is where my power ends," said Ferrers Lord. "I am not loved in Russia. I have my gold, and that is a great thing. Gold, energy, and a strong determination to win are the fathers of success."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 232.

Don't miss the Splendid New School Story, entitled,

"THE LIMIT!" In the

"But do you know which way he has gone?"

"Yes," answered the millionaire, smiling. "He has come the long way round. He will go to Kurak, and from there either to St. Petersburg or Moscow. If he goes to St. Petersburg he may get afloat and give us a sea-chase, or he may, if a day ahead, take to the Trans-Siberian railway. The train leaves at six on Thursday evening, and there is not another until Saturday. He will beat us if he catches that train."

"What about a special?"

"It would cost thousands," answered Ferrers Lord. "The line belongs to the State, and it is difficult to bribe States. Russia is the land of red-tape and corruption. Gore will have his purse-string open. As I said, I am not liked here, and Ching is absolutely hated."

"What have I done?" asked his Highness.

"You spoiled Russia's chances of winning China. Be very good."

"They'll haul you off to Siberia if you play any tricks. Ching!" laughed Rupert.

Ching-Lung made a wry face.

"Thanks awfully. You cheer me up, and make me want my joy to bubble over in song. Siberia! Oh, what bliss to be a giddy exile in a sheepskin coat! I don't care a snap of my fingers for the Tsar, or for this vast land of slavery and corruption they call Holy Russia! A wag of my pigtail for the lot of them!"

"Gently, Ching, gently," muttered the engineer. "That is treason."

"And treason means a mockery of a trial, and then the mines," said Ching-Lung, his eyes flashing. "I know the Bear only too well. I know he would love to get me in his hug and squeeze me to death. We pared his nails for him when he tried to dig his claws into Kwai Hal, and he's afraid that some day we may file down his teeth. What do I care! Siberia has no terrors for me! If they dragged me off this very day I know what would happen."

It was strange to see Ching-Lung indignant. His face was quite flushed.

"What happen den, Chingy?" inquired Gan-Waga.

"Why, several things, my fat one," said Ching-Lung. "My friends would be left. Hal would build a fleet of submarines and airships; Lord would invent terrible explosives; Rupert would become an ambassador. He would say to Russia, 'Give us back Ching-Lung, and ten, or twenty million pounds for this outrage. Apologise on bended knees to him, and print that humble apology in every newspaper in the world. Refuse at your peril! Our flying warships and diving-boats are ready. Refuse, and we shall blow your vaunted impregnable fortress, Kronstadt, to atoms; annihilate your fleet; give St. Petersburg, your city of palaces, to the flames; bring down Odessa, Moscow, Riga, and Vladivostok about your ears; arm the poor serfs, and set them at your throats, and make the Russia which you have made a land of oppression and sorrow, a land of freedom and joy.'"

Few men have dared to speak such bold and noble words in the country where free speech is a crime.

"A grand dream, Ching," said Rupert.

"If they laid a hand on Ching-Lung some part of it may come true," smiled Ferrers Lord. "Eh, Hal?"

The engineer nodded quietly.

"I am sure of it," he answered.

With a jerk, the train drew up. They were near no town or station. Grey, flat, sombre marshes stretched away on every side till they met the sky.

"What's wrong?" muttered Ferrers Lord.

A mounted man rode up to speak to the driver. The millionaire leapt from the footboard.

"What is it?"

"Excellency," said the man, "the big dam at Karsjav has burst. You cannot reach Prinz, except by boat, or leave it except by the high road. The marshes are very full after the rains, and the bursting of the dam has covered the line."

It was a blow, but the millionaire did not wince.

"How did it happen?"

"An explosion of blasting-powder, Excellency. They do not know how it came about."

"And a special train had passed?"

"Ten minutes before the explosion, Excellency. We know nothing else, for the telegraph-poles have been washed away."

This news was a second blow. Nathan Gore was making good his escape, and covering his retreat. Was the bursting of the great Karsjav dam the result of accident or design? Had accident fired the fuse or Nathan Gore's gold?

Ferrers Lord's face darkened.

"Push on as far as you can," he cried to the driver.

He re-entered the carriage silently, and began to examine a map. The possession of such a chart would have sent any

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Russian subject to the mines. He pencilled some figures on the margin, and smiled.

There was a log-bridge at Orkheit, and possibly it would be under water. If so, Nathan Gore could not pass.

Two miles from Prinz the swamps became a yellow lake, and the line was flooded. A flat-bottomed, square-built, steam ferryboat took them off and paddled them to the town.

"How much will you take us to Orkheit for?"

The owner of the craft stared. It was impossible! He could take them within four miles of it, but he would risk his boat. The water might subside and leave him high and dry.

"Name your price," said the millionaire.

"Two hundred gold roubles."

Three hundred and twenty-seven pounds! It would have bought the old tub twice over. Ferrers Lord was no bargain-driver, but he knew the Russian ways.

"Fifty," he answered, smiling, "and prepaid."

"The boat is yours, Excellency."

"And horses?" said the millionaire. "A gold rouble for yourself over and above the price of every horse we buy."

Horses were procured, but, with the exception of two, they were a sorry lot. Still, they could obtain no better, and the prices did not rule high.

The boat steamed away over the flooded swamp beneath a dark and rainy sky. She was as slow as a barge. Even Honour was afraid to put another ounce pressure of steam on her rotten boiler.

The afternoon shadows fell, and Ferrers Lord, gazing ahead through the gloom and mist, suddenly drew his revolver, and fired the chambers into the air.

A rowing-boat, containing a solitary figure, headed towards them. The ragged oarsman pulled off his greasy cap.

"The log-bridge—is it clear?"

"No," grunted the man. "There's a train water-logged there."

A gleam of pleasure sprang into Ferrers Lord's eyes.

"The passengers?" he said quickly.

"I rowed them ashore, Excellency. They are in Ivan's mill. I come for help."

"We are bringing help," answered Ferrers Lord grimly. "Guide us to the mill, and I will give you a rouble. Make your boat fast, and come aboard."

Ching-Lung raised his slanting eyelids. The peasant's accent was puzzling, but he caught the drift. They were close upon their foe. Cigar in mouth, Ferrers Lord paced up and down the deck.

Darkness came down over the lonely water, and a pale moon sailed through the clouds. The grey bank loomed up.

"Ching," said Ferrers Lord, "take the best horse, and see that your weapons are ready for use. Follow us as best you can, Hal. This fellow can run at my bridle. Quick! One never knows when a fox will leave his hole."

He was ashore, and mounted. Ching-Lung vaulted into his saddle.

"Run your best, moujik," said Ferrers Lord, "and I will double the reward."

They started at a trot. Thurston followed close behind.

"Ivan's mill, Excellency," panted the peasant.

The building rose before them as if chiselled out of ebony. All at once the moon sailed clear of the clouds, and touched it with silver.

"Halt!" said Ferrers Lord.

There was a flash of red from the mill, and a scream of pain, mingled with the crack of a gun. The peasant tore at his breast, leapt upward with tossing arms, and fell back into the damp grass.

Barry's Predicament—Ferrers Lord Surrounds the Mill.

The instant the moujik fell, Ferrers Lord and Ching-Lung were on foot, and sheltering behind their horses. They were startled, and they acted from sheer habit, like men who were accustomed to face rifle fire. The man was groaning and cursing alternately in his native tongue. With his keen eyes fixed on the mill, and his revolver steadied across the saddle, Ferrers Lord waited for an opportunity to answer the shot.

"You are beginning to know Nathan Gore better, Ching," said Ferrers Lord drily.

"That's just about the size of it. I say, ask this chap if he's hurt much."

"Men who are badly wounded are generally quiet," said the millionaire. "I'll attend to him in a moment. I fancy I hear the lads coming along. Stop them, Ching, before he uses that Winchester again."

Ching-Lung sank into the grass. He heard a loudening thud-thud of hoofs. The outline of a horse and rider emerged from the darkness.

"Hold on, Ru!" cried the prince. "They're giving presents away."

Thurston reined in.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 232.

A Grand, Long, Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. next Tuesday:

EVERY
TUESDAY.

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

"What is it? Didn't I hear a shot?"

"Unless you're deaf, I reckon you did," said Ching-Lung. "There's a man with a gun in that mill, and he's in a nasty temper. He's dropped the poor, unlucky guide. It's ghastly luck to get between a bullet and daylight. Where are the others? Can't they get their cat's-meat to walk, or what?"

"Shut up! Somebody has come to grief."

"Hilp, hilp, hilp!" came a faint yell. "For the sake of mercy, hilp!"

"Barry, by Christopher!" said Ching-Lung. "Here's for the right-about."

He ran back faster than Thurston could gallop. Presently the howls for help were mingled with shouts of laughter. The men had gathered on a small hill. The moon shone out, revealing Barry's horse, girth-deep in slime, and Barry himself clinging to the saddle with his feet out of the stirrups. The horse was sinking deeper at every plunge.

"Hilp, hilp!" screamed the Irishman. "Bedad, will yez stand there and see me choked wid slime and filth? He'll be undher in a minute. Murther and mutton! Me last hour has come! Howld up, yez ugly lump of bone and hoide. Hilp! Troth, Oi'll be food for eels in wan jiffy. Hilp, I tell yez! Hilp!"

They were not alarmed. Maddock was hurriedly taking off his reins. The only person really scared was Barry himself.

Prout said, with a grin:

"Come into the garden, Maud, for I am all alone. By hokey, Irish, you're gettin' into a mess! It's cruel of yer to wake up the poor eels when they're all snug asleep for the night. He ought to ha' been a circus-performer, didn't he, Joe?"

"Is it sticky, Barry?" Chuckled Joe.

"Yo' ole ass," said Gan. "What yo' doin' in dere fo', catchin' screwmatism? Yo' butterful 'nough idjit, yo' are, yo' ole mud-plugger, to dirty a nice clean hoos like dat. Ho, ho, ho, ho!"

"That'll do," said Ching-Lung. "Buckle those reins together. Now, Barry, don't open your mouth so wide, but catch. Well done! Hitch it over your saddle. Now, Ru, the other end round yours. Hold tight, Killaloe! Go!"

All was ready. He gave Rupert's mount a blow on the flank, the reins tightened, and Barry and his steed were dragged on to the firm ground. Barry was going to make some forcible remarks when Ching-Lung checked him sternly. At that moment the millionaire rode up.

"Leave your horses," he said, "and hobble them. Honour, the man we want is in the mill. Take Prout and Maddock, and get round to the other side. Ching, you will take O'Rooney to the right. Rupert and Gan-Waga, stay with me. When I whistle once begin to close in. Be very careful. A second whistle will signal the rush."

The brisk orders made their blood tingle. Barry hurled up his cap with a soft "Hurroo!" Barry pined for a fight like a bull-terrier. Prout rubbed his hands, and Maddock grinned as he took a firm grip of his revolver.

"Come, boys," said Ching-Lung.

The light was shiftily and uncertain. They had no cotton ropes, and the reins were clumsy for hobbling purposes. The task was assigned to Joe, who did his best. Gan and Rupert followed their chief. When the mill came in sight the moon was darkly veiled.

"Keep down," said Ferrers Lord warningly. "I'll come back to you."

The wounded man was groaning deeply. Ferrers Lord crawled to his side and whispered to him. He put his brandy-flask in the moujik's hand. At present he could do no more. It grew darker. The millionaire whistled softly, and they began to crawl forward.

There was not a sound, not a breath of wind. A second whistle sounded. Dark forms sprang up.

"At the door, Tom—at the door, Barry!" cried Ching-Lung.

The two men hurled themselves at the door, and the rotten woodwork gave way at the latch. The door had not been locked or bolted. Tom and Barry floundered in, and fell over each other. They picked themselves up.

"Outside, lads!" said Ferrers Lord. "Keep close under the wall. What fools we were not to bring a lantern!"

"Me got cangles," said Gan.

"Give me one."

Hearts were beating loudly, not with fear, but with excitement. Was the strange man they were hunting crouching there in the blackness, his finger on the trigger of the weapon?

(This thrilling adventure serial will be continued in next Tuesday's issue of "THE MAGNET" Library. Order in advance. One Penny.)

My Readers' Page.



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NEXT WEEK'S STORY

UNDER SUSPICION!

Such is the title which Frank Richards has bestowed upon his latest masterpiece—next Tuesday's magnificent, complete school story of Harry Wharton & Co., at Greyfriars. The loss of an insignificant little scrap of paper—valueless except in the eyes of the expert philatelist—from the collection of Mr. Capper, the Upper Fifth-Form master, causes a commotion which stirs at Greyfriars, and the consequences are as exciting as they are unexpected. The gradual working out of the mystery in the author's own inimitable style makes the most enthralling reading, in which the seriousness of the subject is not allowed to overshadow the humour in the story. From all points of view

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is a story that simply must be read by all keen followers of the fortunes of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

W. E. S. (London, N.).—Many thanks for your very interesting and appreciative letter. With regard to your suggestion, I will bear this in mind, and you may hear more of it in the future.

S. B. B. (Bradford).—Thank you for your letter and nice way you speak about "The Magnet" and its companion library, "The Gem."

L. M. (near Swansea).—Thank you for your postcard, from which I am glad to learn that you so enjoy reading "The Magnet" stories. Nugent minor is still at Greyfriars, and will probably be heard of again in one of the stories before long.

"Loyal Magnetite and Gemite" (Chester).—If you follow out perseveringly the directions given below, you should notice a marked difference in your weight within a few weeks. First take up some course of physical culture, either with dumbbells or an exerciser; eat plenty of good, wholesome food, and drink as much pure milk as possible; avoid tobacco and other bad habits; go to bed early and rise early, and, if your heart is in a good condition, take a cold or lukewarm bath every morning.

F. Turk (Hastings).—Thanks for your very appreciative letter. I was interested to hear how you first came to read "The Magnet." There may probably be a story on the lines you suggest before long, but I can make no definite promise as to this.

W. Howard (Canada).—Thank you for your letter. I was glad to hear that "The Magnet" and "The Gem" Libraries interest and amuse you so much.

Miss J. Callow (Borough, S.E.).—Thank you for your letter and suggestion, which latter I will consider.

MORE WOULD-BE "MAGNET LEAGUERS."

By every post I am receiving many letters from keen readers all over Great Britain and the Colonies who anxiously inquire whether there is a "Magnet" League in their district to which they may belong. This is only one of the numerous signs of the ever-growing interest and affection which the great hosts of Magnetites are feeling for "the irresistible little book with the orange cover," as one reader calls it, and right pleased I am to see it, naturally. This matter of the formation of local "Magnet" Leagues is one that I am leaving entirely to the energy and loyalty of my reader-friends, who, as I well know, are in no need of any artificial aid or stimulus in the form of Editorial assistance in carrying out their congenial and self-imposed task of gaining new friends for the two famous companion weeklies. Of course, if those Magnetites who are forming leagues in their own district care to send me notice of the fact, with their names and addresses, I will be pleased to publish same in order that would-be "Magnet Leaguers" may know where to apply in order to enrol themselves as members of their local league.

BACK NUMBERS OFFERED AND WANTED.

Miss D. M. Hills, 17, Barrington Road, Crouch End, wishes to obtain Nos. 1 and 2 (halfpenny series), and 178 and 102 of "The Magnet" for half-price.

B. C. Brearly, 237, Waterloo Street, Burton-on-Trent, has about 140 old copies of "The Magnet" to dispose of.

R. S. Shippe, 10, Blandford Street, Sunderland, wishes to obtain early numbers of "The Magnet."

H. Brownsey, Glenmore, Queen Street, Taunton, has 100 numbers of "The Gem" and 140 of "The Magnet" to dispose of at half-price.

E. Morgan, 164, Lightwoods Road, Bearwood, Birmingham, has a quantity of back numbers to dispose of.

B. H. Green, 94, Drayton Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham, has a number of old "Magnets" for disposal at half-price.

TAME MICE.

A good many readers, perhaps, are not aware of the fact that keeping fancy mice can be made into a very profitable hobby. There is one special variety of mice, the "lilac," or "blue fawn," a good specimen of which will fetch over twenty shillings. These are, however, very rare, and for a would-be fancier it is quite sufficient to start with one or two of the more common variety—the white ones—which are cheap to buy, the prices ranging from about fourpence to a shilling, and do not require any special diet.

Of course, a suitable cage will be wanted to keep them in, and this can be bought at a fancier's if the beginner has not the tools to make one. The two chief things to be considered are the size and the warmth. It must be large—the larger it is, the stronger and healthier the mice will be. If possible, a good plan is to make two "floors," the bottom one to be used as a playing-ground, and the top one, being filled with hay, as a sleeping compartment. One or two small ladders will be found sufficient for the mice to climb from one room to the other. A cage on these lines can easily be made from a box such as can be obtained from any grocers.

Now, with regard to the feeding. Fancy mice ought to be fed once in the morning and once in the evening. A suitable food for the morning can be made by soaking a piece of bread in milk, while the evening meal should consist of a few oats, with which should be mixed at various times a little canary seed. To make a change for the evening meal, a little boiled rice, a few crumbs, and some small pieces of boiled potato may be given them. One word of warning is never to give them meat or cheese.

The next important point to deal with, if the hobby is to be made to pay, is

Breeding.

It is not wise to pair mice until they are at least four months old. When the young are born they are quite bald and helpless, and a day or two after birth the litter should be examined and the weak ones taken away and destroyed, so as to give the remainder a better chance of growing up strong and healthy. During the following three weeks the doe should be provided with extra sop—bread-and-milk—and after that time place the young in a separate cage, and let the doe be undisturbed for a few weeks.

There are many varieties of fancy mice, but it is the ambition of every keeper to obtain a "blue"—which, strictly speaking, is not a blue at all, but a peculiar shade of grey. Amongst the other popular colours are black-and-tans, tortoiseshells, tricolour, black-and-white, white, with either pink or black eyes, and a blue fawn, which, as mentioned at the beginning of the article, is rare and valuable.

When buying mice, see that they are of good size and shape, and that the fur is smooth, and evenly marked. The rarer the colouring the more valuable will be the mouse.

Mice can be taught fairly easily to go through different tricks, such as racing, taking the place of a horse in a miniature cart, running up and down poles, and jumping through small hoops, either uncovered or covered with thin tissue paper.

THE EDITOR.



DAISY AIR RIFLE.

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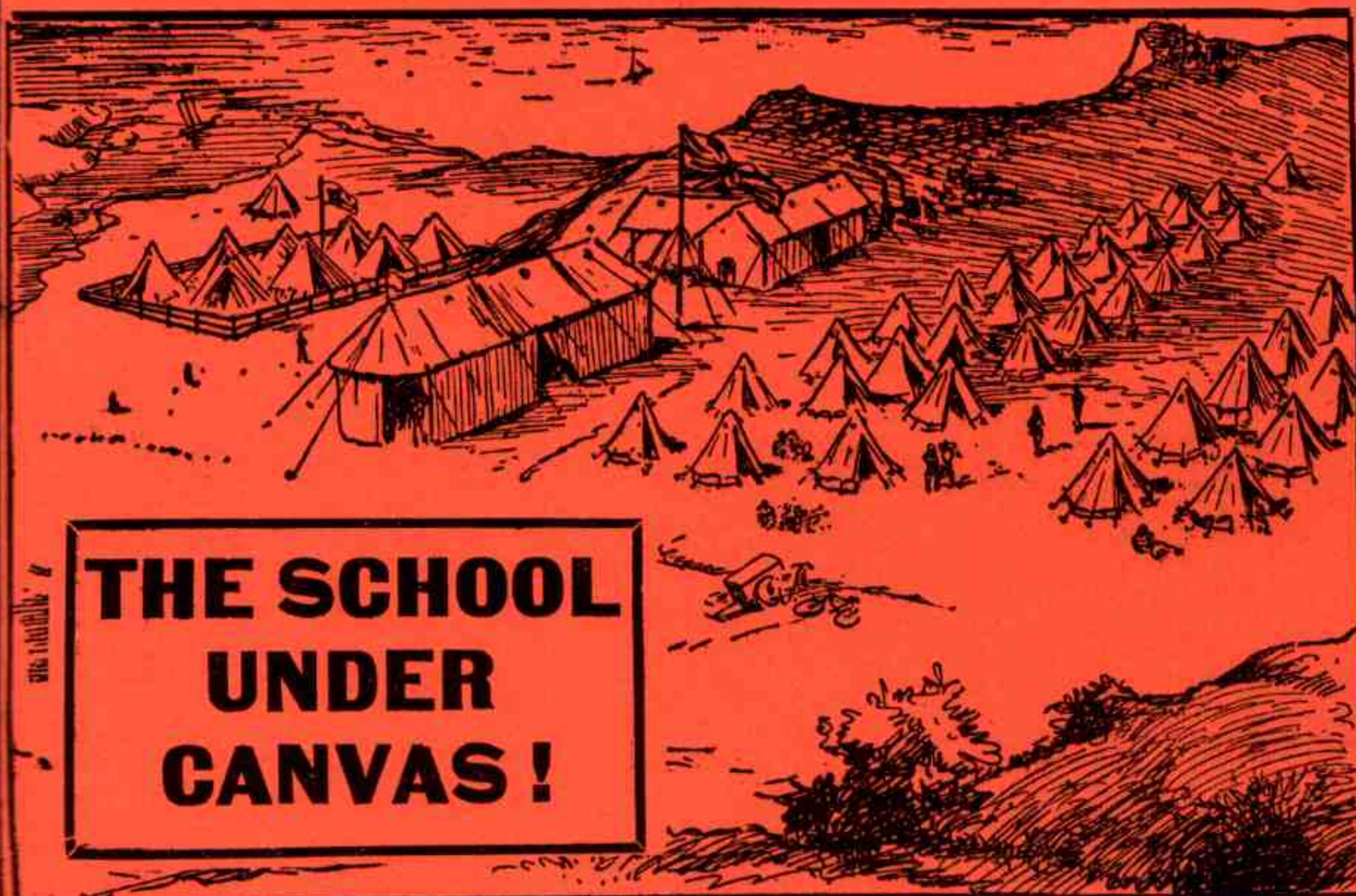
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