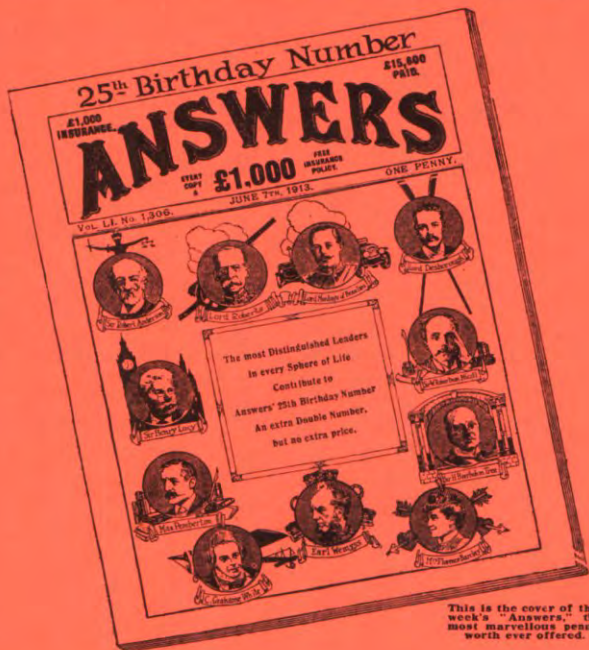


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THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bunter's Treat.

"YOU fellows coming?" Billy Bunter asked the question as he blinked into No. 1 Study in the Remove passage at Greyfriars.

There were five juniors in the study, discussing ways and means. It was a half-holiday at the old school, and a bright, sunny, summer's afternoon. Just the afternoon, as Bob Cherry remarked, for a little excursion, if funds had not been in so low a state. Harry Wharton & Co. were counting up what remained of their pocket-money, and carefully considering whether it would be sufficient to pay for the admission of five fellows to Muller's Menagerie at Courtfield, and the result of their calculations was the painful discovery that it wouldn't.

Then Bunter blinked in through his big spectacles, with an amiable grin on his fat face.

"Coming?" he repeated. "You fellows ain't playing cricket this afternoon, I hear?"

Wharton shook his head.

"No. The Remove are only playing the Third, and we're standing out to give the other fellows a chance. But if

you've come to ask for a place in the team, Billy, you have come to the wrong shop. Go and ask Bulerode. He's skipper for this afternoon, and he will put you in—I don't think!"

"More likely put you out!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"I'm not asking for a place in the Form team," said Bunter. "It wouldn't be fair on the Third to play a fellow like me against them."

"Might give 'em a chance to win!" growled Johnny Bull.

"You fellows coming?" said Bunter, affecting not to hear Johnny Bull's remark. "It's my treat, you know. I've received a postal-order—"

"What?"

The Famous Five uttered that exclamation all together. Billy Bunter was always just going to receive a postal-order, and the various sums he had borrowed up and down the school on the strength of that expected postal-order were innumerable. The juniors would not have been surprised to hear that he was expecting a remittance. They often heard that; but they were astounded to hear that he had received one.

"You've received a postal-order?" gasped Nugent.

"Yes."

"You're not dreaming?"

"Oh, really, Nugent! Look here, it's my treat! I'm going over to Courtfield to see the menagerie, and I'll take you fellows, if you like. You know the Todds are away just now, and I don't want to go over alone. You fellows have stood me a few things, sometimes, and now it's my treat. Are you coming?"

"Well, my hat!" said Bob Cherry. "Wonders will never cease! What was it said the age of miracles was past?"

"No larks!" said Harry Wharton suspiciously. "You've really got a postal-order? You're not going to get us to the show, and then make us pay? As a matter of fact, we should be gone already, but we're nearly stony. No good marching us over there for nothing. We couldn't take the tickets."

Billy Bunter took a slip of paper from his waistcoat-pocket, and flourished it in the air. It was evidently a postal-order, though he was not near enough to the juniors for them to see the amount.

"Money talks," said Billy Bunter cheerfully. "There's the postal-order. Now, are you coming? I'm going to ask some more fellows. It's my treat."

"We'll come, rather!" said Harry Wharton, rising. "And thanks."

"The thankfulness is terrific, my worthy and esteemed nodderous Bunter," remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

Hurree Janset Ram Singh was an Indian prince, and he possessed his own weird style of talking.

"Not at all!" said Bunter airily. "Pleasure, you know. We'll see the giddy show, and have a feed in Courtfield as we come back. Come on, and we'll gather in the rest of the party."

And Billy Bunter rolled away down the Remove passage, and the chums of the Lower Fourth followed him. They were still in a state of great surprise. That Billy Bunter had really received a postal-order was surprising. But that he was willing to expend it in standing treat to the other fellows was more surprising still. When Bunter had any money, he generally made a direct line for the tuckshop, and did not leave that establishment until he was quite stony. His desire to stand treat to the Remove fellows was quite unexpected, and was a hitherto unaccounted trait of generosity in the character of the Owl of the Remove. True, Bunter had had innumerable feeds at the expense of Harry Wharton & Co., but he had never, hitherto, shown any keen desire to return little favours of that sort.

"I'm going to take Mauly," said Billy Bunter, alluding thus to Lord Mauleverer, the dandy of the Remove. "He's slacking in his study, as usual, and it will do him good to have a little run. We'll make him come out. Mauly lent me some money the other day, and it's only fair that he should have a whack in the treat."

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry. "Bunter, old man, you surprise me more and more. You're not ill, I suppose?"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I suppose there's nothing surprising in a chap doing the decent thing when he's in funds?"

"Ahem! It's rather surprising in this case. We can't get used to it all at once, you see."

His lordship was in his study, stretched upon a sofa before the open window, and dreamily contemplating the blue sky. He turned his head lazily as the Co. came in.

"Hallo, my dear fellows!" said Lord Mauleverer. "Sit down."

"Get up!" said Bob Cherry.

The slacker of the Remove shook his head.

"Can't!"

"Why can't you?"

"Tired."

"What's made you tired?" demanded Harry Wharton. Lord Mauleverer seemed to reflect.

"Well, I came upstairs after dinner," he said, at last.

"Must have surely worn you out," said Bob Cherry sympathetically. "Poor chap! I suppose you feel that you'd

better lie on that sofa, and look at the sky all the afternoon?"

"Yvas."

"You feel that you'd better not get up on any account?"

"Yvas."

"I thought so. Well, that's just where you're mistaken," said Bob, with a chuckle. "What you really need is some violent exercise—like this!"

And Bob Cherry grabbed the schoolboy earl, and yanked him off the sofa, and waltzed round the study table with him.

"Oh!" gasped Mauleverer. "Ow! My dear fellows—Ah—oh, begad!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, come along," said Bob Cherry. "It's Bunter's treat. He's taking a little party to see the menagerie at Courtfield. You're coming!"

Lord Mauleverer jerked himself away. He gasped for breath.

"My dear fellow, I can't come!"

"Why not?"

"Tired."

"Oh, we'll give you something to cure all that," said Bob. "Take his other arm, Johnny."

Johnny Bull and Bob Cherry grasped his lordship by the arms, and ran him out of the study. Lord Mauleverer did not struggle. He resigned himself to his fate, following the line of least resistance, so to speak. The other juniors followed them, laughing. Bob and Johnny Bull rushed his lordship down the passage at top speed. There was a sudden roar as Tom Brown came out of his study, just as the three were passing his door.

Crack! Bump!

Lord Mauleverer and Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull and Tom Brown were inextricably mixed up on the linoleum the next moment.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Frank Nugent; and Hurree Janset Ram Singh remarked that the ha-ha-ha-fulness was terrific.

"Ow!" gasped Tom Brown. The New Zealand junior sat up dazed. One of Bob Cherry's arms was round his neck, and Johnny Bull was sitting on his legs, and Lord Mauleverer's leg was over his shoulder. "Ow! Yakh! You silly ass!" What's the little game?"

"Looks like Rugby to me!" said Harry Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow, begad!" groaned Lord Mauleverer. "Oh, begad!"

"It—it's all right," gasped Bob Cherry. "We're taking Mauly out for a little run, and he was too tired to w—"

we were helping him to run. Ow! My knee's hurt! ... silly ass jammed his nose against it!"

"Groo! It was my nose!" groaned Johnny Bull. "Ow! Yow!"

"Come along with us, Brownie!" said Billy Bunter hospitably. "You're not playing cricket this afternoon. It's my treat, and we're going to the menagerie at Courtfield."

"Right you are!" said Tom Brown, struggling to his feet. "I was thinking of going over, but the funds wouldn't run to it."

"That's all right. Bunter's had a postal-order, and he's standing treat all round," grinned Nugent. "It's the unexpected that always happens, you know. Come on!"

"I'll think I'll stay behind," said Lord Mauleverer, who was still sitting on the floor. "I've had quite a shock, I—"

"You'll get another if you don't get up," said Bob Cherry.

"If he isn't up when I count two, jump on him, all together. One—"

Bob Cherry did not need to count two. Lord Mauleverer rose in quite a hurry. Bob Cherry took his lordship's arm, and the juniors went downstairs and out into the sunny Close. On the junior ground the Remove eleven were playing cricket. Wharton was skipper of the Form eleven, and his chums were the chief players in it; but they were standing out on this special occasion, giving the lesser lights of the Remove cricket club a chance to display their powers.

"Walk to Courtfield, I suppose," said Bob Cherry. "It won't take much longer than going down to Friardale for the train."

Bunter shook his head.

"We'll go by train," he said. "I'm in funds, you know. Mauly doesn't want to walk."

"Begad, no!" said his lordship.

"One word for Mauly, and two for Bunter!" grinned Bob Cherry. Bob looked at his watch. "Just time for the afternoon train. We stop out."

And the juniors started down the lane to Friardale. Bunter paused outside the little post-office.

"You fellows get on to the station and get the tickets while I cash my postal-order," he said. "I can't cash it in Courtfield—it's payable at this office. Get the tickets, and I'll settle with you later."

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"Ow! Let me out!" came a moaning voice from the trunk. "Don't let a poor child be murdered! Help! Help! Sir Hilton Popper is going to kill me! Help!" "Good heavens!" yelled Sir Hilton. "There—there cannot be a child in that trunk! My valet packed it, and it contains merely articles of clothing!" (See Chapter 2.)

"Right-ho!"

And the juniors went to the station. Harry Wharton took the tickets, the combined funds of the Famous Five just sufficing for that. Then they strolled on the platform and waited there for Bunter and the train.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Trunk Mystery.

THERE was one other passenger on the platform waiting for the train when the Greyfriars juniors arrived there. He was a man in riding-breeches, with a white moustache, and fierce little eyes under thick, grey brows. He knew the Greyfriars juniors, and bestowed a frown upon them. They knew him, and they raised their caps with exaggerated politeness, which seemed to exasperate him more than if they had taken no notice of his presence. The tall and fierce-looking gentleman was Sir Hilton Popper, a local land-owner, between whom and the chums of Greyfriars there had been many little rubs. A certain island in the River Sark, where the Greyfriars fellows had been accustomed to picnic, had been closed to the public by Sir Hilton Popper. There was a public right of way across that island, but no one had cared to enter into a law-suit with the great

local magnate, and so Sir Hilton Popper had had it all his own way—with the exception that the Greyfriars juniors sometimes visited the island on their own, sometimes leaving polite little messages for Sir Hilton pinned on the trees there. Hence complaints to the Head, and savings, and undying feud.

There was a strapped trunk lying on the platform, ready to get placed in the train, and evidently Sir Hilton's property. The baronet stopped beside the trunk, and frowned down the line. It was not yet quite time for the train, and the local trains were generally a little late, but Sir Hilton was impatient. Sir Hilton was a little tin god, so to speak, in the district, and he was firmly impressed with the belief that all local matters, of not the stars in their courses, ought to move at his nod.

Bob Cherry rubbed his hands reminiscently. He was the latest fellow to be unkind at Greyfriars on Sir Hilton Popper's account.

"I'd rather bump him than go to the menagerie," he said with a sigh. "But I suppose we couldn't risk it."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I should say not, you gas!" "Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Bunter!"

The fat junior came panting along the platform.

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"Cashed the postal-order?" asked Harry.

"Yes."
"The tickets came to—"

"I say, you fellows," said Bunter, apparently not hearing Wharton's reference to the tickets, "that's old Popper! You remember how he got us into a row for camping on his island, and Peter Todd was lashed for cutting down a young tree? Todd's in my study, and I think it's up to us to take it out of Popper. What do you say?"

"Bob was just suggesting bumping him," grinned Nugent.
"Oh, my hat! We can't bump him! But you fellows know what a jolly clever ventriloquist I am," said Bunter, blinking at the juniors.

"Popper isn't a safe man to play tricks on," said Johnny Bull, with a shake of the head.

"That trunk belongs to him," said Billy Bunter, his little round eyes gleaming behind his spectacles. "You remember seeing a case in the paper about a man who killed somebody and hid his body in a trunk and took it away by rail? It was called the Trunk Mystery. Suppose there was another trunk mystery now—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Billy!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Pile in!"

Bunter cleared his throat, looking very important. Billy Bunter was a duffer in most things. The things he couldn't do would have filled whole volumes. But there was no doubt that he was a wonderful ventriloquist. Bob Cherry explained it on the ground that it was a gift, and didn't require brains. The juniors stood in a group near Sir Hilton Popper, who studiously looked the other way.

But the baronet lost his aristocratic impassivity as a sudden and peculiar sound proceeded—or seemed to proceed—from the trunk at his feet. It was a low moan, and it was so full of anguish that it thrilled the Greyfriars juniors themselves.

Sir Hilton gave a jump, and fixed his eyes upon the trunk. Another passenger who had come on the platform jumped, too, and stared at the trunk. And old Rumble, the Fradale porter, who was waiting obsequiously to put the trunk in the train, staggered back against an automatic sweet machine, and leaned on it, overcome with astonishment.

Moan!

The sound was repeated.
"Good heavens!" murmured Rumble. "There's something alive in your trunk, Sir Hilton!"

"Nonsense, sir!" exclaimed the baronet. "How could there be anything alive in my trunk? Don't be a fool, Rumble!"

"But I heard it, sir!"

"Nonsense!" roared Sir Hilton.

Moan!

"Good heavens! There it is again!"

This time the baronet did not stammer. He stared blankly at the trunk, impressed himself by that sound of anguish, and evidently utterly astonished and nonplussed.

"Let me out! Oh, let me out!"

The voice was faint, and low, and anguished. Sir Hilton started, and Rumble shivered. The other passenger, a ruddy farmer, came along towards the trunk and stared at it closely.

"There's somebody in that trunk!" he exclaimed.

"Nonsense!" roared the baronet. "Cannot you see the trunk is not large enough for anybody to be in it?"

"Then who's that moaning and a-groaning?" demanded the farmer.

"I—I can't understand that!"

"Ow! Let me out!" came the moaning voice again.

"Don't let a poor child be murdered! Help! help! Sir Hilton Popper is going to kill me! Help!"

"Good heavens!" yelled Sir Hilton.

"Oh, Lord!" groaned Rumble. "There's a kid in that trunk! Oh, Sir Hilton!"

"Help!"

"There's cannot be a child in that trunk!" exclaimed Sir Hilton. "My valet packed it. It contains merely articles of clothing."

"I heard the voice, Sir Hilton," said Rumble. "So did this gentleman."

"I did!" said the farmer. "That there trunk's going to be opened! I ain't going to see a child done to death by a hoary old villain!"

"What!" roared the baronet.

"A hoary old villain!" said the farmer indignantly. "Shutting a kid up in a trunk! You with grey hair, too! It's horrible! I'll call the police if you don't open that trunk at once!"

"Help! Stop the moaning voice. Don't let him do us to death! Help!"

Sir Hilton mopped his perspiring brow.

"If—if there is a child in that trunk, it must have been THE MARSH LIBRARY—No. 278.

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placed there by my valet," he stammered. "But—but the trunk was packed in my presence! I cannot understand it!"

"Help! I'm suffocating!"

"Poor kid!" murmured Rumble. "Course he's suffocating in that there trunk! There ain't no air for 'im to breathe!"

"Help!"

"Open that trunk, you white-haired villain!" roared the indignant farmer. "Help! Police!"

"Silence, man!"

"Silence yourself!" retorted the farmer.

"Man! Do you know who I am?"

"I don't care if you're the Czar of Russia!" said the farmer. "You're not going to suffocate a helpless baby in your trunk, Sir Hilton Popper! Yes; I know you, but you ain't my landlord, thank goodness! Here's the station-master! Station-master, that old villain has got a baby fastened up in his trunk!"

"Help! help! I'm suffocating!"

The station-master staggered in surprise.

"Help! It will be too late soon! I'm suffocating!"

"Good heavens! The—the trunk had better be opened, Sir Hilton," said the station-master, nervously. "There—there really appears to be someone in it."

"It—is it impossible! But—but you may certainly open it," said Sir Hilton, throwing a key on the platform.

"Rumble, open the trunk!"

"Yesir!"

The porter unfastened the many straps and unlocked the trunk. The moaning continued as he worked with feverish haste. Several more people had gathered round now, with horrified faces, and Sir Hilton was fuming with rage.

"What an awful thing!" said Bob Cherry, in a tone of awe. "Fancy Sir Hilton Popper being a murderer! Isn't it awful!"

"Frightful!"

"The frightfulness is terrific!"

"Silence!" roared Sir Hilton. "You—you insolent young vagabonds! I—I—"

"Help!"

The moaning voice from the trunk silenced the baronet. There was a shriek of a whistle down the line as the train came in. Rumble threw back the lid of the trunk, and revealed the contents, closely packed. There was no sign of a baby there, and evidently the sufferer was concealed under the packed articles of attire. A low, faint moan came from the opened trunk.

"Clear out them things!" shouted the farmer. "I'll see that the hoary old villain don't get away! This here is a job for the police!"

"Scoundrel!" yelled the baronet. "Do you think I want to get away? I know nothing—absolutely nothing of anything but clothing being in that trunk!"

"You'll have to prove that, Sir Hilton Popper."

"Help!"

Rumble threw out the contents of the trunk on the platform. Shirts and collars and boots and socks and other articles were scattered round the trunk. But still the suffering child was not discovered. The bottom of the trunk was revealed, and there certainly was not left space for a mouse, let alone a child, to be concealed. The moaning had ceased now. Rumble's eyes almost started from his head.

"There's—there ain't nobody here!" he stammered.

"What—what—"

"You all heard it, but there ain't—"

"Good heavens, what—what—"

"This is our train," said Harry Wharton. "I'm afraid Sir Hilton won't get his trunk packed again in time to catch it. These things will happen, Pile in."

The grinning juniors crowded into the train. As it moved out of the station, they crowded the carriage window, looking back. Sir Hilton Popper was standing gesticulating with fury in the midst of an astounded crowd, with articles of attire scattered round his feet. That was the last the juniors saw of him. The train rushed on, and the juniors laughed loud and long.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Spoiled!

"BEGAD! here we are!" The train stopped at Courtfield Junction. The juniors poured out of it in great spirits. They had scored over their old enemy, Sir Hilton Popper, which was a source of great satisfaction to the young fellows. Billy Bunter blinked up at the station clock.

"Too early for the show!" he remarked. "We'll have a bit of a feed first. There's a jolly good refreshment room at

this station. Come on, you chaps; it's my treat, you know." And the fat junior led the way into the buffet.

The Removites were by no means averse to a feed before going to the show. But Billy Bunter was surprising them more and more. Bunter's generosity was simply amazing. The juniors began to feel that they had not been quite just to Bunter. He was turning out to be quite different from what they had always believed. Bunter had sometimes made wild promises of the feeds he would stand when his postal-order arrived. And he was more than keeping his word now. As Bob Cherry said, wonders would never cease.

Bunter stopped at the refreshment counter, and blinked at his comrades.

"Order what you like, you fellows!" he exclaimed.

"Quite sure it will run to it, Bunter!" asked Nugent.

Billy Bunter waved a fat hand with a lordly air.

"My dear chap, I'm going to settle out of my postal-order," he said.

"Must have been a whacking postal-order, then."

"I get remittances sometimes from my titled relations," said Bunter, with a great deal of dignity. "Naturally they are large. Pile in. It's my treat."

The juniors piled in.

Billy Bunter was setting them a good example. He ordered provisions right and left.

Railway sandwiches, generally not easy to dispose of, vanished at a great speed down Billy Bunter's throat. Jam-tarts and jam sponges, cream puffs and dough-nuts, followed, washed down by ginger-beer and lemonade.

The other fellows "did themselves well," though not quite up to Bunter's mark.

The feed was a great one. Bob Cherry looked at his big silver watch at last.

"Time for the show!" he said. "Muller's Menagerie opens at half-past three."

"Oh, just a few more tarts!" said Bunter. "Have another, Bob, old man!"

"Well, I'll have one more."

"Try these cream puffs, Wharton. They're ripping!"

"Thanks!"

"And put some of the grub in your pockets," added Bunter generously. "You may get hungry in the show, or going home."

"Well, I must say you're playing up this time, and no mistake," said Nugent. "I take back a lot of things I've said about you, Bunter."

"Yaas, begad!"

"Oh, that's all right!" said Bunter. "I know there was some delay in my postal-order arriving. You won't be suspicious again."

"Never!" said Frank solemnly.

"Hardly ever!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"I have some more tarts, Mauly."

"Begad, I've got no more room!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"Thank you all the same. We shall have to hurry if we're to get good seats."

Bunter slid down off his stool with a sigh.

"Well, I suppose you're right," he remarked. "The show's open now. Give me the bill, miss, please."

The young lady behind the counter was making up a list of the comestibles consumed, and the list was a long one—in fact, as Hurree Singh said, it was terrific.

"H'm! We don't want to be late," said Bunter. "We don't want to find all the good seats taken. You wait for the bill, and Mauly will settle it, while I buzz off and book the seats. I'll settle when you join me, Mauly!"

"Yaas."

"Here, hold on, Bunter!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, growing suspicious all at once.

But Billy Bunter was gone.

Lord Mauleverer, who was always rolling in money, drew a five-pound note out of his pocket-book, and handed it over the counter. He received only two pounds ten shillings in change. The feed had been an expensive one. Harry Wharton & Co. were looking very dubious now. Billy Bunter was standing treat; but he had contrived that Wharton should take the tickets at the station, and that the schoolboy millionaire should pay for the feed in the buffet. Had they been "done" after all by the Owl of the Remove? They could not help feeling suspicious now. They knew William George Bunter of old.

"Come on," said Wharton stolidly.

They left the buffet, and walked down Courtfield High Street towards the building where Muller's Menagerie had taken up its quarters during its visit to the old town. Outside the building flaming posters announced the attractions within. Here Hackenback's Dancing Elephant, and Leopards, the Tiger Tamer, the chief attractions, and there were performing dogs and rabbits, and reptiles, a "all sorts and conditions of animals. Quite a crowd had gathered outside for the afternoon performance. Billy Bunter was at the box-office, and he waved a fat hand to his comrades.

"I saw you fellows, this way!"

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Adventures of Greyfriars next Monday, entitled:

"HIS OWN BETRAYER!"

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"Got the tickets?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Ahem! Not yet!"

"Why not?" asked Harry.

"I was waiting for you fellows to come. We can have a box big enough to hold the party for a guinea."

"Begad, that's all right!"

"Well, take the box," said Tom Brown. "It won't cost any more than paying separately for eight, I should say."

"Right ho!" said Bunter, and he blinked at the man in the box-office. "We'll take that box, please."

The man handed out a slip of paper.

"One guinea, please."

Bunter caught up the slip.

"Come on, you chaps! Pay him, Mauly, and I'll settle with you inside."

Harry Wharton caught the fat junior by the shoulder and swung him back.

"You jolly well won't settle inside," he said. "You'll settle now, or you won't go in, you fat fraud."

"Oh, really, Wharton?"

"Make room there!" said the man in the ticket-office.

Other people were pressing on. The juniors drew aside, and Billy Bunter blinked indignantly at Wharton's angry face.

"The man wants his money," he exclaimed. "I suppose you don't want to get in without paying, Wharton. Let Mauly pay him."

"Yaas, it's all right," said Lord Mauleverer.

"It isn't all right," said Wharton. "Bunter's beer spoofs us all along the line. I don't believe he's had a postal-order at all."

"Why, I showed it to you in the study!" bawled Bunter.

"Well, how much was it for?"

"What does that matter? Look here, I can hear the band. Don't let's be late for the show!" urged Bunter. "I'll settle with Mauly later."

"You'll settle now!"

"You see, I—I—I—"

"Settle up, you fraud!"

"Ow! D-d-d-d shake me like that!" gasped Bunter. "My spectacles may fall off, and if they get broken you'll have to pay for them—ow!"

"Will you settle up, you spoofer!" shouted Wharton.

"I—I say, you fellows, it won't run to it," confessed Bunter. "You know I had a postal-order—I showed it to you—but—but—"

"How much was it for?" demanded Harry.

"Well, you see—"

"How much?"

"Grooh! Take your beastly knuckles out of my neck, you!"

"How much?" yelled Wharton.

"It was for a b-b-bob," gasped Bunter, fairly driven into a corner at last. "But it's all right. I'm going to settle up with you fellows out of another postal-order I'm expecting this evening."

"You—you—you—"

"Ow! Loggo! We're missing the show. I suppose you fellows haven't brought me over here for nothing," bawled Bunter indignantly. "We're going in, I suppose."

"No, we're not!" growled Bob Cherry. "You fraud! You've been spoofs us all the time. We ought to have known you better."

The ought-to-be foolishness is terrific," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh, with a shake of the head.

"It's all right, my dear fellows," said Lord Mauleverer, laughing. "I've got plenty of tin. Let me stand the box."

"It's a rotten shame!"

"Oh, that's all right!" Lord Mauleverer laid down a sovereign and a shilling for the box. "Now come in, my dear chaps!"

"Kick Bunter out!" said Johnny Bull.

Bunter roared.

"Oh, I say, you fellows! I brought you here, you know. Look here, I'm coming in! I—"

"Begad! Let him come in, or he'll bring the roof down," said Lord Mauleverer, laughing. "He's a fraud, but he can't help it—he's built that way. Come on!"

I'm going to settle up out of my postal-order this evening," said Billy Bunter indignantly. "What difference does it make?"

"Oh, shut up!" growled Bob Cherry. "You can come in if Mauly says so, as Mauly's paying. But shut up, or I'll biff you!"

Bunter was satisfied with that. He didn't mind shutting up so long as he went in. And the juniors entered the show, and were shown into their box, and found that the performance had already commenced.

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THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Another Trunk Mystery.

THE box was a large and roomy one, and there was room for the juniors. Billy Bunter claimed the best seat, on account of being short-sighted, and calmly seated himself in it. The juniors had a good view of the ring. A fat gentleman in tights and spangles was going through tricks with performing bears, and the boys looked on with interest. When the bears and their master went out, Wharton glanced at the programme.

"Hackenback's Elephant next!" he remarked.
 "Dancing elephant, too," said Bob Cherry. "I haven't seen an elephant dance since Billy Bunter was at the ball at Cliff House."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Here comes the giddy bullphunt!"
 A large African elephant came bounding into the arena, led by a little fat German, in a crimson tunic, evidently Herr Hackenback. Herr Hackenback led the elephant round the ring to give the audience a view of him, and halted close by the box where the juniors sat looking down. Billy Bunter burst into a chuckle suddenly.

"What are you cackling at?" demanded Bob Cherry.
 "He, he, he!"
 "Something gone wrong with the works?"
 "He, he, he! No! Just you listen!"
 "Ladies and gentlemen," said Herr Hackenback. "Zis is Nero, te performing elephant, who mit me will dance der valtz."

"Ear, ear!" said the audience.
 There were flaming coloured pictures outside the building, depicting the fat German waltzing with the elephant. It would certainly be a sight worth seeing. The band struck up "The Merry Widow," and the elephant placed his trunk about the German and began to pound to and fro to the music. There was a shout of laughter. When the waltz ceased there were cheers, and the little German bowed and grinned.

"Now ve will giff der minuet," he said. "Vill ve not, Nero?"

Herr Hackenback did not expect to receive a reply to that question, of course. It was only his way of affectionately addressing Nero. But, to his amazement, there came a reply.

"No, we won't!"
 Herr Hackenback jumped.
 He gazed at the elephant as if he fancied that his ears had played him some strange trick.

"Mein goodness!" he said. "I tink tat I dream via myself. I tink that I hear Nero speak mit him, hein. Is it forry strange?"
 "Ola, rats!"

Herr Hackenback staggered.
 This time there was no doubt about it. The reply proceeded from the trunk of the elephant, or else Herr Hackenback was labouring under a hallucination.

"Mein Gott!" he exclaimed. "Is it tat I dream?"
 "You've had too much beer!"
 "Vat?"
 "You're drunk!"
 "Mein Gott!"

The Greyfriars juniors stared blankly at the elephant, as amazed as Herr Hackenback, and as the members of the audience who were near enough to hear. But Billy Bunter's cackle enlightened them. It was the Greyfriars' ventriloquist again.

"Oh, you fat duffer!" said Bob Cherry, in great relief.
 "Blessed if I didn't think my mind was wandering for the moment!"
 "He, he, he!"

Herr Hackenback rubbed his fat little nose in wonder and alarm. His performing elephant could do many things, but he had never heard him talk before. Mr. Muller, the proprietor of the show, came across the ring.
 "Get on with the business," he said. "The band's waiting for you."

"It is that I know not vat to tink!" gasped Herr Hackenback. "Mein Herr, tat elephant has talk mit himself!"
 "Nonsense!"

"I dell you tat I hears him!"

"Look here, Herr Hackenback!" said Mr. Muller severely, "you ought to know better than to come into the ring in

this condition! Get through your business as quick as you can before the audience find you out, and then go and lie down and sleep it off!"

"Vat! You tink tat I am trunk! I dell you fat fat elephant he talk mit himself!"

"Be quiet, for goodness sake!"

"Quiet yourself, cocky!"

Mr. Muller spun round towards the elephant in alarm. Nero blinked at him serenely.

"Goodness gracious!" gasped the showman. "I-I thought—"

"Oh, you can't think!"

"Wha-a!"

"Go home!"

"Bless my body and boots!" gasped the showman. "He—he's talking!"

"Ring off, old chap!"

"I—I—I—"

"Go home!"

The audience was in a buzz now. Most of them took the elephant's remarks as a part of the performance, and supposed it was some skillful trick. There was a cheer from the people in front under this misapprehension.

"He talk mit himself!" stuttered Herr Hackenback.

"He talks; you hears him mit yourself and your own ears, ain't it? I am not trunk; I swear tat I have no more tan nine glasses of beer since dis morning. He talks!"

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Muller.

"Nero, mein goot Nero! Now ve will dance to minuet—"

"Shan't!"

"Vat?"

"You're too fat!"

"Mein goodness!"

"You're too lazy! Go home! Go and get sober! Yah!"

said the remarkable elephant.

"Booray! Bravvo!" howled the delighted audience.

"My word!" gasped Mr. Muller. "They're taking it for part of the game. I—I say, what's the matter with your elephant, Hackenback?"

"Mein Gott! I know not! I neffer dream of tat! It is amazing!"

"It's some trick," said Mr. Muller. "The voice comes from his trunk. But he can't be speaking. You've been fixing something in his trunk—a phonograph, or something of that sort!"

"I dell you I haf not! It is amazing—wunderbar!"

"Oh, you're dotty!" came from Nero's trunk. "Go home! Get your hair cut!"

"Mein Gott!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Greyfriars juniors. The audience were roaring, too.

Mr. Muller bent over the elephant's trunk and examined it carefully. He suspected that some contrivance had been placed there skillfully to imitate the human voice. The audience, still thinking it was part of the show, looked on expectantly. Mr. Muller, much to his surprise, found nothing uncommon in the elephant's trunk.

"My word!" he said.

"Rats! What's your word worth!"

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Muller. "What does it mean?"

"It's another trunk mystery!" roared Bob Cherry. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Muller made a sign to the band, and at the agreed signal the elephant began to dance, and Herr Hackenback mechanically joined in. The audience thundered applause. When the peculiar dance ended, Herr Hackenback took off his hat and bowed to the elephant.

"Thank you!" he said.

"Thank you!" came the reply. "Jolly glad that's over; you're too fat to dance!"

The audience shrieked.

"Oh, mein goodness!" gasped Herr Hackenback. "I tink tat my penins are going. I do not understand tat at all. Mein Gott!"

And Herr Hackenback led his elephant off, amid another round of cheers, still without understanding it, and in a state of the greatest amazement.

The Greyfriars juniors laughed till the tears ran down their cheeks.

"Begad," said Lord Mauleverer, "you're worth your weight in jam tarts, Bunter, begad! I wish I could do that—I do, really."

"I'll give you lessons in ventriloquism, if you like," said Bunter. "As you're a pal, I'll charge you only a guinea a lesson. I'll give you one every day—"

"Begad!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "Bunter's got the

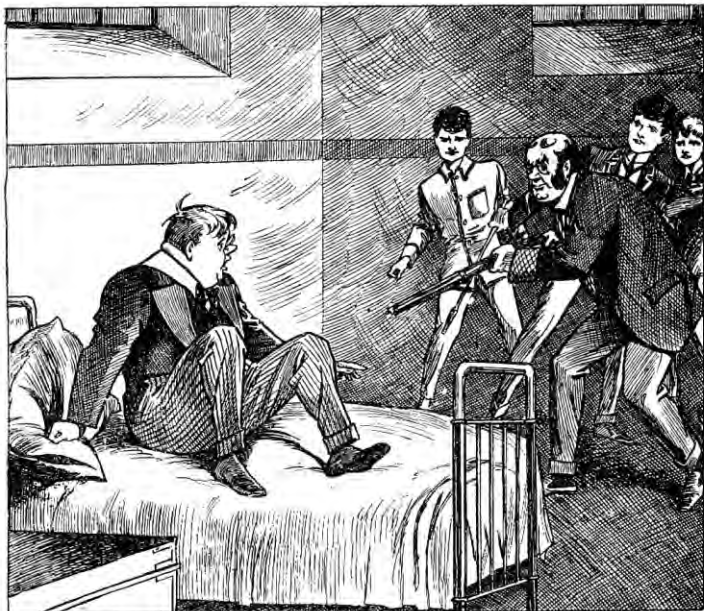
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"Wingate, raise the coverlet!" said Mr. Proud, levelling his rifle. "I will fire as soon as I see him! I am a dead shot! Keep still, Bunter! Unless my rifle jumps, the ball is not likely to pass over the bed——" "What!" yelled Bunter. (See Chapter II.)

experience, and you've got the money, Maun. After a bit, you'll have the experience, and he'll have the money!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Here comes the giddy tiger!"

And there was a lurch in the amphitheatre as Leopardi, the tiger-tamer, came in—a salavat man, with a dark, foreign face, in tights and cloak, with a whip in his hand. A huge cage was wheeled into the arena after him—a cage with bars all round, so that it was open to view on all sides. Inside the cage were two huge animals—a powerful tiger and a smaller tigress. And the eyes of all the audience were fastened upon the cage, and upon the great tiger as he stalked to and fro.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER, The Tiger Lonsel.

"MY hat!" said Harry Wharton. "I shouldn't care to get into the cage with that beast! Look at his jaws!"

"Oh, I shouldn't mind," said Billy Bonter. "You quell wild animals with the power of the eye, you know. I could do it!"

"Go on!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I can do it! Once I've got my eyes fixed upon a wild beast, you know, I should quell him with the mere force of will——"

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Chums of Greyfriars next Monday, entitled:

"Well, you've got an unusual allowance of eyes," said Beld, with a nod. "Chap might do with four eyes what he couldn't do with two."

"Oh, really——"

"Shut up; they've just going to begin."

Mr. Muller had announced Signor Leopardi, and informed the audience that the tiger-tamer was about to enter the cage, which no other living man could have entered without being torn to pieces on the spot. And, indeed, the aspect of the male tiger was far from reassuring. He was stalking up and down the big cage, whisking his tail, and growling from time to time. Signor Leopardi looked in through the bars, and made a gesture to the tiger, and the animal backed away from the iron door; but with a snarling look which might have made any animal-tamer feel uneasy. The juniors were watching closely, and they saw Mr. Muller mutter something to the tiger-tamer. They guessed that the look of the tiger made the showman uneasy. But Signor Leopardi only laughed confidently. There was a lurch in the crowded amphitheatre as he put his hand on the door of the cage.

"That chap's got nerve!" said Tom Brown.

"Oh, he's used to the animals, of course," said Berton. "I dare say that's all got up, you know—the tiger's a tame old beast, and wouldn't hurt a baby."

"He doesn't look very tame." The man's in the cage now.

"Looks as if he'll soon be in the tiger," said Johnny Bull.

"HIS OWN BETRAYER!"

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There was evidently something unusual going on in the tiger's cage. The big tiger crouched away from the cracking whip of the tamer, but in a reluctant, snarling manner. The juniors were close enough to see that Leopardi's face was pale and strained, and rigid. The man was having to keep a tight hand on his nerves. The tiger was out of humour and insubordinate; but the performance had to be gone through as usual. It seemed to the juniors that the man realised his danger, and was hoping that nothing would happen before his performance was over—knowing that he was taking his life in his hand. And yet it was possible that, as Bunter suggested, the whole thing was got up for effect.

Signor Leopardi cracked his whip, and the lioness snote upon the flanks of the tiger, and there was an angry snarl.

But the great beast was obedient so far. The tigress lay in a corner of the cage, blinking at the Italian. Signor Leopardi was devoting all his attention to the tiger. The whip cracked again and again, and the great beast obeyed him. The hard and steady eyes of the tamer were fixed upon the tiger, and the fierce, yellow eyes of the animal quailed before the steady gaze of the man. If that gaze had been removed—

"There's danger in that cage!" said Wharton, in a low voice. "It isn't got up—it's real! That man knows he's in danger! I wish it were over!"

"Jolly well wish he would come out of the cage," said Nugent. "If he gets hurt—"

"The tiger might get loose!" grinned Billy Bunter. "Don't be afraid, you chaps—"

"Who's afraid, you fat ass?" growled Bob Cherry. "You'd jolly well be afraid if that tiger got out, anyway."

said Bunter.

"Chance for you to show the power of your eyes," granted Johnny Bull.

"More likely to show his powers as a footsprinter," said Tom Brown.

"Oh, really, Brown—"

"Good heavens!" muttered Wharton. "Look, look!"

The tiger-tamer, in moving about the cage, his eyes fixed on those of the tiger, had trodden against the tigress. The female animal turned upon him snarling, and the man glared round at her quickly, his arm upraised. As if waiting for that moment when the tamer's eye was off him, the tiger made a spring.

There was a gasp of horror from the audience.

With a crash the tiger-tamer went to the floor of the cage, and the tiger crouched over him, growling.

The man did not move.

The juniors, who could see his face, could see that it was as white as chalk; but he still kept his nerve. If he had struggled at that moment, the tiger would have torn him to pieces. He kept quite still, and the tiger crouched over him and growled, but without attacking him. Mr. Muller and half a dozen attendants came running up. Some of them had red-hot irons, kept ready at hand for an emergency. The irons were thrust through the bars of the cage, and the tiger, growling savagely, retreated from the fallen man.

"Quick, Leo!" gasped Muller. "Out of the cage while you've a chance!"

The tamer did not reply. But he crawled towards the door of the cage, and reached it, the tiger watching him with flaming eyes. Muller cautiously opened the door of the cage, the men behind him holding the iron bars ready in case the tiger should spring again. The door was opened just wide enough for the tamer to crawl out, and he came out backwards with his eyes still on the tiger.

The audience were all on their feet now, breathless and excited, their eyes fixed upon the scene. Some of the more nervous were hurriedly leaving the building. The tamer rolled out, and the door was jammed shut; but at that very moment the tiger made a spring. The door crashed open again, the suddenness of it taking the men by surprise, and in a second more the great striped monster was outside the cage.

There was a shriek of affright from the crowded audience. "The tiger's loose!"

"Run!"

Men and women made a wild rush for the exits.

Seats were thrown over, people rolled and scrambled over one another to escape, and there were groans and yells, and screams of terror.

The Greyfriars juniors in the box jumped up.

Billy Bunter was the first out of the box. It did not occur to the Owl of the Remove at that moment to attempt to quell the escaped tiger with the power of his eyes. The menagerie attendants surrounded the great beast to keep him in the arena while the audience made their escape from the building. But they did not venture too close. The tiger was pawing the ground, and lashing himself into fury with his tail. Leopardi contrived to fasten the door of the cage

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in time, and to prevent the escape of the tigress, who was yelling response to her mate, and whisking up and down inside the bars.

"Out of this—quick!" gasped Nugent.

The juniors rushed out into the passage behind the box.

There they found themselves in a thick crowd, struggling for the exit.

The knowledge that any moment the tiger might come clawing among them had scared the crowd out of their wits, and they struggled and fought for escape as if from a fire, and impeded one another in their efforts.

There were shrieks from people who had gone down in the rush, and were being trampled on by the wild mob.

"Stick together!" muttered Harry.

"Where's Bunter?"

"Out by this time," said Bob Cherry scornfully. "There he is, treading on a woman, the fat beast! I'll—"

Billy Bunter was shoving away furiously. He did not even see the fallen woman he was stepping on in his terror. He disappeared into the whirling, struggling crowd. But the other juniors were made of sterner stuff. They paused round the panting woman, and raised her up, and supported her against them as they pushed on.

"It's all right," said Tom Brown. "We'll get you out, ma'am."

"Help! Help!" she was shrieking.

"We'll take care of you."

"The carefulness will be terrific, honoured madam," panted the Nabob of Bhanipur.

They shoved through the doorway at last.

Out in the street it was cooler. They struggled from the maddened crowd, and panted for air. A huge crowd had gathered before the building, but at the news that the tiger was loose, they kept a respectful distance.

The juniors bore the receding woman out of the crush, and placed her in the nearest shop. They turned back to the street. There was a yell of alarm from the direction of the show building.

"Look out! The tiger!"

"Run!"

"Great Scott! There he is!"

Like a yellow streak the great body bounded from the doorway.

There was a wild scattering of the crowd, a mad rush of feet.

The juniors ran, too.

A fierce roar from the tiger accelerated their flight. The great animal was running, too, probably as much frightened as the people, if they had known it, and intent only on escape.

"Help me, you fellows! Help!"

It was Bunter's voice.

The fat junior was almost in tatters after his struggle with the escaping crowd. His spectacles were gone, and he was blinking about him helplessly, as he leaned on a pillar-box and panted for breath.

"Help! Ow, he's just behind me! Help!"

Wharton caught the arm of the fat junior, and rushed him on.

They dashed into the railway-station, where a crowd of people had taken refuge. The station doors were closed. From a window they looked into the street, and they caught a glimpse of the escaped tiger again, loping along at a great rate, and evidently making for the open country outside the town.

"My hat!" gasped Tom Brown. "There will be the dickens to pay over this! A riddy escaped tiger! What a row there will be!"

"Begad, yass! I think we'll take the train home, my dear fellows. I don't want to walk."

"No fear!"

And the Greyfriars juniors entered the next train for Friarhole. In the railway carriage, Billy Bunter recovered his breath and his courage. He was safe from the tiger now.

"Lucky for you fellows I kept my head," he remarked.

The juniors glared at him.

"What?" roared Johnny Bull.

"Lucky for you I kept my head, and—showed you the way out," said Bunter firmly. "If I hadn't led the way out you might have got chawed up—"

"You fat rotter!" said Bob Cherry wrathfully. "You were in the bluest of blue funks, and you pushed over a woman to get out. You ought to be scragged."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Shut up; you make me ill!"

The train stopped in Friarhole, and the juniors stepped out. News of the escape of the tiger had already reached the village, doubtless by telegraph. Courtfield was not a great distance from Greyfriars, and it was as likely as not

that the tiger would wander in the direction of the school. The juniors paused outside the station to consider.

"I say, you fellows, come on," said Billy Banter. "I want to get in to tea."

"The tiger may have gone this way," said Wharton.

Bunter's jaw dropped.

"He's at Courtfield—"

"He got out of the town before we did! He may be anywhere—in Friardale Lane, for all we know."

"Oh, crums! I—I say, you fellows, I—I'm not going back to school," said Bunter, in dismay. "Suppose we meet him in the lane—"

"You could quell him with the power of your eye, begad," said Mauloverer.

"Oh, really, Mauly—"

"Well, it's no good finking it," said Wharton, at last. "We can't stay here. We've got to get back to the school, and we should be laughed at if we fink it, especially if the tiger hasn't come in this direction at all. Who's game?"

"Come on!" said Bob Cherry.

"I—I say, you fellows, I'm not coming! I—I—!"

"Stay here, then," said Bob Cherry shortly.

"Look here, you stay with me! I—I—"

"Oh, rats!"

The juniors started off down the lane. Billy Bunter blinched after them. The mere possibility of meeting the escaped tiger in the lane made him turn cold all over. But he did not want to remain alone in Friardale; and he knew that he must return to the school sooner or later—tiger or no tiger. He hurried after the juniors.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Run for Life!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. walked very fast. They kept their eyes well about them, and any rustle of the leaves along the lane, the sigh of the wind in the hedges made them start and look round.

There was danger, and they knew it.

The tiger might have gone in any of a dozen directions; but the direction of Greyfriars was as likely as any other. And if they should meet the ferocious beast—

Half-way to the school, they were already regretting that they had not stayed in the safety of the village. Under the circumstances, the Head would have excused them, of course. But then they reflected that the tiger might be miles away, and they thought of the chipping they would receive from their schoolfellows if they finked an imaginary danger. They tramped grimly on.

Billy Bunter gasped and puffed like an engine out of order as he tried to keep pace with them. Bunter was fat and heavy, and he was not in good condition. He walked and ran by turns, his fat little legs going like clockwork. But his breath gave out at last, and he panted out an appeal to the others.

"I say, you fellows, I—I really can't go so fast! Slacken a bit."

"Hurry up!"

"I—I can't! Don't leave me," shrieked Bunter, as the distance between him and the other juniors increased.

Wharton paused.

"You fellows get on. I'll stay with Bunter—"

"No you won't," growled Johnny Bull. "We'll stick together. Sink or swim, the whole jolly family. Try to get a move on, Bunter!"

"Oh—ow! I'm out of breath! Oh!"

"Take his arms and help him."

Bunter's arms were taken by Johnny Bull and Harry Wharton, and they ran him on, half carrying him.

The fat junior gasped and snorted.

The tower of Greyfriars came in sight at last, over the trees. None of the fellows were to be seen outside the gates. It looked as if the warning of danger had reached the school already. Bunter was gasping and groaning continuously now.

"Lemme go!" he spluttered at last. "I can't keep it up! Lemme alone."

"Come on, Bunter. Make an effort."

"I—I c-can't! Lemme alone."

The juniors paused. Bunter still staggered on, but at a snail's pace, his face red with exertion, and his breath coming and going in gasps. He was in the last stage of exhaustion.

"The gates may be shut, if they've heard about the tiger," muttered Bob.

"Cut on and see that they're opened, Bob."

"I'm not going on without you—"

"Look!" yelled Tom Brown suddenly.

The juniors looked round quickly, and stood for a second frozen with horror.

From a gap in the hedge, a huge, whiskered head had emerged, and they caught a glimpse of a great, striped body behind it. It was the tiger, and his fierce, rolling eyes were fixed upon them, and a quiver ran through his sinuous body, showing that he was about to spring.

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"Run!" panted Wharton.

The juniors tore down the road.

Even Billy Bunter, exhausted as he was, found new strength at that horrid sight. He ran as fast as the others, for a minute. Then his strength gave out, and he stumbled and fell. He was too exhausted to cry out. He rolled in the dust, overcome with exhaustion and fear, moaning.

The juniors were tearing on, in their mind's eye seeing the savage beast behind them. Wharton was the only one who heard Bunter fall, and he glanced back. The fat junior was on the ground, moaning with terror. Back down the lane was a great striped body.

Wharton's heart was thumping like a hammer.

He was no coward, but the sight of those flaming eyes and terrific jaws sent the blood curdling to his heart.

But he stopped. He ran back to Bunter, and caught hold of him. He dragged the fat junior to his knees.

"Bunter! Quick—run—run!"

"I—I can't!"

It was evident that Bunter could not. There was only one thing to be done. Harry bent over him, and raised him by sheer strength, and threw the fat junior over his shoulder. Bunter hung there, helplessly, like a sack of potatoes.

Almost reeling under his crushing weight, Wharton ran on toward the school gates.

Bunter was half fainting, and almost insensible now to his surroundings. But Wharton's mind was active, his nerves on edge. Was the tiger behind him? Was the great striped body flying through the air, to land upon him from behind, and bear him to the earth. He dared not look back.

The other juniors had reached the gates.

The gates were closed and locked. They rang the bell furiously, and pounded on the gates, yelling to Gosling to come and open them. The school porter appeared inside the gates with a key in his hand.

"Open the gates—quick—quick—quick!" shrieked Nugent.

"Horders from the 'Ead to lock up!" growled Gosling. "Which they've telephoned that a tiger 'ave escaped from a menagerie, and—"

"The tiger's after us, you idiot! Open the gates!"

"None of your larks," said Gosling, fumbling with the key. "Wat I says is this 'ere—"

"Open the gates!"

"Quick! Quick!"

The white faces of the excited juniors made the porter understand that they were in earnest, and that it was, indeed, something more serious than a lark. He unlocked the gates, his cowardly face going white, and he looked anxiously along the road.

The juniors crowded in, Gosling opening the gate just wide enough to allow them to pass inside.

"Where's Wharton?" cried Bob.

"And Bunter?"

"Look 'ere, these 'ere gates 'ave got to be shut—"

Bob Cherry hurried Gosling out of the way, and dragged the gate open again. He ran into the road just as Wharton came staggering up under his burden.

"Here you are—thank goodness! Get inside—quick!" yelled Bob. "He's coming down the lane!"

Wharton staggered in.

In the dusty road Bob caught a glimpse of the tiger. He was loping along at a great speed, and was not a dozen paces behind Wharton.

Bob sprang in after his chum, and slammed the gates, and turned the key in the lock.

"Look!"

"Oh!"

Outside in the road, the sinuous body came pressing against the gates, and the fearful eyes looked in through the bars. The juniors looked at the terrible sight, fascinated. The tiger growled savagely, and rubbed against the bars of the gate.

"He would jump over that!" muttered Nugent tensely.

The juniors dashed away for the shelter of the schoolhouse, and Gosling bolted into his lodge and slammed and locked the door.

Billy Bunter was dragged into the schoolhouse, and the juniors slammed the big, oaken door. Mr. Quelch, the Master of the Remove, came out of his study.

"What is the matter?" he asked.

"The tiger, sir!"

"What?"

"He's after us, sir! He's just outside the school gates!"

"Good heavens! Close the door—quick!"

The door was bolted and chained. Then the juniors breathed more freely. Inside the strong stone walls of the school House, at all events, they were safe from the terrible animal.

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THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Pluck!

GREYFRIARS was in a buzz of excitement. The escape of the tiger from the menagerie at Courtfield had been communicated at once to the surrounding villages by telephone and telegraph. The Head of Greyfriars had been rung up from Courtfield with the news, and he had immediately ordered all the boys indoors, and had the school gates closed. There was a considerable amount of grumbling on the subject. The Remove team had not finished playing the Third, and they did not want to leave the match, and they scoffed at the idea of the escaped tiger getting on to the playing-fields of Greyfriars. But Dr. Locke was wisely determined to run no risks. Until the terrible animal was recaptured or killed, the whole neighbourhood would be in the direst peril, especially when the animal had been free so long as to grow famished with hunger. Until Signor Leopardi had succeeded in catching his escaped tiger, bounds at Greyfriars were likely to be extremely limited.

The reality of the danger was impressed upon the juniors by the narrow escape of Harry Wharton & Co. They had actually been chased, for some distance, by the escaped animal, whether he had intended to attack them or not. Gooding, the porter, had seen the huge, whiskered head outside the bars of the gate, and he described the sight afterwards in fear and trembling. The fellows crowded at the windows, looking out into the Close for a sight of the tiger. The school wall was high, but it was an easy leap for a tiger, if he chose to leap in. If anything attracted the animal to the spot, they might see the monster stalking across the Close, under the windows of Greyfriars.

But the tiger was not seen. Doubtless he had passed on by the locked gates, and was gone, and might be miles away by this time. But a feeling of uneasiness prevailed as the dusk descended on the school.

The chums of the Remove were called upon again and again for descriptions of the scene at the menagerie when the tiger had escaped. Billy Bunter was in his element in describing what had happened. Bunter was holding forth after tea to a crowd of juniors in the common-room when Harry Wharton & Co. came along, and they stopped to listen. The short-sighted Owl of the Remove did not see them.

"It all shows what you get by having presence of mind, you fellows," Bunter said, blinking round at the interested juniors. "If I'd lost my presence of mind, I should be lying now—"

"Well, you are lying now," said Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry," said Bunter, "I was saying I should be lying now, cold and stark and stiff, torn into fragments by that ferocious tiger—"

"Blessed if I see how you could be cold and stiff, and torn into fragments at the same time," said Bolsover major.

"Well, I should be lying—"

"Not if you were killed," said Bulstrode. "That's the only thing, in fact, that would keep you from lying."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I should be lying in my gore!" howled Bunter. "If I lost my presence of mind! Luckily I was cool—perfectly cool!"

"You're cool enough, as a rule," agreed Vernon-Smith. "I don't know about having a cool head, but you've got a cool cheek."

"I remained cool, and saved my comrades' lives," yelled Bunter. "Wharton was as white as a sheet. I called out to him: 'Buck up, Harry! Take hold of my arm, and I'll see you through.' He was gasping with fright, but I got him out. Then I went back for Bob Cherry."

"Oh, my only hat!" gasped Wharton.

"My sainted Sam!" said Bob Cherry, sinking into a chair. "This is rotten for me, even for Bunter! Go on, Bunter! Tell 'em what you did when you came back for me, and I clung round your neck, and cried to you with tears in my eyes to save your old pal Bob."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I got Cherry out, and then I went back for Nugent."

"Oh, my hat!"

"How I got them to the railway-station I hardly know. They depended on me entirely. But I did it by presence of mind—sheer presence of mind and pluck. They owe me their lives. There was the tiger, raging on our tracks—"

"You were making tracks, and the tiger was raging on them!" asked Bolsover major. "I suppose you were making tracks faster than the tiger was raging?"

"When we walked home from Fivisdale, we spotted the tiger," said Bunter. "He was crouching behind a hedge, and as he was spotted—"

"What rot!" said Vernon-Smith. "Tigers are striped. Leopards are spotted. Sure it wasn't a leopard you saw."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 278.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR"
Every Friday.

"I tell you I spotted the tiger, crouching behind a hedge!" roared Bunter. "We said—"

"I've no doubt you did—"

"We believe that much, Bunter, bedad!" said Micky Desmond.

"Yes, we just got in by the skin of our giddy teeth," said Bunter. "I had to stop behind to help Wharton, or the tiger would have had him."

"Why, Wharton carried you in, you awful Ananias!" yelled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"The fearful fabricator," said Wharton. "He was in such a funk at the menagerie, that he shored over a woman in scrambling out, and we picked her up and carried her out of the building. Then we found him screaming for help in the street, and the tiger was nowhere near him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't expect gratitude from you, Wharton, for saving your life," said Billy Bunter loftily. "But I really think—"

"Saving my life!" howled Wharton.

"Yes, I saved your life. Without my presence of mind we should all have been devoured by that fearful tiger—"

"My hat!" said Russell. "Must have been a jolly big tiger, Billy, if he could get you inside him—to say nothing of the others."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I saved Wharton's life. I don't expect him to be grateful; but I really think he might be decent about it. Chaps don't save your life every day."

"Sure, and it's a giddy day ye are!" said Micky Desmond. "If the tiger gets into the school, we'll send for Billy Bunter on the spot to spot him. And do ye know, you fellows," continued the Irish junior, glancing round mysteriously, "it's occurred to me, bedad, that the baste may have crept into one of the back windows, you know. Did ye hear something move in the passage there?"

Micky pointed to a door at the back of the room, where a passage led to the back of the house. The door was ajar, and if the tiger had been there he could certainly have pushed the door open quite easily, and trotted in.

Bunter changed colour a little.

"I wish you wouldn't make these rotten jokes, Desmond," he said. "If the tiger comes here, you'll see me face him. I shall quell him with the power of my eye."

Mick tip-toed to the little door, and bent against it, listening.

The juniors watched him in silence.

Suddenly Micky held up his hand, an expression of such horror coming over his face that Bunter turned cold all over.

"Faith! Listen! Did ye hear him growl?" murmured Micky.

"Great Scott!"

"Run!"

Some of the juniors, entering into Mick's little joke, rushed for the door—the other door, of course, which gave upon the Form-room passage. Billy Bunter blinked at Micky Desmond. Micky rushed across the room, and caught hold of Bunter, holding the fat junior in front of him.

"Bunter, save me—save me intirely!" he roared. "The baste is coming! The thafe of the worruld is in the passage. Save me!"

"Ow!" roared Bunter. "Lemme go! Oh, help!"

Bunter made a terrific effort to break loose and dash away into the Form-room passage. But Micky Desmond held him fast.

"Save me, Bunter!"

"Yow! Leggo! Oh!"

Bunter's hair was standing on end with fright now. There was a sound in the passage at the back; something or someone was there. The door was pushed in! It opened!

Bunter, with a shriek of terror, wrenched himself away from Micky Desmond, and fled. He dashed into the Form-room passage like a runaway steam-engine, and buried the juniors to right and left with his weight. He tore round the nearest corner at top speed, and dashed right into Wingate of the Sixth, who was going to his study. Wingate gripped him by the collar, and stopped him, and shook him angrily.

"You fat duffer!" shouted the Sixth-former. "What do you mean by running into me? Keep still, you silly ass!" Bunter was struggling violently.

The tiger!" he yelled. "Oh, the tiger—the t-tiger!"

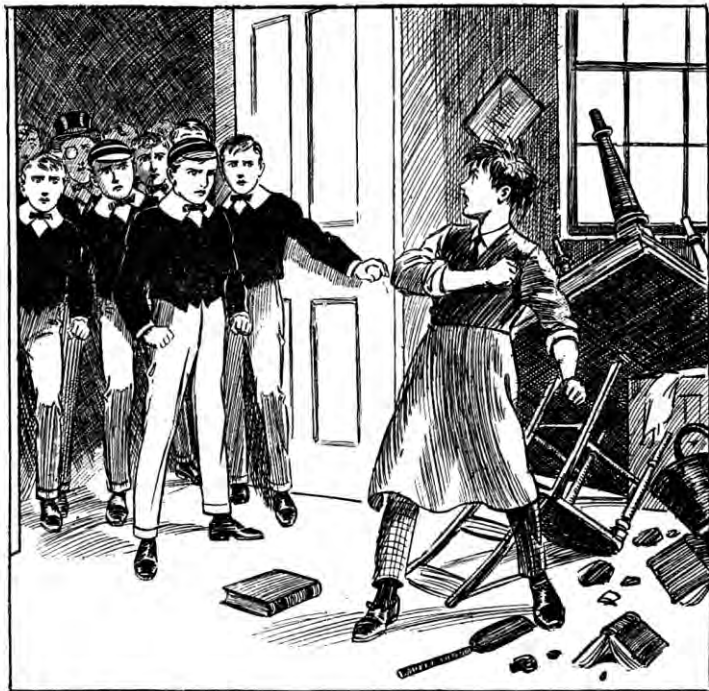
"What?"

"Run! Lemme go! He's in the house! He—ho—he—"

Bunter stammered, with a curious sound, as though he were laughing. "He—ho—he's there!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a roar from the juniors.

Wingate had been alarmed for a second, but that roar of laughter reassured him. He fastened a firm grip upon



Bernard Glyn put the key in the lock. Click! There was a muttered exclamation from inside the study. The Liverpool lad threw open the door, and the juniors stared into the study. Then there was an exclamation from all at once, "Higgles!" (For this thrilling incident see the grand, long, complete tale of Tom Merry & Co. at 8, Jim's, entitled "THE SCHEMER!" by Martin Clifford, in our grand companion paper "THE GEM" LIBRARY. On sale Wednesday. Price One Penny.)

Bunter's collar, and marched the struggling Owl of the Remove back into the Common-room. The juniors there were howling with laughter, and it dawned even upon Billy Bunter that his leg had been pulled. The little door at the back of the room was open now, and in the passage beyond could be seen a housemaid, who was retiring after having brought a scuttle of coal into the Common-room.

"What does this mean?" demanded Wingate.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You rotter!" roared Bunter. "You said it was the tiger!"

"Sure I asked you if you heard him intirely!" said Mock, innocently. "And, ha, ha, I called on you to save me life, and you ran away!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You should not play these jokes on a fink like Bunter."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 273.

A Grand, Long, Complete School Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars next Monday, entitled:

said Wingate, laughing. "He might be scared into a fit. You young rascals!"

And Wingate walked away. Billy Bunter blinked round in a rather uncertain way at the grinning juniors, and then burst into a cackle:

"He, he, he! Of course, I knew it was Desmond's little joke all along! He, he, he! I say, your fellows, I'll bet I made you believe that I was really scared! He, he, he!"

"That you jolly well did!" said Bob Cherry. "And we still believe it, Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, your fellows, of course I was only playing up, as I knew it was a joke!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you silly asses—"

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

And Billy Bunter gave it up.

"HIS OWN BETRAYER!"

Please order your copy of "THE MAGNET" Library in advance.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER. A Scare for Bolsover!

"It's rotten!"
"Eh?"
"I say it's rotten!"
"I wish you'd speak plainly!" said Dutton. "How can you expect me to hear when you mumble like that?"

Billy Bunter grunted discontentedly. Bunter was in his study, and Dutton, the deaf junior, his study-mate, was doing his preparation. The two Todds, who also belonged to No. 7 Study, were away from the school. Billy Bunter felt himself a much-injured person.

After saving Wharton's life, as he explained, it was too bad to have the fellows turn on him as they had done. Micky Desmond's little joke in the common-room had been the last straw. Nobody met Bunter now without howling out "Tiger!" and Billy Bunter was growing fed-up with it.

He might have received some sympathy from his study-mate, perhaps, if Dutton could have heard him. But Tom Dutton was afflicted with deafness, and it was a labour of love to talk to him at all.

Billy Bunter sat in the armchair, and grunted in a dissatisfied way. In his inward heart, the Owl of the Remove knew that he had made a most deplorable exhibition of cowardice, and that all the fellows knew it.

"I'm not going to stand it, Dutton!" he said.

"What?"

"It's rotten!"

"Who's trotting?" demanded Tom Dutton. "What are you talking about?"

"I saved Wharton's life."

"I didn't know he'd lost a knife," replied Dutton. "But if he has, and you've found it, give it back to him, and don't bother me about it!"

"I didn't say a knife, you ass!" yelled Bunter. "I said his life!"

"How could you find his life? I suppose he hasn't lost his life, has he?"

"I didn't say I'd found it—I said I'd saved it!"

"Eh?"

"I saved Wharton at Courtfield."

"Rot! He doesn't need shaving at his age, I should think, and I'm jolly sure he wouldn't let you shave him!" said Dutton, with a shake of the head. "What do you tell those blessed whoppers for, Bunter? I don't see the object."

"I saved him from the tiger!" yelled Bunter. "I saved his life when he was attacked by a ferocious beast!"

"That alters the case," said Dutton, more amiably. "If it's a feast, I'm on! Where's the feast, and who's standing it?"

"Ass! Not feast—beast!"

"Eh?"

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

Tom Dutton jumped up. He had heard that.

"Beast—eh? I'll teach you to call me a beast! Just because I don't believe your awful whoppers about slaving Wharton—as if he'd let you shave him, even if he wanted shaving, which he doesn't! I'll—"

"I didn't call you a beast!" gasped Bunter, springing up, and dodging round the table in alarm.

Dutton caught only the last word.

"All right; if I'm a beast, I'll give you a beastly hiding!" he said.

Billy Bunter circumnavigated the table, and made a bolt for the door. He just escaped from the study, and slammed the door after him, and fled. Tom Dutton returned to his preparation with a growl.

"Fat rotter!" he muttered. "Fancy telling me those awful whoppers about shaving Wharton, and calling me a beast because I don't believe him! I'm fed-up with Bunter and his lies!"

Billy Bunter rolled disconsolately away. Bolsover minor, of the Third, met him at the corner of the passage, and hailed him.

"Bunter! Bunter! Look out!"

"What's the matter?" asked Bunter, blinking round.

"Tiger!"

And Bolsover minor ded with a chuckle as the Owl of the Remove made an angry dash at him.

On the landing Bunter encountered the Famous Five. They greeted him with a general grin.

"Seen the tiger again, Billy?"

"Or the housemaid bringing in the coals?"

"Look here, Wharton, you owe me twelve-and-six!"

crowled Billy Bunter. "It's time for you to settle up! I won't say any more about saving your life; I don't expect any gratitude for that. But the money—"

Wharton stared at him blankly.

"What do I owe you twelve-and-six for?" he demanded.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY—No. 278.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY.

Every Wednesday

"I lost a pair of spectacles in Courtfield, in rescuing you from the tiger—"

"In losing your head and bolting, you mean, you fat bouncer!"

"I can't afford to lose twelve-and-six!" said Bunter, unheeding. "I don't charge you anything for saving your life. That's nothing, to a plucky fellow like me; but I think you ought to stand the spoos."

"You don't charge me?" queried Wharton.

"No; but—"

"Well, I'm going to charge you!"

"What! I— Oh, oh!"

Wharton charged, and Billy Bunter went rolling along the passage. The chains of the Remove walked off, laughing, and the fat junior sat up and gasped:

"Boasts!"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Bolsover major, coming along to his study. "What are you sitting on the floor for, Bunter? Waiting for the tiger?"

Bunter glared at Bolsover major. He could not say the things he would have liked to say to the bully of the Remove; Bolsover major would probably have booted him along the passage if he had. But the fat junior remembered his powers as a ventriloquist, and he could imitate the growl of an animal as easily as the voice of a man.

Bolsover major jumped.

It was dusky in the Remove passage, and the lights were not yet on. The growl seemed to come from a deep recess in the passage, where the shadows were thick. Bolsover major turned quite pale, and he forgot all about chipping Bunter.

"M-my hat!" he ejaculated. "Did you hear that?"

"Sounded like a dog," said Bunter carelessly.

"More like—a bigger animal than a dog!" said Bolsover major. "I—I wonder if—if that awful beast can have got in?"

"Oh, don't be a funk!" said Bunter airily. "Stick to me, and I'll protect you!"

"Why, you fat duffer!"

Growl!

Bolsover major broke off suddenly short. The growl was unmistakable this time, and he turned cold all over. It seemed to the startled junior that he could see two flaming eyes glaring at him from the shadows.

"I—I say, it's the tiger!" he gasped.

And he dashed to the nearest study, rushed in, and slammed the door behind him. Billy Bunter picked himself up, and went downstairs cheerfully. He felt that he had got a little of his own back.

It was No. 1 Study that Bunter, just sitting down to do their preparation. The sudden entrance of Bolsover major disturbed them considerably. He came in with so hurried a rush that he bumped into the table, and the two juniors jumped up with a startled exclamation.

"What on earth—"

"What the dickens—"

Bolsover major did not heed them. He slammed the door, locked it, and dragged the table to it by way of a barricade. Then he stood shivering and listening. The chains of the Remove regarded him with amusement.

"What's the matter?" roared Wharton. "What on earth are you up to, Bolsover? Is Loder after you, or Coker?"

"No, no!" gasped Bolsover. "Good heavens! I've had a frightfully narrow escape! The tiger's got into the House!"

"What?"

"He was lurking in the alcove in the passage!" panted Bolsover major. "He growled, and I just got in in time! He was after me!"

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Wharton. "He can't be in the House! How could he have got in? It must be a joke! Did you see him?"

"I—I saw his eyes—gleaming eyes!" said Bolsover.

"Well, the house seems pretty quiet, considering there's a tiger loose in it," said Wharton sceptically. "I fancy it's a case of nerves!"

There was a sound in the passage, and Bolsover started and trembled.

"Listen!"

"It's only a giddy foot-step!" said Nugent. "Tigers don't wear boots, you know!"

And Wharton chuckled. There was a knock at the door. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! What are you locked in for?" demanded Bob Cherry's voice outside.

Bolsover says the tiger's out there, Bob, and he's locked the door!"

"Rate! I just saw Miss Kibble's cat. Perhaps Bolsover took that for the tiger!" said Bob. "Anyway, open the door! I want your Latin dec, and you'll have to chance the tiger!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton pulled the table away from the door, and unlocked it, and opened it. Bob Cherry came in grinning. There were two or three more juniors there in the passage; and if the tiger was there, too, he was certainly lying very low. Bolsover major turned red.

"I heard a growl, anyway," he declared.
"And you heard his eyes gleam, you said!" grinned Frank Nugent.

"I saw them gleam, fathead. I—I might have been mistaken about the eyes, but I'll swear I heard a growl."

"Perhaps it was the cat mewing," suggested Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Bolsover major scowled and stamped out of the study. And for the rest of the evening Bolsover received very nearly as much chipping as Billy Bunter on the subject of the tiger.

THE NINTH CHAPTER. The Bounder's Challenge!

THE great door of the School House, generally wide open in the summer weather, was closed fast that evening, and kept closed. The Greyfriars prefects had strict orders to see that none of the juniors ventured out into the Close. Until the Head knew for certain that the escaped tiger had been recaptured, bounds would be very close for the Greyfriars fellows.

The school walls would form the school bounds in daytime, and after dark no one would be allowed outside the house at all. It was only common prudence on the part of the Head; but the youngsters chafed under the restraint. Dr. Loder was responsible for the boys under his charge, and he did not mean to run any risks with them; but the juniors would for the most part have preferred to run some risks. They were shut off from the tuckshop in the corner of the Close, even, though fortunately there was a covered way to the gym, which enabled them to use that building.

The interdiction of all access to the school shop was the kindest cut of all. Little loss and supper in the studies were supplied from the tuckshop, and supper in hall was a meal generally despised. Nobody wanted weak cocoa and "doorsteeps," as the juniors disrespectfully termed the slabs of bread-and-butter provided by the school; they wanted their own little treats in their own quarters. But with the grim apparition of the escaped tiger stalking across the Close they had to give up the tuckshop.

Vernon-Smith grunted that there wasn't any reason to suppose that the tiger would get into the school grounds, and that they didn't want to stick in the house like a crowd of finks; but the prefects were severe. When Tubbs, of the Third, was discovered trying to make a surreptitious exit through a back window, Loder, the prefect, discovered him, and shut him down upon his back; and then, having Tubbs in an excellent position for castigating, Loder laid on with the cane. The roars and howls of Tubbs would have done credit to the dreaded tiger himself, as he wriggled under the cane of the prefect; and when Loder was finished, and Tubbs was released from his uncomfortable position, all his desire to break bounds was gone. All he wanted to break was Loder's neck, as he confessed to his chum Paget.

Billy Bunter was most indignant of all about the restriction of access to the tuckshop. Bunter wanted to know what was the use of a fellow getting a postal order, if he couldn't get to the tuckshop to have something for supper.

"But you haven't had a postal order," said Micky Desmott.

Bunter snorted.
"I'm expecting one," he growled, "and when it comes—"
"That's all right," said Bob Cherry reassuringly. "The tiger will have died of old age by the time your postal order comes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I think it's rot!" said Vernon-Smith, with a sniff. "I was going to have some fellows to supper in my study. I'm not afraid of the tiger, for one."

"Most likely Mrs. Mumble will have closed her shop," said Frank Nugent. "You wouldn't be able to get anything if you were allowed out."

"I'd jolly well get something if I got there!" growled the Bounder. "Any of you fellows came to come with me!"

"You can't go," said Harry Wharton. "Head's orders!"
"Blow Head's orders!" growled the Bounder. "I don't want to go alone. If any of you fellows have the nerve to come with me— But I suppose you haven't."

"Oh, rats!" said Johnny Bull.
"Will you come, then?" asked Vernon-Smith maliciously.

"No, I won't. I'm not afraid. But—"

"Only finking!"
"I'm not finking, you rotter!" roared Johnny Bull, clenching his fists. "But we've got orders to stay in the house. Still, I'm not going to have you crowing over me, and I'll come. Now, you can come with me, or back out."

"Oh, I'll come!" said the Bounder.

"Oh, I'll come!" said the Bounder.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY—No. 275

A Grand, Long, Complete School Tale of the

Chums of Greyfriars next Monday, entitled:

"HIS OWN BETRAYER!"

EVERY
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

"Look here, Johnny!" began Wharton.
"I'm going," said Johnny Bull; "that outsider isn't going to say that I funk doing anything he can do."

"Bring me some tarts back with you, Bull, old man," said Billy Bunter. "A dozen twopenny ones, and a dozen cream puffs, and a pound cake!"

"Where's the tin?"

"Ahem! I'll settle with you to-morrow. I'm expecting a postal order by the first post in the morning."

"I'm ready," said the Bounder.

"So am I!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Then come on."

There was a window in the little passage behind the common-room, looking upon a garden, whence access could be had to the Close. Vernon-Smith led the way into the back passage, and opened the window. The door upon the common-room was closed, in case a prefect should look in. But several juniors had followed the bold adventurers into the little passage.

The Bounder looked out of the window. The night was very dark, and the trees outside loomed up dimly in the gloom. Every shadow might conceal the lurking tiger, if the beast had entered the school grounds. The probability was that he was not there, but there was a good chance that he was. Wharton caught Johnny Bull by the arm.

"Don't go, Johnny!" he exclaimed. "It doesn't matter what Smith says. Don't go!"

Johnny Bull grunted.

"Oh, rats! I'm going."

"Yes, let him go," said Bunter. "He's going to bring me some jam-tarts. Don't forget the tarts, Bull, old fellow—twopenny ones."

"Oh, shut up!"

"Look here, are you going to bring some tarts?"

"No, I'm not."

"Then I jolly well hope you'll meet the tiger in the Close!" growled Billy Bunter.

Vernon-Smith dropped out of the window. The Bounder of Greyfriars had an iron nerve, and he glanced back at the juniors inside with perfect coolness.

"Coming, Bull?"

"Yes, bother you!" And Johnny Bull dropped in his turn from the window. His chums looked after him with anxious faces. It was not really probable that the tiger was lurking in the shadows. But if the terrible beast should be there, it might be death for the two venturesome juniors.

Vernon-Smith and his companion disappeared into the darkness. The door of the common-room opened, and Loder, the prefect, came into the back passage. He frowned at the sight of the open window.

"How dare you open a window?" he exclaimed. "You know the orders—all doors and windows on the ground floor to be kept shut and fastened. Who opened that window?" demanded Loder, in his most bullying tone, as he jammed the sash down and fastened it.

The juniors did not reply. Loder did not know that any one had gone out, apparently. He glared inquiringly at the juniors.

"Who opened that window?"

"Chap who opened it isn't here," said Ogilvy.

"Who was it?"

"There was no reply. Loder gave a start."

"You don't mean to say that anybody has gone out?" he exclaimed. "You young fools! Don't you know the risk you are running! They've telephoned to the Head that the tiger hasn't been seen since it was close to the school here. It is likely as not that he's got into the grounds to get away from the men who are hunting for him. Who's gone out?"

"Bull and Vernon-Smith," said Harry Wharton. "It was useless to attempt to conceal the fact, for the prefect had only to look round to see who was missing."

"Where have they gone?"

"To the tuckshop."

"The tuckshop's closed," said Loder. "He reopened the window, and leaned out."

"Bull! Smith! Come back at once!"

There was no reply from the shadowy garden. Johnny Bull and the Bounder were far enough away by that time. Loder gritted his teeth.

"Bother the young rascals! They shall be caught for this."

"Are you going after them, Loder?" asked Skinner, of the Remore. Skinner closed one eye at his Form-fellows as he asked the question. He knew that Loder would as soon have thought of flying as of going out into the Close just then.

"Yes, go after them, and fetch them back, Loder!" chorused the juniors.

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Loder bit his lip. It was his duty to do so; but Loder did not carry his ideas of duty to any such extreme.

"They might get torn to pieces, you know," said Skinner. "Rush after them, Loder. If you get killed, you will die doing your duty. It will be a noble death."

"The nobleness will be terrific, my esteemed and ludicrous Loder," murmured Hurree Jamsai Ram Singh.

"Shut up, you young idiots!" growled Loder.

"Aren't you going after them?" exclaimed Skinner in surprise. "I'm sure it's your duty, Loder. And I'm sure you're not afraid—ow!" Loder's open palm caught Skinner's ear, and the humorist of the Remove staggered against the wall with a yell.

"Now, you shut up!" said Loder, as Skinner rubbed his ear and glared at him. "I'll wait here till those young rascals come back, and when they come in—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, here's Wingate!" said Bob Cherry. The captain of Greyfriars came upon the spot, frowning.

"What's that window open for, Loder?" he asked.

"Hull and Vernon-Smith have gone out!"

"The young rascals!" Wingate vaulted through the window. "Which way have they gone?"

"To the tuckshop. But—"

"Come after me, Loder. They must be found and brought in."

Wingate disappeared, but Loder remained where he was. He was somewhat red now, and he wished that he had not come upon the scene. The juniors were grinning at one another.

George Wingate's promptness in hurrying out after the tramps, showed the different stuff he was made of. Wingate's voice called back from the garden:

"Come on, Loder!"

Loder set his teeth and strode away. There was a chuckle from the group of juniors, and someone whispered "Funk!" loud enough for the prefect to hear. Loder turned round with a flaming face.

"Who said that?" he roared.

"Who said what?" asked Bob Cherry innocently.

"Was it you, Merry?"

"Was what me?"

"Did you call me a funk?" yelled the angry prefect.

"Oh, no! Unless I was thinking aloud," said Bob Cherry, dodging the prefect and creeping into the common-room. And there was another chuckle.

Loder had a cane in his hand. He did not waste any more time in words, but he ran at the juniors, lashing with the cane. There was a yell, and the Removites scattered and fled.

Loder's left hand closed upon Skinner's collar. Skinner

was not quite able to get away in time, and Loder did not care which fellow he licked, so long as he licked somebody. He held Skinner in an iron grip, and lashed him across the shoulders with the cane. Skinner roared and wriggled.

"Ow—ow—ow! Leggo! Yow! You beast! Yah!"

"You called me a funk, I think!" panted Loder.

"Yes, I did; and you are one!" yelled Skinner. "Ow—ow!"

"Lash—lash—lash!" "Yarrah! Oh!"

Skinner wrenched himself away at last and fled. Loder strode through the common-room, and as he went there was a howl from a dozen different voices in the room:

"Funk!"

But this time Loder did not turn back. He strode away up the Form-room passage. Skinner twisted and rubbed his back.

"Ow!" he grumbled. "I'll make that rotter sit up for that! Ow! Yow! He's licked me just because we know he was afraid to follow Wingate! Ow—ow! Yow!" And Skinner rubbed his injuries and plotted vengeance on the bully of the Sixth, with a result that Loder was to discover later.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Caught!

"CLOSED!" growled Johnny Bull.

The two foolhardy juniors had reached the little tuckshop which Mrs. Minble kept in a corner of the Close. The door was fast, and there was no light in the shop. In an upper window, however, a light gleamed.

The alarm of the escaped tiger had caused Mrs. Minble to close her shop, regardless of the anguish of supperless juniors.

"She can come down and let us in," said the Boulder.

He picked up a pebble and tossed it up to the lighted window, where it clinked on the glass and fell.

A shadow appeared on the window. It opened and Mrs. Minble looked out.

"It's all right, Mrs. Minble," called out Johnny Bull.

"It's only us, and we're not escaped tigers—only escaped juniors. We want some tuck."

"Denry me?" said Mrs. Minble. "You foolish young gentlemen, to come out of doors! The shop is closed!"

"Come down and let us in, Mrs. Minble," said Vernon-Smith. "I've got a quid I want to change."

Mrs. Minble shook her head.

"I daren't come down and open the door, Master Smith! Besides, Dr. Locke has ordered the shop to be closed. Go back to the House at once, like good boys."

"We want some tuck."

CONTRASTS.—No. 12.

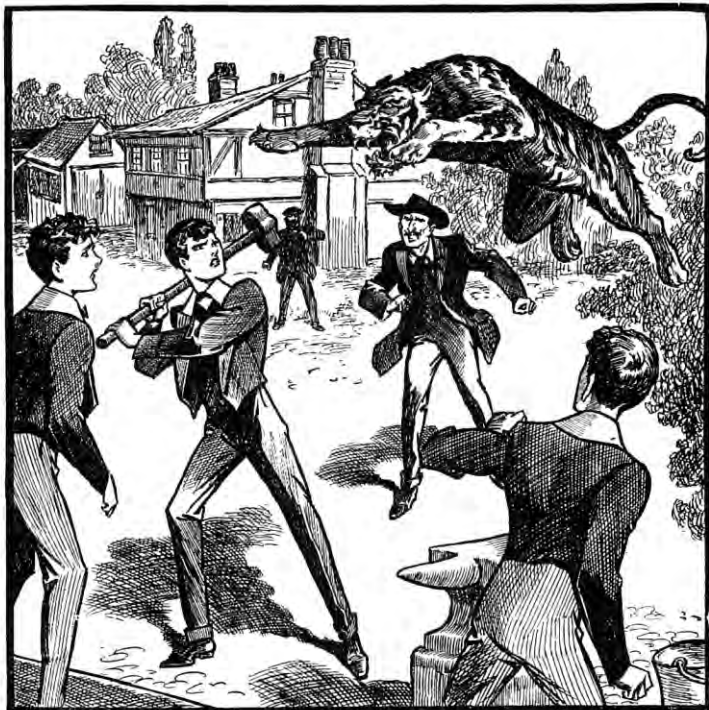
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The tiger gave a low, rumbling growl; the long body undulated—and then came the spring! Wharton did not flinch. The great hammer swung in the air. (See Chapter 15.)

"I can't serve you, Master Smith," said the good dame, in great distress. "Please go back to the House at once. You are in terrible danger while you are out of doors."

"Oh, rats! We're not going back till you've served us!" said the Bouncer. "If we get torn to little bits it will be your fault, Mrs. Minble."

"I can't open the door, Master Smith."

"All right. Then we'll stay here."

And the Bouncer leaned carelessly against the hop window, and put his hands into his pockets. Johnny Bull growled angrily. He had come out with the Bouncer because he would not allow Vernon Smith to outdo him. But he was not naturally footlardy, and he did not like the situation. Vernon Smith seemed to be enjoying it. The distress of Mrs. Minble, and the angry uneasiness of Johnny Bull, seemed to afford some gratification to the Bouncer's peculiar nature.

"Master Smith!" called down Mrs. Minble. "If you don't go back to the House at once I shall report you to Dr. Lockett!"

"But it's away!" said the Bouncer cheerfully. "I don't
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see how you'll do it, as you can't get to the House, and I'm jolly certain the Hood won't come here! I'll risk it!"

"You are in fearful danger—"

"I don't mind!"

Mrs. Minble hesitated. To get the juniors to return to the shelter of the House she would probably have come down and served them; but just then Wingate came on the scene. The captain of Greyfriars appeared in the gloom, striding quickly towards the tuckshop. The Bouncer caught Johnny Bull by the arm.

"Here comes Wingate!" he muttered. "Cover!"

Johnny Bull grunted, but he obeyed. He did not know that Wingate had come specially to look for them, and he did not want to be caught. The Bouncer dragged him into the cover of the big elm that stood before the little shop, and they lay low. Wingate stopped under the window.

"Have you seen two juniors out here, Mrs. Minble?" he called out.

"Yes, Master Wingate. They was here a moment ago, and the good dame—" Master Bull and Master Vernon Smith.

"Thank you! The young rascals!" growled the captain.

of Greyfriars. "Where are they gone— Ah! What was that!"

Growl!

It was a sudden, deep-toned growl from the shadows, and Wingate started, the blood rushing to his heart. He stood quite still for a moment, peering into the darkness round him. The growl was terrifying to hear, and Mrs. Mimble slammed down the window with a cry of terror.

But Wingate did not run. There were few fellows at Greyfriars who would have stood their ground under the circumstances; but Wingate, after the first start, was quite cool. He did not believe that the tiger was here. The animal's growl would probably have been followed by the spring, and the spring had not followed. Wingate set his teeth, and strode into the darkness under the elm.

The next moment he was grasping two juniors by the collars, and shaking them.

"Ow!" gasped Johnny Bull, as his head came into violent contact with Vernon-Smith's.

"Yarrah!" roared the Bounder.

"You young rascals!" exclaimed Wingate. "I've caught you!"

"Ow—ow!"

"Yeh!"

Wingate knocked their heads together with great impartiality. Wingate was very angry, as indeed he had reason to be.

"So you thought you'd scare me, you cheeky young rotters!" he said. "Which of you was it that growled—oh?"

Bliff—bliff—bliff!

Vernon-Smith did not growl now—he howled. Johnny Bull roared. Wingate dragged them from under the elm, and marched them back to the School House, with his grasp on their collars, shaking them as he went. They reached the window of the passage behind the common-room, where Harry Wharton & Co. were waiting.

"Here the conquering hero comes!" grinned Bolsover major.

"Get in!" snapped Wingate.

The two discomfited juniors climbed into the window. Johnny Bull rubbed his head and frowned, Wingate followed them in, and closed the window and fastened it.

"Any more of this, and there will be trouble for all concerned!" he said sharply. "Don't you understand that the Head's orders are for your own good. Suppose the tiger should be in the school grounds? It's as likely as not."

"Oh, rot!" growled the Bounder.

"What!"

"I'm not a fink!" yelled Vernon-Smith, who was hurt and thoroughly angry. "I'm not afraid of a rotten tiger! Stay in if you're funky, and let me alone!"

"That isn't the way to speak to a prefect," said Wingate grimly. "You'll come with me to my study, Vernon-Smith. And his hand dropped on the Bounder's collar again.

When Vernon-Smith came back to the common-room, ten minutes later, he was rubbing his hands painfully, and his face was white with rage.

"The rotter—the rotter!" he growled savagely. "I'll make him smart for this somehow."

"Oh, rot!" said Nugent. "Wingate isn't a rotter, and you know it. You oughtn't to have gone out after the Head's orders, and it was jolly lucky of Wingate to go out after you. Loder finked it."

"Loder isn't the only fink!" snarled the Bounder. "You're all scared out of your wits. I don't suppose the tiger's within a mile of Greyfriars, and very likely he's been caught hours ago, for all we know. I think it's all rot."

"Oh, rats!"

"Did you bring in any grub, Smithy?" asked Billy Bunter.

"No! I didn't, ass! Mrs. Mimble wouldn't serve us!" growled the Bounder. "And if I had, there wouldn't be any for you! Go and eat cake! As for Wingate, I'll make him sit up!"

"Vernon-Smith!"

The Bounder swung sharply round at Wingate's voice. He had not expected the captain of Greyfriars to hear his remark. Vernon-Smith stared blankly at the doorway, but Wingate was not to be seen. The Bounder looked amazed.

"Didn't you hear Wingate, you fellows?" he exclaimed. "I thought—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "It's our giddy ventriloquist!"

Vernon-Smith comprehended. He rushed at Billy Bunter and bumped the fat junior over on the floor, and kicked him with energy.

"You—you fat rotter! I'll teach you to play rotten ventriloquist tricks on me! Take that—and that—and that—"

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"Ow—ow—ow—ow!"

Billy Bunter took them, because he could not help it. He rolled under the table for safety, and squirmed out on the other side, and fled. Vernon-Smith threw himself into a chair, scowling savagely. Skinner joined him. Since Skinner's return to Greyfriars, after a long period of absence, he had chummed up with the Bounder, in whose study he had been placed.

They were kindred spirits.

"It's all right, Smithy," muttered Skinner. The Bounder stared at him.

"What's all right?" he growled.

"I've got a scheme to pay out Loder and the other prefects if you're game to help me. They're all in a blue funk about that giddy tiger, and I've got a scheme to give them the scare of their lives. If you're game—"

"I'm game!" growled the Bounder. "You know that! What's the idea?"

Skinner lowered his voice to a whisper.

"You know the tiger-skin rug in the library?" he murmured.

"Of course I do! What about it?"

"It's a good skin, and the head's complete," whispered Skinner. "With a bit of making up, a chap inside that rug could—"

The Bounder burst into a sudden chuckle.

"Good egg! I'm game! After lights out, of course—"

"Yes. Mum's the word."

"Oh, rather!"

"What are you two bounders whispering about?" demanded Bob Cherry suspiciously.

"Tigers!" said Skinner blandly.

And the two plotters chuckled again; but they did not enlighten Bob Cherry any further. They were still discussing the scheme in whispers when bedtime came.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter is Quite Cool.

THE Remove went up to their dormitory. It was Loder's duty that night to see lights out for the Remove, and Loder marched the juniors up in a very bad temper.

Wingate had spoken some very sharp words to the prefect about Loder's refusing to follow him into the Chow. Loder had had to take it quietly, but he was looking out for a victim for his wrath. The Remove understood his looks, and they were very circumspect just now.

"Turn in, you young rotters!" growled Loder. "I shall be back in five minutes, and if you're not in bed—"

"Oh, really, Loder, I can't get in bed in five minutes, Ow!" roared Bunter. "Leggo my ear! Yow ow!"

"Can you get in bed in five minutes?" asked Loder, compressing the junior's fat ear in a grip like a vice.

"Ow!" wailed Bunter, in anguish. "Ow! Yes! I'll get in bed in two minutes if you like, Loder. Ow! I—I really meant to say that I'd be in bed in a jiffy! Yow! I'll go to bed with my clothes on if you like! Yarrah!"

"Mind you're in when I come back, all of you," growled Loder, as he left the dormitory.

"Nice kind prefect Loder is, isn't he?" remarked Dick Rake, kicking the door shut after Loder. "We shan't have time to look under the beds to see if the tiger's there. We're all safe enough, though. If he's hungry, he'll go for Bunter. Bunter would be a regular ovate for him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You needn't be afraid while I'm here," said Bunter. "I saved Wharton's life—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Harry Wharton.

"Well, you know I did. When you fellows lost your nerve at the menagerie, you'd have been torn to pieces if I hadn't—"

"Begad!" said Lord Mauleverer. "Bunter will go on saying that till he gets to believe in it himself, begad."

"I saved your life, too," said Bunter. "I was the only chap who kept his head. Lucky for you I was with you, that's all. I don't expect any gratitude. I rather wish the tiger would get in here, that's all. You'd see who'd show some nerve."

"I say, what's that under Bunter's bed?" exclaimed Bairsto suddenly. "Did you see something worse, you fellows?"

Bunter, who was sitting on the side of his bed taking his boots off, whipped his feet up on the bed in a twinkling.

"Oh, crump!" he gasped. "Help! Help! Oh help!"

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

Billy Bunter blinked furiously at Bairsto. He understood now that it was a little joke to test his nerve.

"You—you rotters!" he gasped. "I—I—I knew it was a joke, of course. I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows! I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gr-r-r-rowl!

The deep and terrible sound came suddenly in the midst of the laughter. The laughter died away quite suddenly. The sound seemed to proceed from under Bunter's bed. The juniors stopped undressing, and gazed towards the bed with fascinated eyes. The coverlet prevented them from seeing under the bed. But that growl was unmistakable.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Bunter. "Oh, dear! It's the tiger!"

Gr-r-r-rowl!

There was a rush of the juniors to the door. Billy Bunter remained sitting on his bed, with a peculiar gleam in his little round eyes behind his spectacles.

"I say, you fellows, don't run away. Don't leave me!" he yelled.

"Run for it, you fat duffer!" shouted Bob Cherry.

"I'm not going to run! I'm not a funk!"

Ogilvy had dragged the door open. The juniors poured out of the doorway in a crowd, just as Loder came striding in. There was a collision in the doorway, and Loder was whirled back into the passage by the rush of the juniors.

"I say, you fellows, don't run! I'll look after you!" shouted Bunter.

"What does this mean?" shouted Loder. "What—what—"

"The tiger!"

"What!"

"He's in the dorm.; under Bunter's bed!"

"Rot!" snarled Loder. "None of your japes with me! The tiger couldn't get into the House. Go back into the dormitory at once, all of you, and don't be silly cowards."

"But we heard him growl, Loder!"

"Nonsense! Go back at once, or I'll warn you."

Gr-r-r-rowl!

Loder heard it then, and he started.

"Good heavens! It sounds like—"

"You lead the way into the dorm., and we'll follow," said Harry Wharton.

Loder showed no intention of leading the way. Instead of that, he caught the door of the dormitory and pulled it shut with a slam.

"Bunter's in there!" shouted Nugent.

"Open the door, Loder!"

The prefect held the handle fast. His face was white.

"You fools!" he said. "The door must be kept shut. I heard the beast growl!"

"Bue Bunter—"

"He should have got out! If I open the door, the tiger may be amongst us in a second!" said Loder, with chattering teeth.

"We're going to have Bunter out!" shouted Bob Cherry angrily, and he tried to drag Loder's hand from the door-handle. The prefect struck him savagely, and he staggered back.

"Help!" the juniors were shouting. "Help! The tiger!"

There was a scattering of hurried feet and a slamming of doors. Fellows who heard the shout of alarm did not seem inclined to come in the direction of the Remove dormitory. The opposite direction seemed to appeal to them more. Harry Wharton knocked on the door, which Loder was savagely holding shut, and shouted to Bunter:

"Bunter! Billy!"

"It's all right," came back Bunter's voice from the dormitory. "I'm not a funk! I shall quell him with the power of my eye, you know."

Wharton almost staggered in his amazement. Billy Bunter wasn't afraid; and the tiger was under his bed! There was only one possible explanation—the tiger wasn't there, and Bunter knew that he wasn't!

"Oh," gasped Wharton. "What asses we are! I ought to have known. It's a trick!"

"That giddy ventriloquist again!" muttered Bob Cherry, but not loud enough for Loder to hear. It wasn't the "game" to give the Remove ventriloquist away to the prefect. And it was quite enjoyable to see the terror in Loder's face. The thick oaken door of the dormitory was a strong protection against the tiger; the animal, if he had been there, could not possibly have got through the strong oak. And Loder held on the door-handle like grim death. That door was not going to be opened, if Loder could help it, even if he had heard Bunter yelling in the claws of the tiger.

Wingate of the Sixth, and Coker of the Fifth, came dashing along the passage, with pokers in their hands—the first weapons they had been able to catch up in their hurry.

"It's the tiger!" gasped Loder. "He's in the dorm. I heard him growl! I'm keeping the door shut!"

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"That's right, if you're sure he's there!" said Wingate, doubtful. "Nobody in the dorm., I suppose!"

"Bunter's there!" shouted Johnny Bull.

The Removes had all realised by this time that that growl from under the bed was the artistic work of the Greyfriars ventriloquist, and all their fears were gone.

"What!" exclaimed Wingate. "Open the door at once, Loder!"

"Here comes Mr. Prout. He's got his gun!" shouted Nugent.

"Open the door, Loder!"

"I'm not going to have the door opened!" howled Loder. "I can hear him moving inside. As soon as the door's opened he'll spring!"

Wingate did not reply; but he grasped the end of the Sixth and dragged him away from the door. Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, was hurrying upstairs with his gun. Mr. Prout had been a great hunter in his earlier days, before he had settled down as a Form-master, and he kept all kinds of trophies of the chase in his study—which some of the juniors disrespectfully hinted that he had bought second-hand. There were always four or five guns of various kinds hanging on Mr. Prout's walls, and the housemaids dusted his study in a state of terror for fear that they might be loaded. The gun Mr. Prout had in his hands now was certainly loaded, and the juniors scattered out of his path when they saw that he had his finger on the trigger. The Fifth Form master had loaded all his available firearms when he heard of the escaped tiger, and he was simply longing for a chance to get at the tiger. He had confided to Mr. Quelch and the Head that he had shot grizzlies in the Rocky Mountains, and buffaloes on the prairies of Texas, and ponies in the wilds of Mexico, and he was yearning for a chance at bigger game. If the escaped tiger penetrated into the precincts of Greyfriars, Mr. Prout was ready for him. The news that the tiger had been actually discovered in the Remove dormitory brought joy untold to the heart of the gallant huntman.

"Courage!" cried Mr. Prout. "I am here!"

"Needs some courage, too, when he's here, with that giddy blunderbus loaded!" muttered Johnny Bull. "Don't get in front of it, you fellows."

"No fear!"

"The no-fearfulness is terrific!"

"Where is the tiger?" shouted Mr. Prout. "Stand back, my boys! Get behind me—you will be safe there."

"Just what we're doing, sir," said Bob Cherry. "We want to be safe, sir. All of you get behind Mr. Prout, you chaps. It's the only safe place."

Bob Cherry was alluding to Mr. Prout's gun, not to the tiger.

There was a chuckle as the juniors warned to get behind the gun. Wingate had thrown open the door, and rushed in, with Coker of the Fifth at his heels, brandishing his poker.

"Where is he?" roared Coker.

"Good old Coker!" shouted the Removes. "There's pluck for you! Biff him on the napper, Coker! Make it a boundary!"

"Hay, ha, ha!"

"This is no laughing matter!" gasped Mr. Prout. "I am glad you have kept your heads; but it is no laughing matter! Coker, stand back! Wingate, my dear fellow, you are just in front of my rifle. Pups, stand aside!"

Wingate stood aside, with a sudden jump that would have done credit to a kangaroo.

"Now, where is the tiger?" exclaimed Mr. Prout. "Courage, my dear boys! Rely on me."

Someone in the passage began to sing, "Johnny, get your gun!" but Mr. Prout was too excited to notice that. All he wanted was to get at the tiger, and add the skin of the savage animal to his collection. All Greyfriars would be witnesses then to the fact that he had really killed big game, and had not bought the skin second-hand.

Billy Bunter was sitting calmly on his bed. He blinked at the excited master.

"What splendid coolness!" exclaimed Mr. Prout. "Bunter, I am proud of you! You set an example to your Form-fellows!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"I'm not afraid, sir," said Bunter cheerfully. "I hope I shall always keep my head in times of danger, sir."

"I can't see the tiger!" growled Wingate suspiciously. He did not notice that Bunter's coolness so much as Mr. Prout did.

He was more inclined to suspect a joke.

"It's under Bunter's bed!" gasped Loder, from the passage. "I tell you I heard him growl, and I saw his claws under the coverlet. Take care!"

"Must have second sight, if you saw the claws!" murmured Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wingate, raise the coverlet!" said Mr. Prout, levelling his rifle. "I will fire as soon as I see him. You may depend upon me; I am a dead shot. When I was in the Rockies, in '86—"

"Mind you don't get leg before wicket, Wingate!" yelled a voice from the passage.

"Keep still, Bunter!" said Mr. Prout. "Unless my rifle should jump, the ball is not likely to pass over the bed—"

"What?" yelled Bunter.

"Keep still!"

"Oh, crimals!"

Bunter did not mind if Mr. Prout fired under the bed, but at the idea of the rifle jumping, and the bullet flying high, Bunter turned cold all over. He scrambled off the bed, in spite of Mr. Prout's warning, and bolted for the door. Like the rest of the juniors, he felt that he would be safer behind Mr. Prout.

Wingate raised the coverlet of the bed. He did not believe for a moment that the tiger was there, but there was a chance of it, and he was very wary. Mr. Prout held his finger on the trigger, falling upon his knees, to take better aim under the bed.

"Don't fire too quick, sir," said Wingate. "I think it's very likely some young ass joking, and you don't want to kill him!"

"Oh," said Mr. Prout, rather taken aback.

Wingate looked under the bed. The space was quite empty; there was no sign of a tiger, or a practical joker, either.

"Can you see him?" asked Mr. Prout anxiously.

"Nothing there!" said Wingate.

"I tell you, I heard him growl!" yelled Loder. "He may have crawled under one of the other beds."

"Oh, rats!" growled Wingate.

"Better look!" said Mr. Prout. "Look under all the beds in turn, Wingate, and I will be just behind you with the gun—"

"I'd rather you were just beside me, if you don't mind, sir," said Wingate. "That gun might go off!"

"My dear Wingate, rely upon me; I am a dead shot—"

But the captain of Greyfriars kept a wary eye on Mr. Prout's gun as he looked under all the beds in turn. There was nothing to be seen of the tiger. It was evident that it had been a false alarm, and that the tiger was not there.

Mr. Prout was very disappointed. He had counted upon that skin for his collection. And he was inclined to be angry with Loder for having brought him to the dormitory upon a wild-goose chase. He frowned at the prefect as he went out into the passage, his gun on his shoulder.

"I am afraid, Loder, that you have caused a great deal of trouble by being afraid of nothing!" he said severely. "There is certainly not a tiger in the dormitory, and you have allowed your imagination to deceive you. You should be more careful, Loder."

And Mr. Prout walked away, leaving the prefect gritting his teeth. Coker of the Fifth also had something to say to Loder as he went.

"Yeh! Funk!" said Coker elegantly, and he marched off with his poker.

Wingate did not speak as he departed, but his glance was enough. The Removites turned in, grinning, and Loder scowled at them blackly.

"One of you young scoundrels was playing a trick!" he said between his teeth. "Some-one here imitated an animal growling."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" shouted Loder. "I will find out who it was, and thrash him within an inch of his life! I think it was probably you, Skinner."

"That it wasn't!" said Skinner. "I was as scared as you were, Loder."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What? Take that!" exclaimed the exasperated prefect, and he cuffed Skinner, with a force that sent him staggering over his bed.

Then the angry prefect put the lights out and retired, and the Removites were left to themselves. There was a loud



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laugh in the dormitory, and Loder opened the door again for a moment, and scowled into the shadowy room.

"If I hear any row here, I shall come back with a cane!" he growled. "I warn you to look out!" And then Loder slammed the door and retired.

Skinner grunted as he settled down in bed. The prefect had hurt him, and Skinner did not like being hurt.

"I suppose it was you, Bunter, who played that trick?" Bob Cherry exclaimed.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"It was Bunter's rotten ventriloquism!" growled Johnny Bull. "I'm getting fed-up with it."

Billy Bunter chuckled.

"What a set of guys you looked, scampering for the door!" he said agreeably. "I was the only one who had any nerve."

"Because you knew it was a trick, you fat bouncer! Shut up!"

"Wake me up if you hear the tiger again," clucked Bunter, and he settled down to sleep.

The talk of the juniors ran upon the subject of the escaped tiger, and it was long before they slept. The thought that the savage animal might be prowling about the school made them strangely uneasy, safe as they were within the strong stone walls of Greyfriars.

Eleven o'clock had tolled out from the tower when Vernon Smith stepped out of bed, and began to dress himself.

"Time, Skinny!" he said.

"What ho!" said Skinner.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry. "You chaps going out tiger-hunting?"

"No; we're going prefect-hunting!" grinned Vernon Smith. "The prefects will be in their room, most likely, as there's a prefects' meeting to-night. Some of them will be there, anyway, and they're going to get a scare."

"What's the little game?"

"Skinner's going to play tiger, with the rug from the library."

There was a chuckle.

"Oh, my hat!" said Bulstrode. "What a ripping idea! I'm on in this scene." And he turned out of bed, and a good many other Removies followed his example.

"Mum's the word!" said the Bouncer. "And keep it dark. They would smell a rat if they knew that you were out of bed. Come on, Skinner."

And the Bouncer and his confederate cautiously left the dormitory.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

An Alarm in the Night.

"I—I SAY, what's that!"

It was Loder who uttered the sudden exclamation. Loder was in the prefects' room, an apartment on the ground floor sacred to the use of prefects. There were six other seniors in the room; it had been one of the periodical meetings of the prefects, and it was just over. The seniors were chatting carelessly, before breaking up, when Loder's startled voice broke in upon their conversation.

"What's what?" yawned Courtney.

"Didn't you hear something in the passage?"

"I didn't," said Courtney, with another yawn. "Loder, old man, you seem to be in a regular state of nerves lately. One would think it rained lions and tigers!"

"I heard something in the passage. Listen!"

The attention of all the seniors was directed towards the door now. In the dead silence, a sound was heard as of a body brushing against the outside of the door, and then there was a low, rumbling growl.

"My hat!" ejaculated Walker.

Wingate rose to his feet with a frown.

"It's some trick of those blessed juniors!" he exclaimed. "I'm getting fed-up. I'll larrip the young rascal!"

The Greyfriars captain crossed to the door.

"Careful how you open it, Wingate!" exclaimed Loder.

"It might be—"

"Oh, rot!"

Wingate opened the door, and looked out into the passage. The gas had been turned low there, and the passage was dim.

It was light enough for any object in the passage to be seen.

Gr-r-r-r-rowl!

Wingate started. He gave one look at the fearful object that met his eyes, and then leaped back into the room and slammed the door. The prefects were all on their feet now.

"What is it?"

"What did you see, Wingate?"

Wingate breathed hard.

"The tiger!" he panted.

"What?"

"The tiger—in the House!"

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"It—it can't be!" gasped Courtney. "How could it get in—"

"I tell you I saw it," said Wingate breathlessly. "Those juniors had a window open this evening on the ground floor. It might have got in then. I saw it in the passage. Listen."

Gr-r-r-r-rowl!

The terrific sound came audibly from the passage, and there was a scratching at the door. Valence hurriedly turned the key in the lock.

The prefects stood in a group, with white faces, their eyes upon the door. There was a sound again of a body brushing against the door, and then another growl, and then a sound as of the animal retreating down the passage.

"This—is awful!" muttered Loder, licking his dry lips. "It may have been the tiger I heard after all, in the dorm. What are we going to do?"

"Keep the door shut," said Walker.

"We can't stay here," said Wingate decisively. "If the tiger's loose in the House, we've got to warn the others. Proust is in his study, and so is Quelch, and they may come out any moment, and walk into the beast. Then—"

"Horrible!" muttered Walker. "Those show people ought to be prosecuted for being so careless. It's infamous!"

"Don't open the door!" shrieked Loder, as Wingate put his hand on the lock. "He may be crouching outside all ready to spring."

Wingate's face was pale, but his manner was determined. He turned back the key.

"I think he's gone," he said. "It sounded like it. Anyway, I'm not going to leave the others unwatched."

"Keep that door shut!" yelled Walker.

"Don't be a coward!"

Wingate opened the door. He cast a hasty glance into the passage. It was empty.

"He's not here now," he said, in a low voice.

"Quite sure you saw him?" asked Walker dubiously.

"Yes," growled Wingate. "I'm not in a state of nerves like Loder. I'm going to cut away to Quelch's study and warn him. You fellows hold the door, ready to let me in if I have to get back in a hurry."

And Wingate stepped back into the passage, his heart beating fast, but his nerves steady. Loder pushed the door shut. Courtney promptly pulled it open again.

"We're not going to shut Wingate out!" he said. "He may have to bolt back here in a hurry."

"The tiger!" panted Loder.

"I'm going to hold the door open."

"You fool!" yelled Loder. "Shut the door. I'm going to let him in!"

Courtney took out the key, and put it into his pocket.

"You're not," he said grimly. "I'll shut it fast enough if the tiger comes along; but we're not going to leave old Wingate in the lurch."

Courtney held the door ajar, and peered out into the dusky passage. Wingate had reached the end of the passage, peering about him, and listening. The passage gave upon the wide corridor where the masters' studies were situated. Wingate started as he heard a rustle; but the rustle was only made by Mr. Quelch's gown. The Remove-master was coming along the corridor. He started in surprise at Wingate's pale face.

"What on earth is the matter, Wingate?" he exclaimed.

"The tiger, sir!"

Mr. Quelch frowned.

"Another trick of the juniors, I suppose?"

"No, sir! I saw him!"

"You saw him?" said Mr. Quelch. "That alters the case."

You saw the tiger in the House, Wingate? You are sure?"

"He was in this passage five minutes ago, sir. I was coming to warn you and Mr. Proust."

"Good heavens!"

Wingate suddenly clutched the Form-master's arm.

"Look, sir!" he breathed.

Round the corner from a side passage a fearful object came into view. Master and prefect stared at the grim, terrible head, the bristling whiskers, and then, with a simultaneous gasp, they fled. They dashed down the passage to the prefects' room, and hurried themselves on the door. Loder had heard them coming, and he flung himself against the door, and jammed it shut, keeping his foot against it. Mr. Quelch beat upon the door with his hands.

"Let us in! Let us in!" he shrieked.

If Gerald Loder had had his way, the door would not have been opened. But Courtney dragged him back by main force, and tore open the door. Mr. Quelch and Wingate staggered into the room.

"Quick—close the door!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

The door was slammed. Courtney jammed the key into the lock, and turned it. Mr. Quelch sank gasping into a chair.

"You—you saw it, sir?" stammered Walker.

"Yes. It was a fearful sight. One moment more, and we should have been in its jaws!" Mr. Quelch gasped. "Good heavens! What is to be done? Suppose Mr. Prout should come out of his study—"

Grew-w-e-l!

The horrible sound was just outside the door. It made the seniors and the Form-master shiver. The strong oaken door was between them and the enemy. But—

"We have no weapon to attack such a fearful animal!" Mr. Quelch stammered. "This is a—most dreadful situation. What—what is to be done?"

"Mr. Prout has a gun, sir!" said Wingate.

"But—how is word to be taken to Mr. Prout? That dreadful animal will tear in pieces anyone who ventures out of this room. He knows we are here, and doubtless he is hungry! And the Remove-master shivered.

"There's the window, sir," said Wingate quietly. "I could get out, and get round to Mr. Prout's window, and attract his attention."

"Perhaps—perhaps that would be best, Wingate."

"I'll do it, sir. The tiger is in the House now; and I shall be safe enough in the Close. I'll chance it, anyway."

And Wingate opened the window. Outside, in the Close, all was still and silent under the glimmering stars. Wingate dropped lightly to the ground, and the other seniors and the Form-master waited in deepest anxiety for the result.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Hunted Down!

MR. PROUT was in his study.

Mr. Prout was annoyed.

The portly, somewhat bald, and very important master of the Fifth was seated in an armchair, with his spectacles on his nose, cleaning a rifle. There were two or three more guns on the table, and a case of cartridges. Over the door of Mr. Prout's study was the stuffed head of a buffalo, shot by Mr. Prout's own hand. Over his bookcase were the antlers of a stag, another victim of Mr. Prout's prowess. In a quiet neighbourhood like Froudsdale there was no opportunity of bag game shooting. Mr. Prout disclaimed to shoot rabbits—it would have been a descent from the sublime to the ridiculous. But the huntsman's soul was still alive in Mr. Prout's sportsy body. Mr. Prout would have given a year's salary for a chance at the escaped tiger. He was very annoyed that the tiger had not succeeded in getting into the school after all. What glory, great and undying, it would have been for the master of the Fifth to lay that terrible beast in his gore, and to preserve the skin stuffed in his study! Instead of his old stories of hunting in the Wild West—when I was in the Rockies in '86—he would be able to say "Yes, sir, it was a tiger that had escaped from some travelling menagerie. Fortunately I was

on the spot! Afraid? Not a bit, sir—in fact, I never thought of the danger till afterwards! I gave him my Martini, sir, right between the eyes, and he gave one gasp, and rolled over—simple as shooting a rabbit, sir."

Mr. Prout had it all pictured in his mind. He had even made up a description of the scene to be related afterwards to averted and admiring friends—and now the tiger hadn't come after all! It was really too bad, and utterly inconsiderate on the part of the tiger.

It is not often that a Form-master in a school in a quiet English county has an opportunity for displaying heroic courage. Mr. Prout felt that he had been unjustly deprived of his opportunity. But he was keeping his firearms ready, with a lingering hope that the animal might yet happen along. He was thinking it over, as he cleaned his rifle, when he heard a tap at his window.

Mr. Prout jumped up, and the rifle fell to the floor. The Form-master was startled. His study was on the ground floor; but it was absurd to suppose that anybody could be in the Close at that hour, tapping on his window. It was evidently the tiger, trying to obtain an entrance into the House.

"At last!" muttered Mr. Prout, hastily ramming in a cartridge. "At last! I shall show them that my hand has not lost its cunning! Ahem!"

Tap, tap!

It really sounded like tapping at the window; but, of course, it could not be anything of the sort. Somehow or other the tiger was doing it. Mr. Prout took up his loaded rifle, and cautiously approached the window, and pulled the curtain back.

"I will throw up the window suddenly, and let him have it right in the head!" murmured Mr. Prout, with subdued glee. "I will—Why, what—what—"

"Open the window, Mr. Prout—quick!"

"Dear me! It's Wingate!"

Mr. Prout laid down his rifle, and opened the window. The captain of Greyfriars clambered hastily in. Mr. Prout frowned at him.

"What is the meaning of this most extraordinary conduct, Wingate?" he exclaimed. "I am very much surprised. What—"

"The tiger, sir!"

Mr. Prout jumped, and clutched up the rifle again. "The tiger! Good! Where is he? After you!" The muzzle of Mr. Prout's rifle bore upon the open window, ready for the terrible enemy.

"In the House, sir," said Wingate breathlessly. "He's in the passage outside the door of the prefects' room. I came round by the window to warn you."

"You have seen him?"

"Yes."

"Good! Quite right to come to me, Wingate—quite right. Don't be afraid."

"I'm not afraid," growled Wingate.

"No, no, certainly not. But rely upon me. I will run him down, and give him my Martini right between the eyes. My favourite spot for shooting big game, Wingate. When I was in the Rockies in '86—"

"Mr. Quelch is in the prefects' room, sir, and the prefects are there—shut up, with the tiger outside. Something will have to be done."

"Certainly, Wingate, and at once. Can you use a rifle?"

"Yes, sir."

"Take that Lee Metford, then," said Mr. Prout, indicating a rifle on the table. "It is a magazine rifle, and is fully loaded. Follow me. If I do not kill him with the first shot, you can aid me; but do not fire in too great a hurry, as I am anxious not to spoil the skin."

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Wingate. That Mr. Prout should think about such a matter as spoiling the tiger's skin, at such a moment, seemed amazing to him. But he did not understand the nature of the born huntsman. Mr. Prout did not feel an atom of fear. He was only too glad that the tiger had come, and only anxious to get to close quarters with the enemy.

The Fifth-Form master opened his study door, and peered into the corridor. From the side-passage leading to the prefects' room came a deep, low growl.

"He's there, sir!" muttered Wingate.

"Good! I shall have him cornered," said Mr. Prout, with great satisfaction. "There is no exit from that passage excepting through the prefects' room, and I suppose the door is closed."

"Yes, rather, sir."

"Very good! Follow me, Wingate! Pray act as my bearer. When I was in the Rockies in '86, I employed a Punjee Indian as a gun-bearer. He was a—"

Growl-growl!



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"Follow me!" said Mr. Prout, breaking off his reminiscences, and coming back to the business in hand. "If I do not kill him with the first shot, hand me the other rifle, and we will riddle him with bullets, if necessary. But if possible I should prefer not to spoil the skin. Follow me!"

And holding his famous Martini in readiness, Mr. Prout marched boldly down the corridor, and came to the corner of the passage leading to the prefects' room. In the dim light of the passage the terrible animal could be seen, brushing against the door of the prefects' room, and growling. The fearful head and jaws turned towards Mr. Prout, but the Fifth Form master did not falter.

"Ah! I have him now!" cried Mr. Prout. "I shall fire as he springs, Wingate. I—"

"Ow! My hat! Don't fire! Yow!"

Mr. Prout almost fell down.

If the tiger had growled, yelled, roared, or sprung, Mr. Prout would not have been surprised. Those proceedings would have been natural enough on the part of a tiger. But for a tiger to call out to him, not to fire was so astounding that Mr. Prout staggered back, quite unnerved and astounded.

"G-g-good heavens!" he gasped. "What—what—"

"Don't shoot! Ow! It's only a joke!" yelled the tiger.

"Ow! Don't shoot! Help, help! Murder! Ow!"

"Good heavens! Am I dreaming?"

"Help! Ow! Don't shoot! I ain't a tiger! I'm Skinner! Ow!"

Wingate uttered an exclamation.

"It's a junior—in a tiger-skin!" he cried.

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Prout.

The Fifth Form master rushed along the passage. The tiger growled at his feet. On a closer inspection, it could be seen that it was indeed a junior, almost completely encased in the big tiger-skin. Mr. Prout was purple with rage. Again his big game hand escaped him, and he had been deceived of his prey. Wingate was angrier than the Form-master. He kicked the tiger savagely, at the risk of spoiling the skin.

"Ow—ow!" wailed Skinner, who was nearly frantic with terror at the sight of the rifle. "Ow! Help! Murder! Don't let him shoot me! Ow! I ain't a tiger! Yow!"

"Skinner!" gasped Mr. Prout.

"Yes, sir! Don't shoot! Ow!"

Skinner's yells were heard in the prefects' room. Mr. Quelch opened the door, and looked out with a very red face, the prefects behind him.

"What is this?" demanded Mr. Quelch, staring at the growling tiger. Skinner was vainly striving to extricate himself from the skin. The Bouncer had fastened him up in it very securely.

"This, sir," said Mr. Prout, with majestic wrath—"this, sir, is best of your Fogg. He has been playing a trick, sir, and very nearly caused a fatality! Another moment, and I should have shot him, sir—shot him dead."

"Ow!" wailed Skinner.

"Skinner!" thundered the Remove master, as Mr. Prout stalked away in great wrath. "Skinner! You—you wicked young rascal! How dare you, sir? How dare you?"

"I—I—I didn't mean to frighten you, sir!" stammered the unfortunate Skinner.

"What! How dare you say that I was frightened?" thundered the Form-master, his red face becoming quite crimson.

"Ow! I—I—I didn't mean that either, sir! I—I—It was only a joke."

"Take that skin off at once."

"I—I can't!" wailed Skinner. "Smithy fastened me up too tight, I—"

"Ah! Vernon-Smith was your accomplice in this—this outrage!" said Mr. Quelch angrily. Wingate, may I trouble you to find Vernon-Smith, and bring him here."

"Certainly, sir," said Wingate, very willingly.

"Help Skinner off with those things," said Mr. Quelch, to the other prefects. "The young rascal appears to have taken the Head's tiger-skin rug from the library. He has probably damaged it. He shall be punished very severely for this."

The Sixth-formers helped Skinner out of the skin—not too gently. The humorist of the Remove staggered to his feet. He was not feeling very humorous now.

"Follow me to my study, Skinner," said Mr. Quelch.

"It—it was only a joke, sir," stammered Skinner.

"I shall teach you not play jokes of that kind, Skinner. Follow me!"

Wingate had gone to the Remove dormitory. There was a sound of hurried scampering into bed as he reached it. Wingate smiled grimly and opened the door.

"Vernon-Smith!" he rapped out, as he switched on the light.

There was no reply. The Bouncer was in bed—he had been there about three seconds, but he seemed to be fast asleep. Wingate grasped him by the shoulder, and jerked him out of bed with a bump to the floor.

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ONE
PENNY.

"Oh!" roared the Bouncer.

"You're wanted," said Wingate grimly, and he marched the Bouncer downstairs.

There was a roar of laughter in the Remove dormitory. A good many of the juniors had witnessed the proceedings of the tiger and the tiger-hunters over the banisters.

"Poor old Smithy," murmured Bob Cherry. "He oughtn't to have left Skinner in the lurch; and Skinner's given him away. My hat! I don't think Skinner would have played that little joke if he'd thought about Prout's gun."

Ha, ha, ha!

It was half minutes later when Skinner and Vernon-Smith came back into the dormitory. To all inquiries as to how they had fared, they replied only with groans. The Remove chucked themselves to sleep; but the two jaspers remained awake quite a long time, sore and sorry, and wishing sincerely that they had not been quite so funny.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Giddy Goats!

THE next day the Greyfriars fellows chafed within close bounds. There were few of them who would not have preferred to risk the tiger. They waited eagerly for news that the escaped animal had been captured and killed, but the news did not come. Mr. Muller and Signor Leopardi, and a crowd of police and gamekeepers, were hunting the tiger in the woods and thickets, but they had not found him yet. He had killed a sheep in a field a mile away from Greyfriars, and since then nothing had been heard of him.

"I'm getting fed-up with school bounds," Bob Cherry remarked that evening. "I've got to go down to the village to see about my new hat. I'm going to-morrow, tiger or no tiger."

"The beast may have wandered fifty miles away by this time," said Frank Nugent. "He mayn't be found for weeks. It's absurd being shut up within gates all that time."

"I hear that the Highcliffe fellows are gated," said Bolsover major, "and the kids aren't going to the County School in Courthill, except those who live in the town."

"Oh, it's not I! I'm going to chase it!"

And the next day, after lessons, Bob Cherry determined to chance it. The chums intended to chance it along with him. Nothing had been heard of the tiger; and the rigidity of the new rules had been somewhat relaxed. As Bob Cherry said, if the tradesmen could come to the school, and the boys could go to the village—it wasn't any more risky.

But the Famous Five did not leave by way of the gate, as a prefect would probably have stopped them. They selected a point in the school wall, under cover of the elms. They were about to scale it, when there was a sound of hurried footsteps behind them.

"Look out!" murmured Johnny Bull. "Some blessed prefect."

And the juniors all looked as innocent as they could, as though the idea of climbing the school wall had never entered into their heads.

But it was not a prefect—it was Billy Bunter. The fat junior came up, panting.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, buzz off," said Bob Cherry. "We're going out. You can't come; Wharton doesn't want to have to carry you home again."

"Oh, really, I don't believe the tiger's anywhere near the school; and I'm sure there's no danger," said Bunter. "I'm coming! I heard Bull say he was going to call in at Uncle Clegg's—"

"I don't want you to call in with me," growled Johnny Bull.

"I don't mind a bit, Bull. I shall be pleased."

"The pleasure will be all yours, then."

"Besides, you'll be safer with me, if we should meet the tiger," said Billy Bunter, apparently not hearing Bull's remark. "You know how cool I am in moments of danger."

"I know how cool you are at other times," said Wharton. "Ah, well! I should not lose my head, as you fellows did in the dorm the other night, and I might have an opportunity of saving your life again. I should quell the tiger with the power of my eye."

"Oh, rats! Buzz off!"

The juniors climbed the wall lightly, one by one. Billy Bunter fastened a firm grip upon Nugent's ankles, and held to them. Nugent, holding to the top of the wall, glared down at him.

"You fat dunder! Leggo!"

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"Will you give me a bunk up?" asked Bunter.

"No, I won't."

"Then I'm going to hold on."

"You—you fat rotter!" roared Nugent. "Let go, I tell you!"

"You'll have a prefect here if you yell like that, Nugent," Nugent wriggled and kicked. But Bunter's weight was on his legs, and Bunter was a great weight. Nugent could not get his feet free, and he could not drop down from the wall, for as Bunter had hold of his ankles, he would have fallen on his head. The other fellows were in the road waiting for him.

"Buck up, Franky," said Bob. "You don't want Wingate or Loder to come and catch you hanging on the wall."

Nugent breathed hard with fury.

"There's a fat porpoise hanging on to my legs!" he gasped.

"Give me a bunk up, then," said Bunter.

"Leggo! I can't hold on with your weight on me!" panted Nugent. "I shall come down with a bump and break my neck."

"Sorry," said Bunter.

"Will you let go?"

"Not unless you help me out."

"You—you—you fat villain! I'll help you!"

"Honour bright!"

"Yes, fathomed!"

"Good!" said Bunter. "It's a go!" And he released Nugent's ankles, only just in time, for his weight was telling, and Frank could not have held on much longer. Frank Nugent dropped to the ground, and glared at the fat junior, and clenched his fists. He gave Billy Bunter a dab on his fat little nose that sent him staggering away the wall.

"Ow!" roared Bunter. "You beast! You promised—I promised to help you out, but I didn't say I wouldn't pinch your nose!" panted Nugent. "Now, then, beast, up you go!"

"Ow!"

"If you're not ready I'll leave you here."

"Yow! I'm ready! Chuck my umbrella over the wall first. I'm not going without that."

Nugent tossed the umbrella over the wall. There was a sudden yelp from the road, and Johnny Bull's voice came in a roar.

"What silly ass chucked that umbrella on my napper?"

"Ha, ha, ha—I mean, sorry! Up you go, Bunter!"

The Owl of the Remove was hoisted up the wall, and he rolled over, and plumped down into the road. Nugent followed him quickly. Bunter gathered up his umbrella, and Johnny Bull rubbed his head where the gump had smitten him.

"Buck up!" said Harry. "The sooner we're out of sight the better. It means fines or a licking for getting out of bounds."

The juniors hurried down the road towards Friarlands. Billy Bunter puffed along with his umbrella under his arm, with difficulty keeping pace with the juniors. It was a glorious afternoon in early summer, and the Removes enjoyed the brisk walk down the green leafy lane. As for the tiger, they had forgotten him already. Even Billy Bunter was not thinking of the possibility of danger lurking behind the hedges. His thoughts were bent upon the village tuck-shop.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly. "There's something striped behind that hedge!"

Bunter jumped.

"G-g-good heavens!" he stuttered. "I—I—"

"Run!" yelled Nugent.

Bunter ran. But he ran only a dozen paces, and then, realising that the others were not running, he came pounding angrily back. The juniors were roaring.

"You—you rotters!" gasped Bunter. "There isn't anything striped behind the hedge."

"There is!" said Bob Cherry.

"What is it, then?"

"A labourer's shirt, hung out to dry!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you beast!" said Billy Bunter. "Not that I was frightened. I thought I'd pretend to run to make you fellows think you'd taken me in. I should quell the tiger with the power of my eye if we met him."

Nugent winked at his comrades, unseen by the short-sighted Owl of the Remove.

"The power of the human eye is a wonderful thing," he remarked. "And as Bunter has four eyes, he would have a force of four-donkey power."

"Oh, really, Nugent?"

"I should like to see you at work, Bunter, quelling the savage beast with the power of your eye," said Nugent solemnly. "You could try on some nice quiet animal like a bull."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
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"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
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"Or a billy-goat," said Nugent. "Old Benson's goats are in the field there, and they look nice quiet animals, don't they? See if you can quell them with the power of your eye; they're such timid little dears that it will be quite safe to experiment on them."

Bunter blinked over the fence at the goats. Certainly they looked quiet and harmless enough. One tough old billy-goat looked at Bunter out of the corner of his eye, with a wicked gleam in it; but the Owl of the Remove did not see that. It seemed a safe enough experiment to make; and Bunter was very fond of getting into the limelight. It was not often that the leading spirits of the Remove were willing to stand by and look on to see what Bunter could do. The fat junior puffed with importance at once.

"You watch me," he said.

"We're watching!" said Bob Cherry solemnly. "Go it!"

Billy Bunter clambered over the fence. A country youth who was sitting on the fence, looking after the goats, called out to him.

"Hi, mister, you ain't allowed in this field!"

"Then you go and eat coke!" said Bunter.

"Then goats don't like being meddled with, mister," said the countryman.

"I know how to handle 'em," said Bunter.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Handling isn't allowed in this game, any more than in soccer!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You've got to do it with the power of your eye, or of your specs, whichever you like," said Nugent.

"You watch me!" said Bunter loftily.

"I'll take care of your umbrella," said Johnny Bull.

Bunter shook his head.

"I'd rather keep it, thanks." Billy Bunter had some slight doubt of the power of his eye in soothing the savage beast, and thought that the umbrella might be useful as a weapon in an emergency. "You watch me, you fellows."

"Go it!"

"On the ball!"

Billy Bunter was inside the fence now. He advanced upon the goats. The tough-looking old billy-goat, the leader of the flock, eyed him out of the corner of his eye, and lowered his head a little. Probably he was too surprised at the temerity of the stranger to act for a moment. But he woke into sudden life as Bunter halted before him, and fixed his eyes upon him, and made a commanding gesture.

According to programme, the billy-goat should have cowered from Bunter's powerful eye, and backed away in timid retreat.

But he didn't.

He launched himself forward at Bunter with the sublimeness of a bullet and the force of a battering ram!

"Oh!" yelled Bunter.

The lowered head of the goat smote him and he rolled in the grass. There was a yell from the juniors at the fence.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Keep your eye on him, Bunter!"

"Ow! Ow! Rescue! Yow! Yaw! Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter struggled into a sitting posture, and groined wildly for his spectacles, to set them straight on his fat little nose. Another goat charged him in the back, and he rolled over again, and then a third billy-goat leaped into him. Bunter leaped up with a yell. The tough old billy was ready for him. He made a charge at Bunter, and the fat junior grabbed wildly at his horns and gripped them, and held on for dear life. The juniors yelled encouragement.

"Go it, Billy! Go it, goat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. "Groah! If I get out of this alive—ow!—take that, you beast!—you!—rescue—help—fire—murder! Ow!"

Bunter clutched his umbrella in his right hand, and lashed at the goat, still clutching hold of the horns. Billy the Goat dragged him about furiously, but Bunter would not let go. But as he struggled with Billy the Goat, another goat dashed at him from behind, and he was charged over. There was a wild yell from Bunter, and Billy Bunter and Billy the Goat seemed to be mixed up in an inextricable bundle. Then the juniors swarmed over the fence to the rescue, and Bunter was dragged away, and heaved over the fence, and dumped down in the road, crimson and breathless.

Towards the fence, the billy-goat pranced to and fro, evidently anxious for another chance at Bunter. The countryman, sitting on the fence, had not moved, and he was yelling with laughter. Billy Bunter was yelling, too, but not with laughter.

"Ow, ow, ow! Groah! I'm hurt! Yaw! I'm dying!"

"You're not dead yet," said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "But the next time you test the power of your eye, Bunter, you'd better do it with a white rabbit, not a billy-goat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter staggered to his feet. He was very ruffled, and very breathless, and his spectacles had fallen inside his collar, and his umbrella remained in the grass, where the goats were butting at it.

Bunter groped for his spectacles, and jammed them on his nose, and blinked angrily at the grinning juniors.

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at!" he growled. "Where's my umbrella?"

"You left it behind."

"One of you fellows, go and fetch it for me!"

"No fear!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Can't depend on the power of our eye to keep the billy-goats in order! But we'll watch you get it!"

"Look here, I'm not going to leave that umbrella there," roared Bunter. "That umbrella cost three-and-six. Then you were done!" grinned Nugent. "Anyway, it won't be worth threepence-halfpenny by the time the goats have finished with it! I'll tell you what—go and fetch the umbrella, and I'll give you three-and-six for it!"

Billy Bunter blinked through the fence at the goats, but did not think of earning that three-and-sixpence. Three hundred pounds would probably not have tempted him over that fence again. Billy, the goat, was waiting for him, his eyes wickedly there.

"Look here, I'm not going without that umbrella!" snarled Bunter.

"Good egg!" said Bob Cherry heartily. "Come on, you fellows; Bunter's staying here!"

And the juniors grinned, and started down the road. But Bunter did not stay there. He grunted, and rolled after the juniors.

The umbrella was left to its fate, and by the time the goats had finished butting it, it was certainly not worth the trouble of salvage.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

For Life or Death!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Something's on here!" Bob Cherry remarked, as the juniors came into the old High Street of Friarale.

Something evidently was.

Most of the shops had their doors closed, and some of them had their shutters up.

Outside the Cross Keys was a group of men, among whom the juniors recognised Signor Leopardi, the tiger-tamer of Muller's Menagerie, and Herr Hackenback, and two gamekeepers of Sir Hilton Popper's estate. It was evidently a party in search of the escaped tiger, and their search had brought them to Friarale.

Several of the villagers had joined them, armed with pitchforks and axes; and the village blacksmith was in the group.

The juniors knew the latter, and they stopped to speak to him.

"Looking for the tiger?" asked Harry.

"Yes, Master Wharton. He's been seen here," said the blacksmith. "Mr. Penfold saw him from his back window, sneaking along the towing-path, and he's about the village somewhere. Everybody's gone indoors, and you had better do the same. You can get into my place, if you like."

"Thanks!" said Harry. "I suppose you don't want any help?"

The blacksmith grinned.

"I'm afraid Dr. Locke wouldn't let you join in searching for the tiger, Master Wharton. You'd better get into shelter!"

"Oh, rats," murmured Bob Cherry. "We're not going to skulk indoors. Where are you going, Bunter?" "We're going into the forge!" stammered Bunter. "I—I'm awfully interested in—in blacksmithing and things, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha! This is where the power of your eye comes in!" said Bob Cherry, grasping the fat junior by the shoulder. "You stay here!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—I—"

"We want you to protect us, Bunter!" grinned Johnny Bull. "You promised to protect us if the tiger came along, you know!"

"Yes; b-but I—I think I'll fetch the blacksmith's hammer! It would be useful in case we meet the tiger—"

Bunter didn't think you could lift the hammer, Master Bunter," said the blacksmith, with a grin. "You're welcome to try."

"Yes; I—I will!" said Bunter, wrenching himself away from Bob Cherry. "I'm going to look for the hammer, Bob Cherry, you beast—"

"The hammer's outside, on the anvil!" roared Bob.

Billy Bunter did not heed. He dashed into the forge, and disappeared. Perhaps his experience with the goats had discouraged him. At all events, he did not seem at all keen to try the power of his eye on the tiger.

Harry Wharton & Co. paused outside the forge. The High Street Library, No. 278.

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ONE
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search-party had gone off towards the river, looking for traces of the tiger. The gamekeepers were carrying guns. The whole village was in a state of terror. Doors and windows were shut and barred. Since his escape from the menagerie, the tiger had done no damage beyond killing a sheep to satisfy his hunger. But he was quite as likely to attack human beings, if he came upon them.

"We were rather asses to come out, after all!" Nugent remarked. "I thought the beastly tiger had cleared out for good. I don't want another walk home like we had the other evening."

"No fear!" said Harry Wharton, with a shiver, as he remembered his experiences on that occasion. "And there's Bunter, too! We'd better stay here for a bit, but—"

"There'll be a row if we miss call-over!" growled Johnny Bull. "They'll know that we're out of bounds."

Bob Cherry gave a dismal groan.

"It will mean a licking as well as gating," he said. "What rotten ill-luck for nice boys like us, who only want a little run! We didn't ask the tiger to escape! Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the row?"

A lad came tearing along the street. It was Hogg, the chemist's boy. His face was white with terror, and he rushed right into the juniors without seeing them. Bob Cherry caught him by the collar and steadied him.

"What's the matter?" he demanded.

"Let me go! Let me go!" panted Hogg. "The tiger!"

"Have you seen him?"

"He was coming up the path from the river!" stammered Hogg. "Run! Run for your lives!"

And he bolted.

"Perhaps we'd better get into the forge!" muttered Wharton uneasily.

The juniors looked round them. The thought that the terrible beast, hungry and ferocious, was at hand, made their flesh creep.

Then James Ram Singh uttered a sudden low exclamation, and pointed with a shaking finger.

"Look!" he muttered.

"Oh!"

"Good heavens!"

It was the tiger!

A terrible head came into view round the forge, and it was followed by the striped, sinuous body. The tiger was creeping along, as if in its native jungle, his eyes glaring savagely on either side of him. He caught sight of the group of juniors, and stopped, crouching on the ground. His eyes blazed, and an undulation ran through his long, striped body. The jaws were open, showing the fearful teeth, and the beast's whiskers were bristling.

The incessant worrying of the hunt had enraged the great brute. The juniors stared at it as if fascinated.

"Oh, good heavens!" muttered Bob. "He—he's going to spring! Run!"

But they did not run. There was not time to run into the forge—the tiger would be upon them before they could reach the shelter. He was about to spring, and there was no escape—for one of them, at least—whichever one the beast had selected as his victim!

Wharton set his teeth hard.

After the first shudder that had run through him, at the sight of the tiger, he was cool again—with the courage of desperation.

He made one leap, and caught up the heavy blacksmith's hammer.

The hammer was weighty, and would have taxed the strength of most fellows to lift it, but Wharton was athletic and at that moment he seemed to have the strength of two men.

With the great hammer in his grasp he faced the tiger, waiting for the spring. The juniors stood transfixed. Their faces were white as death.

It was only a second that passed, but it seemed an eternity to them.

Would the beast never spring?

Life or death hung upon what passed in the next moment. There was a low, rumbling growl. The long, striped body undulated, and then came the spring!

Wharton did not flinch.

The great hammer swung in the air, and as the tiger came hurtling straight at him, it descended with a terrific crash upon the beast's great head.

Wharton staggered back, overcome by the effort of the terrible drive, and for a moment he hardly knew whether he was in the claws of the tiger. Horrible growling and snarling filled his ears, and the scene swam round him for a second. Then he was cool again.

The tiger was on the ground, rolling from side to side, half-stunned by the terrific impact of the hammer.

"HIS OWN BETRAYER!"

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Bob Cherry gave a gasping yell.

"Give him another! Quick—quick!"

Wharton swung up the hammer.

The tiger was struggling up, dazed.

Crash!

The hammer came down again, and it struck upon the great savage head with a force that dragged it from Wharton's hands.

The junior reeled back.

Bob Cherry caught him as he reeled. The danger was past. The tiger lay stretched at their feet, stunned.

The great striped body lay still. The fearful jaws were open, and covered with foam; but they could do no harm now.

"Oh, good heavens!" panted Wharton breathlessly. "I—"

There was a great shout as Leopardi came dashing on the scene, the other searchers after him. They came up breathlessly.

"Mein Gott!" yelled Herr Hackenback. "Here is der tiger! Tat pay have stunn him—tat prave pay!"

And the German clapped Harry Wharton on the back, with a force that knocked out of him his little remaining breath.

Leopardi was bending anxiously over his tiger.

The animal's eyes glared glassily at him. The tiger was stunned, but his insensibility was not likely to last long. Leopardi uncoiled a stout rope and began to bind the animal. His swift hands moved deftly, and in a few minutes the tiger was secure. It lay bound and helpless on the ground.

The tiger-tamer rose to his feet. He waved back the two gamekeepers, who had run up, eager to empty their guns into the striped body.

"Do not shoot! He is safe now! Do not shoot!"

"Safer dead, I should think!" growled one of the keepers. "He's given trouble enough."

"I shall take him back to the show now," said Leopardi. "He is worth three hundred pounds to me. I cannot have him killed, as it is not necessary to take life." The Italian

"You can come out, you fat funk!" roared Bob Cherry. "The tiger's caught, and he's been taken away. There's no danger."

Billy Bunter came out at that. He blinked in a rather uncertain way at the juniors.

"Rotten luck that I wasn't on the spot," he murmured. "I was looking for the hammer—"

"Oh, cheese it!"

The juniors walked back to the school. They were not feeling cheerful. Wharton's feat had been one to be proud of, certainly, but it was certain to come out now that they had been out of bounds. When they arrived at Greyfriars, they were not surprised to find Wingate looking for them. The captain of Greyfriars called to Wharton. He eyed the Famous Five grimly.

"So you've been out of bounds?" he demanded.

"Yes," said Harry.

"The Head has been telephoned to from the village police-station," Wingate explained. "It seems that the tiger has been caught and taken back to the menagerie."

"Yes, it's all right."

"And he was stunned with a blacksmith's hammer, by a Greyfriars boy, according to the Head's message," said Wingate. "One of you young rascals running into danger, as usual, I suppose?"

"Yes," groaned Wharton.

"Well, you're to go to the Head."

And the juniors presented themselves in the Head's study. Billy Bunter discreetly detaching himself from the party before they arrived there. Dr. Locke rose to his feet as the juniors came in. The Head was looking agitated.

"None of you are hurt?" he exclaimed.

"No, sir."

"Which of you was it that stunned the tiger?"

"Wharton, sir," said Nugent.

"I have received a full account of it," said the Head. "It was very wrong of you to break bounds, which I imposed for your own safety."

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turned to Harry Wharton. "I am grateful to you, signorino. You have helped me to catch the tiger without having him shot. Grazie tanto."

Wharton gasped.

"That's all right," he said. "I'm glad I was able to bill him. I thought I was gone for a minute! I felt his breath on my face—"

The junior shuddered.

"You are a brave lad," said the tiger-tamer. "There are few men who would have faced that beast as he sprang! Molto coraggio—molto! Signor Hackenback, we will get a cart and take him back to the menagerie."

"Mein goodness!" said Herr Hackenback, with an uneasy glance at the tiger. "I think I feel safer if I do not go in tat cart, mein friend."

"He is quite safe now," said Leopardi, with a laugh.

"Good! But I think I yalks, all to same—"

A cart was soon forthcoming, and the bound tiger was placed in it, and driven away. A crowd gathered to see it taken away. The terror was over now, and the village folk ventured out of their houses. And when the tiger was gone the crowd gave Harry Wharton a ringing cheer. The gallant deed had been witnessed from many windows. The captain of the Remove grew very red as the crowd gathered round him and cheered him.

"My hat! Let's get out of this!" he exclaimed. "It's all right. If you slap me on the back again, I'll punch your nose, smelly."

The blacksmith grinned.

"You're a 'ero, that's what you are," he said. "Hurrah!"

"Hurrah!" shouted the crowd.

Wharton grinned.

"This will get to the school, and it will come out that we were out of bounds," he growled. "For goodness' sake let it drop. Come on, you chaps, and let's get back."

Billy Bunter blinked out of the forge.

"I—I say, you fellows, is the tiger killed?"

"No; he isn't—"

"Oh, crumbs!"

Bunter disappeared again as if by magic.

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"THE GEN" LIBRARY,

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The juniors hung their heads.

"We're sorry, sir," murmured Bob Cherry, and Hurree Janseet Ram Singh remarked with a pathetic expression that the sorrowfulness was terrific.

"But in view of what has happened, I shall not inflict any punishment," said the Head kindly.

The juniors brightened up wonderfully.

"Wharton has done a very brave and gallant deed," said the Head. "Probably lives have been saved by his conduct. I am proud of you, Wharton—proud that there is so brave a lad in my school. Although you did very wrong in breaking bounds, I am glad, as the matter turns out, that you were upon the spot."

And the Head shook hands with Harry; and the juniors left the study in a state of great satisfaction.

"Lookise all round if we hadn't had a giddy hero with us!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Three cheers for the hero!"

"Hurrah!"

"Shut up!" roared Wharton.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

"You silly asses—"

"Ha, ha, ha! Hurrah!"

The juniors found half the Lower School gathered round Billy Bunter in the Close, listening to his account of the encounter with the tiger. They passed to listen. Billy Bunter was going strong.

"He was just going to spring, and I said to Wharton: 'Back up! Don't be afraid! Remember, I saved your life once, and I'll save it again!' Then I *swung* the hammer—"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "I can't stand this! Bump him!"

And the juniors collared the voracious storyteller, and bumped him hard!

THE END.

(Another splendid, long, complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co. next Monday, entitled: "His Own Betrayer," by Frank Richards. Order your copy of THE MAGNET in advance. Price One Penny.)

START READING THIS STORY TO-DAY.

'Mysteria'

By **SIDNEY DREW.**

READ THIS FIRST.

Ferrers Lord, the famous multi-millionaire, is surrounded in his magnificent London residence by his friends Ching-Lung, Barry O'Roonsey, Gan-Wang, the Eskimo, and Prout & Co.—the stalwarts of the millionaire's famous submarine, the Lord of the Deep. After a period of inaction, there is a rumour abroad that Ferrers Lord is about to start upon one of his great expeditions again. Meantime, the millionaire himself is devoting all his attention to a curiously carved narwhal's tusk, which he has picked up in an East End curio-dealer's shop. The tusk proves to be hollow, and to contain some gold coins, and a small vial of parchment, which bears a strange message from the sea. This tells of a mysterious floating island, inhabited by strange monsters, which Ferrers Lord determines to go in search of. Thurston immediately christens the phantom island "Mysteria," in advance. All hands board the Lord of the Deep, which slips out of its secret cave on its mysterious new quest. On their way the submarine gets entangled in a net lost by fishermen. Ching-Lung and Red Honour, the engineer, free the submarine, and, much to Gan-Wang's delight, they capture an enormous dogfish. Gan tells Barry O'Roonsey that it is a quaint species known as a Barry O'Roonstic, and the Irishman catches hold of the unfortunate Eskimo.

(Now go on with the story.)

The New Cook's Deadly Name.

"O'im about fed-up wid yer, darlint," he growled. "Av yez dare to call any dirty say-urchin afther Barry O'Roonsey, Esquire, late of Bally-Bunton Castle, Oireland, O'll take yez by the two ugly ears of yez and twist yez up into tape! D'yez understand?"

"Rats! He's only jealous because he hasn't got a fish of his own to make a fuss of," said Ching-Lung.

The dogfish slipped into the crook of Gan's left arm.

"Don't cries, Irishes!" he murmured. "I gives you some fishes, dears. Takes dose home and fry 'em. Ho, ho, ho!"

He snatched up a bucket, poured the squirming whiting over O'Roonsey, and bolted for safety and the bath like a racehorse.

Barry O'Roonsey, amid shrieks of mirth, dashed after him. Had the distance been greater he might have won, for a fifty-pound dog-fish is not a feather-weight. Gan, however, beat the angry Irishman on the post—the door-post, to be accurate—and Barry had the sorry satisfaction of hearing the bolt shoot into the socket.

"Yez miserable son of a barrel of drippin'!" he yelled through the keyhole. "O'll flay yez alive, sure as me name's O'Roonsey! I'll knock iv'ry grain o' stuffin' out o' yez. O'll take an insect to insult a real Irish gentleman! Bedad, wance Oi git hould of yez, my lovely freak, they'll have to sweep up the paves wid a brush!"

"Go ways, yo' smelly fishness!" warbled Gan. "Ho, ho, hoo! Go ways, yo' silly bluffers! Me off to bed, Barry. Good-afternoites!"

There was a resounding splash. Barry shook his fist at the door, and sadly mounted the counting-tower ladder.

"By hovey, gear out!" roared the steersman. "Gear out!"

"You shall like a fish-shob!"

"Do Oi asked Barry wearily. "Oi fancy Oi fual like wan. Tommy, av yez own such a thing as a black suit, git it out and brush it. Oi expect to have the pleasure of invitin' yez to the funeral of an Eskimo afore the week's out!"

"His blood, his blood is phwat I crave!"

O'll plant him in his little grave.

And then we'll sing wid joyous glees;

He'll never none chuck fish at me!"

"By hovey, ged out of my nice gleen blue!" bellowed

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A Grand, Long, Complete School Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars next Monday, entitled:

the big-voiced steersman. "Ged oud, or I'll bunch your head!"

Barry whistled dolefully as he went away. He turned into the galley, expecting to see his old friend M'sieu Pierre, who had, on the previous voyage, presided over the culinary arrangements of the Lord of the Deep. Barry was more than surprised to encounter a complete stranger. He saw a short, stout gentleman, attired in a white suit of duck. The unknown gentleman was carefully parting his hair in the middle, and squinting into a cracked mirror to obtain the best view of this delicate operation.

"Hem-un! Ah, ha—hem!" coughed Barry.

The new cook turned round. He was round enough without doing so—a little, barrel-bodied man, with four chins, and sausage-shaped legs. Two tiny eyes, almost hidden in his puffy face, blinked inquiringly at Barry. His hair was flattened down, and parted in the middle, leaving a kind of footpath up the centre. He held a big, unlighted cigar between his lips, and he wore enough brass rings on his fingers to hang up several curtains.

Ferrers Lord never let a good man go, in any capacity, but he never retained a bad one. Barry smiled at the new-comer, and bowed low. The fat gentleman bobbed up and down like a float when a fish bites.

"Beggin' your lordship's pardon, and several of thim," said O'Roonsey; "but Oi thrust O'im not intrudin'. My name ut's O'Roonsey, and, faith, O'im no looney. Whin a man says Oi am, he foinds out purty soonny that O'im not! Excuse the verse, please. And how are yez? I hope yez are bloomin' like the rose in our back-yard. Gimme howld of your flippin'. It's a splendid, foine noight, isn't it? in spite of the wet outside! Phwat's your name, prince?"

"Hans von Fritz von Juggenvoltzhoppenzweizerpoffenhorn!" snorted the little man.

Barry recoiled, and fanned himself with a handkerchief.

"Where d'yez keep ut whin yez go to bed?" he asked. "No, no; Oi don't mane that. Oi mane how much extra do they charge yez for luggage whin yez take ut by thram wid yez? Oi bet yez foive pound to fourpence, yez can't spell ut right off widout havin' a shrink half-way! Av yez'll be good enough to give me your vistin'-card, O'll send for a boy wid a horse and cart to take ut home for me!"

Hearing Barry's voice, Maddock, who happened to be passing, looked in.

"HIS OWN BETRAYER!"Please order your copy of "THE MAGNET"
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"Benjamin," said O'Roonoy, "allow me to interjooze yer to my dearest friend, Mither—Mither Von—Von—Say it, could sport?"

"Hans von Fritz von Juggenvoltzhoppenzweizerpoffenheim!" said the cook, with a pronounced German accent. Maddock's eyes closed. He staggered, and fell into Barry's arms.

"Bedad, he's done!" wailed O'Roonoy, staggering under his burden. "Ochone, ochone! Yez have kilt my precious darlint—the lovely jooll of my loife! U'ts the name that did it. Ay yez had hit him wid a sledge-hammer int wud have been a slower dith! Oh, me lovely darlint cherub! Spake, and till me you're dead! Spake! Ay yez can't do it wid your mouth do it wid your foot!"

The boy's sun evinced no sign of life. For several seconds, Herr Hans von Fritz, etc., gazed at the two mariners in speechless amazement. Barry's face was the picture of woe, and two bitter tears trickled down his cheeks.

"Ah, Ben," he sobbed; "t-to th-think yez wud lave me, and turin into c-c-cowld mate loike this! But that name! Bedad, that name! U't wud have stabbed me to the heart, but, by good luck, Oi left me heart in the pianola. Sir," he added fiercely, pointing at the cook, "yez are a mur-r-r—"

"Oi repeat ut a mur-r-r-der-r-r-r!"

"Eh, vot dot?"

"A mur-r-r-der-r-r-r-r!" hissed Barry. "Faal his poor pulse, faal his poor heart, faal his poor teeth. All cowed, all sinetess—all done! Oh, Ben, Ben! Why did yez do it wid whikers on whin horsehair is so dear?"

"What's wrong here?"

The engines were humming and buzzing again awfully. Ching-Lung stepped in, and perched himself on the table.

"Oh, your Highness," said Barry, wiping his eyes with his sleeve, "that rascal has kilt him. He hit him wid his—his name, sir?"

"His name? Great Scot! In the name of all names, man, what is your name?"

"Hans von Fritz von Juggenvoltzhoppenzweizerpoffenheim, mein herr," answered the polite German.

Ching-Lung fell off the table, and crawled away on his hands and knees. The repetition of the awful name brought Maddock back to life. He fled, Barry at his heels.

The cook winked at the galley cat, and lighted a big German pipe. Before he had got the pipe in working order, the cat rose and yawned and looked at him.

"Say, Saak-kut," it remarked, "will you write that name of yours down?"

The startled chef jumped back six feet.

"But don't bother to sign it," said the cat, "when you have written it down, because we've only got enough paper in the ship to last seventy years!"

And then a very slimy whitening hit the cook on the nose, a second ploughed up the pretty garden-path in his hair, and a third bounced off his left ear.

"Fish—all fresh! Five a shillin', whitin'!" shouted a voice. "Try'em and buy'em! All growed at home!"

The German cook was not pleased, but he could not see anyone about who could be charged with the crime of throwing whitening at him and disarranging his garden-path. He therefore turned once again to his culinary operations, and all was still.

An Early Dip—Jan Waga as a Vocalist.

Joe, the carpenter, was always Joe to everybody. He had, of course, a surname, but hardly a soul knew it. Joseph was a man of many parts. He could cook, build a boat or a house, make a suit of clothes as well as any tailor, shoot to a hair's breadth with a rifle or revolver, and look after a gentleman better than ninety-nine professional valets out of a hundred.

Rupert gave a sigh of relief when Joe placed the early cup of coffee at his bedside. He was only half awake, but the hum of the engines made sweet music, and he realised that it was the old, fascinating life over again.

"Good-morning, Joe!" he said, sleepily.

"Morning, sir!" said Joe. "It's piping hot, sir, so don't let it get cold. I mean the coffee, sir. What clothes shall I brush, sir?"

"Never mind the clothes. Is his Highness up?"

"Just off for his dip, sir, and he asked me to tell you."

"Give me my dressing-gown, and some towels, then," said Rupert, springing out of bed. "By Jove, this is splendid, Joseph."

Joe quite agreed with him. It was splendid to be aboard the submarine again, with adventures in store; and, above all, it was splendid to be back among the tried friends.

Thurston whisked into his dressing gown, and pulled on his bathslippers.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 278.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY, Every Wednesday.

"If I was you, sir, meanin' no rudeness," said Joe, "I'd put some cotton-wool in my ears."

Thurston discovered a reason for the carpenter's sapient advice as he neared the swimming-bath. He heard the notes of a tin-whistle playing "Bluebell."

Other sounds accompanied it—wail, hideous notes, harsh and loathsome enough to drive the average being to immediate suicide.

"Hallo! The beautiful Gan is taking singing-lessons!" laughed Thurston.

He laughed louder when he entered the room. Gan, naked except for a pair of red-and-yellow bathing-drawers, was howling sweet music into the funnel of a gramophone, while Ching-Lung, in equally airy attire, fingered the whistle with one hand and beat time with the other solemnly.

And what the Eskimo sang was this, so far as the English alphabet will imitate the words:

"Kok—eruk—gogga—kik—wog,
Goo—chik—orgok—glagg—ak—kak.
Snorgs—agokik—kooglo—gog.
Wagok—oorgok—wak.
Snar—er-r-r-r-gash—kog!"

Ching-Lung stopped the music and the machinery at the same time, and, producing a large paper fan from his big toe, cooled himself.

"Dat butterfuls 'nough, my Chingy?" grinned the son of the Polar Seas.

"Myes—quite!" sighed the prince. "I think I'll sell it to the British War Office. It would be a jolly sight more deadly than dynamite or lyddite. You must have left your voice out all night, Gan, and got it frosted. If the War Office doesn't buy the patent, we'll do it up in sixpenny packets, and sell it for stopping dog-fights. Bless my beautiful golden curls, there's Thurston! Fancy meeting that so early in the night-daytime! Does he mean suicide, or is he going to wash himself after all these long and bitter years? Well, Ru, Ru, Ru, how do you do, do, do?"

"How yo' doeses when you dontes, hunk?" grinned the Eskimo. "Ho, ho, hoo! Where my 'Rooneyes? I show yo' my 'Rooneyes, Rupert. He bites yo' if not interductions, hunk, Chingy?"

Gan-Waga went headlong into the water without causing a ripple. They saw him shoot over the wet idea like a torpedo. He rose above the surface, holding his friend the dogfish by the dorsal-fin and tail.

"Mister dogfishes, Mister Thurston and a halves," he said, shaking the drops from his shining hair. "Is yo' bites Mister Thurston, you die of peronousness, so note do it. Ho, ho, hoo! He lames now, and stand on hind legs. He, he, he, he, hoo—gog!"

No one in the world could laugh like Gan-Waga. He did not laugh with his voice only, but with his face and his whole corpulent body.

The extraordinary creature he had chosen for a bedfellow did not appear perturbed in any way by Gan-Waga's familiarity. When he released it, the creature swam away briskly.

"Look here, Gan!" said Rupert. "We can't have that filthy beast in the bath!"

"Note filthy, Ruperts. Him uses mores waters den yo'. Ho-ho-hoo! Rooney's always washing—eh, Chingy?"

"You have struck the tinct on the head with a steam-hammer, dear," said Ching-Lung. "A fact is a fact, and pigs' ears are pork. I hope there's not a draught in that wet water, because I'm so liable to catch pneumonia if I swim in draughts. Who'll get a pen-orth of monkey-nuts I won't do three of the best?"

He bounded down the springboard, shot into the air like a rocket, and, turning three perfect somersaults, splashed into the water.

"Very bad, bad 'nough awfulness!" said Gan, as the diver rose.

"What's bad? My diving?"

"Dat tigers yo' shoots lasts years in Thalet. Chingy?" grinned the Eskimo, churning out of reach. "Him horrible bads. Ho, ho, hoo!"

The water was deliciously cool and refreshing. Thurston's skin tingled and glowed as he towelled himself.

He resented the presence of the ugly dogfish, but Gan-Waga was such a privileged person that Rupert did not mention the subject again.

He made a most good note to tell Joe to remove the creature when he was in Gan-Waga's absence, however, but forgot all about it.

A long instalment of this splendid serial will appear in next Monday's MAGNET LIBRARY. In the meantime, note the point of securing the great 25th Birthday Number.

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My Readers' Page

WHOM TO WRITE TO :
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The Editor
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hear from
his home or
abroad.

FOR NEXT MONDAY:

"HIS OWN BETRAYER!"

By Frank Richards.

Next Monday's splendid, long complete tale of the Chums of Greyfriars introduces a new fellow to the Remove—a fellow who is somewhat of a mystery to many of the juniors. Strong, and athletic-looking, Frank Cleveland, by his own confession, is an absolute duffer at all games and sports, and takes a foremost place only amongst the "swots" of the school. From the first, the new boy has to face the relentless persecution of Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, who openly accuses him of being, in reality, Hubert Osborne, a boy who had been expelled from another school for theft. Cleveland's quiet but firm denials, and his frank and manly bearing, cause the Bounder's story to be generally disbelieved, and Harry Wharton & Co. especially find themselves very much attracted towards the new boy.

The astounding revelation that comes upon Greyfriars like a bomb-shell at the end of the story is entirely brought about by Cleveland himself, who gives way to a heroic impulse in a moment of crisis, and thus acts as

"HIS OWN BETRAYER!"

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

Chathamite.—You can obtain a cheap book on photography from L. Upcott Gill, Bazaar Buildings, Drury Lane, London, W.C.

Pearl Barley (Worthing).—The address of Pathe Freres, the cinematograph producers, is 31, Charing Cross Road, London, W.C.

R. Cohen (Liverpool).—To become a member of the orchestra you mention, make personal application to the conductor.

H. C. G. (Hove).—An article on "How to Become a Fireman" appeared on the Chat page of our companion paper the "Gem," No. 267, week ending March 22nd.

Too Small (London).—As you do not smoke, and are still so young, having six years to grow in, I do not advise treatment of any kind.

I must thank the following readers for their very chatty letters:

J. and H. Hastings, of Australia; E. Scott, of South Africa; S. R. (Waterloo); Pro. "The Co.;" K. G. (Swazee); "A Loyal Reader; L. M. (Walthamston).

THE ROMANCE OF "ANSWERS."

Some twenty-five years ago there began in a very small office in Paternoster Square, London, a journal called "Answers to Correspondents." It was not a very large paper, and it did not commence with any blare of trumpets.

Not that it was by any means a failure, however, for slowly but surely, step by step, that paper began to win popularity and regard. All this was in 1888, just a quarter of a century ago.

To-day, this very week indeed, that same paper, now known universally as "Answers," celebrates its twenty-fifth birthday. During the past twenty-five years it has built up for itself a wonderful reputation, and has grown to be the best and most widely read journal for home and train.

In celebration of its twenty-fifth birthday, a unique and striking number is being produced. It is almost a double

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 278.
A Grand, Long, Complete School Tale of the
Chums of Greyfriars next Monday, entitled:

"HIS OWN BETRAYER!"

number, containing no fewer than thirty-six pages, yet its price is one penny only. Lord Northcliffe, founder and first editor of "Answers," contributes a long and interesting article, and there are contributions by the recognised leaders in almost every phase and walk of life.

As showing the world's progress of twenty-five years, its change of ideas and thought, and for the purely personal interest of a twenty-fifth birthday, this week's special issue of "Answers" should on no account be missed.

HOW TO KEEP FIT.—No. 5.

By a Sergeant-Instructor.

RUNNING EXERCISE.

There is not one boy in a hundred who knows how to run properly. I know this is a bit stiff, but, for all that, it's true: Look at that lad running to secure a good place at the local cricket match. See his arms! They look as if he'd no use for them. Look at his mouth. He runs along as if his one great desire was to capture and swallow all the dust and microbes he can in the least time possible. He is in a big way to do himself an injury by banging his heels on the ground. He is in a sweat, and as nearly out of breath as he can be, and live! All this is wrong, useless, and absolutely unnecessary.

The Proper Way to Run.

When you start running keep your mouth shut. Remember what I have told you about the use of the nose (see Article No. 1). Never use your heels in running. Get on to your toes, and pull the ground towards you like a prancing horse. You must not lean forward, in this way your legs are keeping up with your body. Keep the body erect. Let the legs carry the body along, and at an even pace. Thus will you get your second wind, and the lungs, being at their fullest by reason of the erect body, will not suffer from lack of air. The arms should be bent at the elbow, and not stiffly, but allowed to move naturally and of their own accord. Spring off the ground with every step, and, above all, do not stink your lungs for sin. Give them plenty of warm air through the nose. Do not smoke either before or after running.

To Strengthen the Pectorals.

The great mass of muscle, which looks so well when properly developed, and which forms the chest around the nipples, is known as the pectorals. When these great muscles are neglected, or not properly developed, you are known as "flat-chested." There is no boy with ordinary health and will-power who may not be proud of his chest development. The way to harden and enlarge these muscles is as follows:

Stand firmly on both feet. If possible, have on a light under-vest of elastic nature. Close the fists tightly as the arms hang by the sides. Now bring the fist in a rigidly slow manner towards the pectoral on its own side. As you lower the right arm, raise the left. This is a sort of turn-about exercise, as you bring each arm to the chest just as the other arm reaches the side. Keep a tight grip of something about as thick as the grip of your bicycle hand-grip. Indeed, a pair of old ones make excellent grippers where the grip is necessary. After a while you will find this exercise, when helped out by deep breathing, to be the very best tonic a boy can take in the way of getting fit.

In conjunction with this exercise, you may take wrist exercise. Hold the grips tightly, arms extended in line with the shoulders. Now turn the wrists back and forth, and up and down. The bones you see where the arm joins the wrist are easily injured, and if broken very hard to mend again. So be careful of attempting any violent exercise which you are not able to bear. Do the simple wrist exercise, and in a little time the bones and muscles will tell you yourselves how much they are improved.

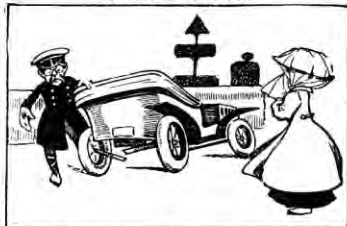
(Another of these Splendid Articles Next Monday.)

THE EDITOR.

Please order your copy of "THE MAGNET"
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THE "MAGNET" LIBRARY SPECIAL COMIC SUPPLEMENT.

A YEW-SFUL IDEA.



1. "Now you've done it, George. The axle is broken, and pa will be here in a minute. You'll catch it for trying to elope with me. Buck up, and get an idea, George!"



2. Needless to say, George bucked up, and, between me and you, he froze on to a first-class wheeze. This ornamental yew-tree is about 200 years old, and never did a turn for its living.



3. Now it is doing 301,902 turns per second, and, moreover, is doing George and Isabella a really good turn in taking them over the border to celebrate their run-away wedding.

GREAT CAESAR!



"Wasn't Julius Caesar one of the strongest men that ever lived?"

"What makes you ask that question?"

"I was just reading that he threw a bridge over the Rhine."

HE WON BY A LONG NECK!



1. "I shall want the rest for this shot," said Nibs, the monk, to his pal. But the ostrich had eaten it the day before. What were they to do?"



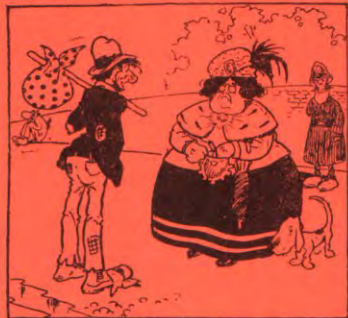
2. "How do I go as a rest?" asked the giraffe, as he laid his neck along the table, and Nibs took the shot.



1. Things were slack with Laurie, when suddenly he spotted a poster of a White City rickshaw, which set a sparkling idea sizzling in his brain-pan.



2. And in less time than it takes to tell you to spell "Poplets" he'd constructed a first-rate rickshaw out of his old boat, and was doing a roaring trade in sixpenny rides.



The Lady: "Well, I'll give you twopence, not because I think you deserve it, mind, but because it pleases me."

Tramp: "Thanks, mum! Couldn't you make it sixpence, and thoroughly enjoy yourself?"



"See here! Didn't I tell you not to dare to venture out o' the door for another month?"

Tommy: "It's all right, auntie, I climbed out of the window."

HE MUST HAVE!



Gabe: "Jones has a wonderful constitution, hasn't he?"

Steve: "I should say so. Why, he can read a whole patent medicine booklet and feel perfectly sound!"

VERY HARD LUCK!



"Stop crying, Bobbie! Now tell mamma how that brute of a Jimmy Smithers hurt you."

"Just as I was going to punch him he ducked, and I skinned my fist on the wall."

A CANDID OPINION!



Chappie: "Do you know I'm smoking an awful lot of cigars lately?"

Smith: "Well, if that one you gave me yesterday was one of them, they certainly are an awful lot."

"IN DIREST PERIL!"

This Week's Splendid, New, Long, Complete Tale of School Life.



The tough old billygoat made a charge at Bunter. The fat junior grabbed wildly at his horns and gripped him, and held on for dear life. The juniors yelled encouragement. "Go it, Billy! Go it, Goat!" "Ow!" gasped Bunter. (See our Long, Complete School Tale contained in this Number.)

