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— BY —
SIDNEY DREW



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Easy Terms!



Cripps and P.-c. Tozer bore the raided packing-case across the field and back to the carrier's cart, little thinking that it had been tampered with! (See Chapter 7.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER. A Remarkable Advertisement!

F.E.P." The letters were daubed upon a large sheet of paper with a brush, and the paper was pinned in a conspicuous position on the school notice-board.

They caught the eyes of the Removites at once, when the juniors came out of the Form-room after morning lessons. Quite a crowd gathered round the notice-board, staring at the peculiar announcement.

What it meant was a mystery.

"F.E.P.," said Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove. "What on earth does that mean?"

"What silly ass has put it up there?" said Bob Cherry. "I suppose it's a joke of some sort."

"It must mean something," said Frank Nugent. "What can F.E.P. stand for?"

"Feel 'Enry's Pulse!" suggested Skinner, the humorist. And there was a laugh.

Fisher T. Fish, the American junior in the Lower Fourth, came down the passage and joined the crowd before the notice-board. He grinned with satisfaction as he saw the interest the peculiar notice was exciting.

"I guess that's pretty slick!" he remarked.

"Do you know anything about it?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"I guess so—just a few!"

"Did you put it there?"

"Yep."

"What does it mean? What is it?"

"I guess it's an advertisement."

Fisher T. Fish pronounced that word in the American manner, with the accent on the third syllable.

"Advertisement of what?"

"I guess you'll see if you live long enough," said Fisher T. Fish. "You puzzle it out, and see if you can tumble."

"Blessed if I'm going to puzzle it out," said Bob Cherry, yawning. "If it's some more of your blessed ideas, I suppose it's only some silly rot, anyway!"

"I guess—"

"F.E.P.," said Bolsover major. "What the dooce is F.E.P.? Explain what it means, you ass!"

"I guess not! You can puzzle it out, till the show begins."

"What show?"

"F.E.P.," said Fish blandly.

"But what does it mean?" shrieked the juniors.

Fisher T. Fish did not reply. Evidently he was enjoying the perplexity of his Form-fellows. Coker of the Fifth came along, and glanced at the crowd before the notice-board, and looked at the notice.

"F.E.P.!" he exclaimed. "What's that?"

"Kids mustn't shove that kind of rot on the school notice-board!" said Potter of the Fifth severely. "Yank it down, Coker!"

"I'm going to!" said Coker.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Fish. "You let my advertisement alone!"

"Advertisement! What are you advertising now?"

"I guess you'll see to-morrow."

"I guess I'm going to tear that rubbish up now!" said Coker, jerking the paper off the board.

Coker of the Fifth was really exceeding his rights in interfering at all, but Coker never could understand that it wasn't his business to manage affairs for Greyfriars in general.

Fisher T. Fish gave a yell.

"Gimme my paper, you jay!"

Coker grinned, and tore the notice in two, and then in two again. Then he tossed the pieces at the enraged Yankee junior.

"There's your rubbish!" he said. "Now, don't you do it again, or I shall come down heavy on you! You Remove kids are too cheeky by half!"

"You silly jay—"

"Shut up!" said Coker, frowning. "Come on, Potter; we've wasted enough time on these fags!"

And the two lordly Fifth-Formers walked on, with their noses high in the air. Fisher T. Fish cast quite a ferocious glance after Coker.

"The slab-sided jay!" he growled. "He's torn up my advertisement. But I guess I can fix that up all right."

And Fisher T. Fish pinned up the four pieces together on the notice-board once more.

"He's dotty!" said Johnny Bull. "He must be dotty! I've suspected it before, and now I'm jolly sure of it!"

"Quite off his chump!" agreed Harry Wharton.

"I guess you'll see. I guess I'm going to make things hum this time," said Fisher T. Fish confidently. "You haven't any ideas to speak of in this played-out old country. You want waking up. I guess I'm going to wake Greyfriars up—a few!"

"Look here," roared Bolsover major, the bully of the Remove, "you're going to explain what that silly rot means!"

"I guess not!"

"Why not?" demanded Nugent.

"It's an advertisement—on the American system," Fisher T. Fish explained airily. "It excites the curiosity, you see—people see it, and try to puzzle out what it means. You could stick up an advertisement on Bunker's Soap, for instance, and nobody would notice it; but if you put up 'B.S.' people will start wondering what B.S. stands for. And when they find out that it stands for Bunker's Soap, they remember Bunker's Soap, and buy it. Got that?"

"Well, we're not going to puzzle it out," said Bolsover major. "You're going to explain what it means, and at once!"

"Nope."

"Or you'll get walloped!" roared Bolsover. "You'll tell us what it means, or I'll make you eat it! Got that?"

"I guess—"

"Collar him!" said Bolsover.

"Hyer, I say—I guess— Yowp! Ow!"

Half a dozen grinning juniors grasped the Yankee school-boy, and held him fast. Bolsover major jerked the notice off the board once more, and crumpled it in his hand.

Fisher T. Fish blinked at him—nervously, but as obstinate as ever.

"Now then, are you going to tell us what your silly F.E.P. stands for?" Bolsover demanded.

"Nope."

"Open his jaws!" said Bolsover.

"Groogh! Leggo! Lend me a hand, Wharton! Draggemoff!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Why can't you explain?" he said. "Stop playing the giddy goat, and tell us what it means!"

"Nope."

"Then you can take the consequences, you duffer!"

"Groogh—hooh!"

Skinner and Vernon-Smith jerked Fish's mouth open. Bolsover major knicked the paper into a ball, and jammed it into Fish's lantern jaws.

"Ger-roo-g-g-h!" came from Fisher T. Fish, amid a yell of laughter from the Removites.

"Are you going to explain?" asked Bolsover.

"Gro-o-ogh! Nope!"

"Then you'll eat your giddy words—or, rather, letters!" said Bolsover. "Chew away! You're fond of chewing-gum, you know; you can chew paper and ink for a change."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ber-r-r-r-r-og-g-g-g-h!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Work his jaws for him if he won't eat it!" said Bolsover.

"Ow, ow, ow! Groogh!"

There was a yell of laughter, as Skinner grasped Fish's pointed chin, and Vernon-Smith seized his long, sharp nose, and started operations. The Yankee junior's jaws were worked in spite of himself.

"Ger-r-r-ro-o-o-o-og-g-g-h!" came in gasping accents from Fisher T. Fish. "Let up! Stop it! Chuck it! Rescue! Ow, ow! Groogh!"

"Will you tell us, then?"

"Groogh! I guess I'll tell! Leggo!"

The juniors released the half-suffocated Yankee school-boy. Fisher T. Fish ejected the fragments of the paper, and spluttered furiously.

"Now, what are you going to tell us?" Bolsover demanded. "Go ahead!"

"Groogh! I guess I'm going to tell you you're a blithering jay!" gasped Fisher T. Fish breathlessly. "That's all I'm going to tell you, you slab-sided mugwump! Yah!"

"Collar him!" roared Bolsover.

But Fisher T. Fish had already taken to his heels, and he disappeared at top speed round the nearest corner. And the mystery of "F.E.P." remained still unexplained.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Great Preparations!

JOHNNY BULL snorted.

Johnny Bull was a fellow of few words, but he had a most expressive snort. His snort just now was more expressive than usual. He had come into Study No. 14 in the Remove passage, which he had the honour of sharing with Fisher T. Fish, the enterprising Yankee. And he found alterations going on in the study.

Fisher T. Fish prided himself upon being a fellow with ideas. The way things were run in the Old Country, as he often declared, made him tired. Greyfriars, according to Fisher T. Fish, was half asleep, and he felt sometimes that it was his duty to wake the place up somehow, and introduce a spirit of American "hustle." Fish's ideas generally ended in disaster, it was true; but the Yankee schoolboy was never daunted by failure. After every egregious blunder, he would come up smiling, as serene and self-satisfied as ever.

It was his ambition to show the other fellows how to "do things," as they did them "over there." "Over there" meant in the United States—or, as Fish pronounced the name of his native land, the Yew-nited States.

Johnny Bull stood in the doorway, and regarded Fisher T. Fish, who was busy in the study. It was evening now, and Bull had come there to do his preparation.

But there did not seem much chance of doing any preparation in No. 14 Study that evening.

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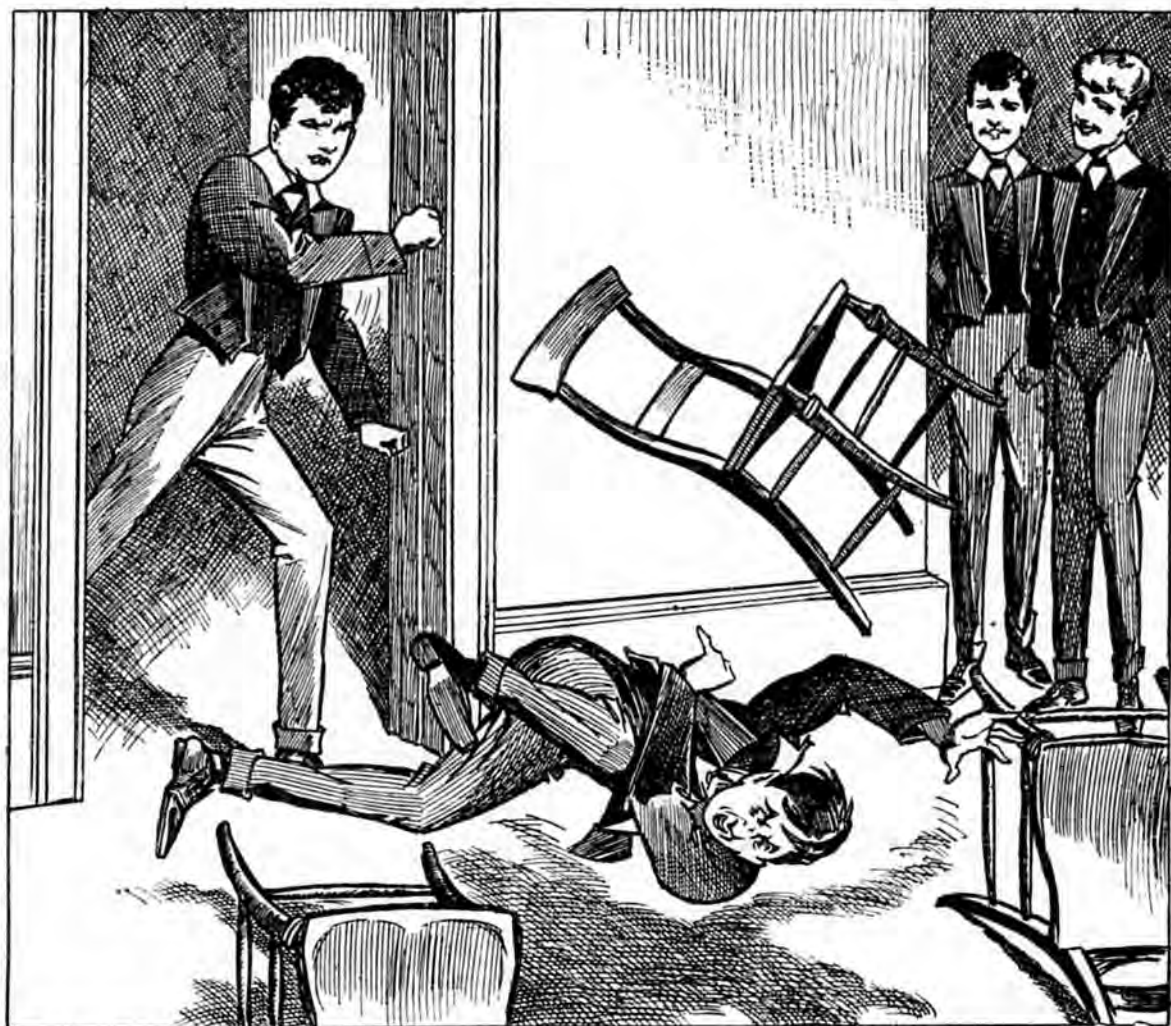
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A hurtling form came flying through the doorway of Johnny Bull's study, and landed in the passage with a bump. "My hat! He's chucked out!" roared Bolsover. Fisher T. Fish scrambled up. "I guess I'm not going to soil my hands on the rotter!" he growled—and the juniors roared. (See Chapter 2.)

The study table had been pulled to one side of the room. Another table, apparently borrowed from another study, had been placed next to it. Together they formed a sort of counter across one side of the study.

On one table was an inkstand, and beside it a large ledger, and Fisher T. Fish was busy with the ledger. The space before the tables was occupied with chairs and forms. Chairs had been collected from goodness knew where—some of them in a very rocky condition, apparently fetched out of the lumber-room to serve Fisher T. Fish's unknown and mysterious purpose.

Johnny Bull's snort did not attract Fish's attention. He was busy. Johnny Bull advanced into the study, picking his way among the chairs, forms, and stools with some difficulty. There was not much room to move about.

He glared at Fish, and Fish looked up. "Hallo!" he said affably.

"What's all this rot?" asked Bull. "I guess it isn't rot. I'm lettering the pages of this hyer ledger," Fisher T. Fish explained.

Johnny Bull stared at the ledger. Fish was lettering the pages alphabetically, in order, from A to Z.

"What on earth's that for?" asked Bull, in amazement.

"For the names, of course."

"What names?"

"The names of my clients."

"Your what?" howled Bull.

"My clients. You see, I enter up their names on the page lettered accordingly, and that makes it simple for reference. THE MAGNET LIBRARY—No. 320.

Suppose, for instance, I do business with you—I put your name down on the page lettered 'B.' Business with Wharton—I shove the items down on the page lettered 'W.' It's quite simple."

"What business?"

"I guess you'll see to-morrow, when the circus begins," chuckled Fisher T. Fish. "It's the 'F.E.P.' you know."

"And what's that?"

"I reckon you'll know to-morrow."

"And why to-morrow?"

"Because the stuff arrives then."

"What stuff?" demanded Bull.

"I guess you'll know—when it comes," said Fish calmly.

"Don't be impatient."

Johnny Bull snorted again, more emphatically than before. "What are all these chairs and things here for?" he demanded.

"They're for the crowd."

"So you expect a crowd here?" exclaimed the perplexed junior.

"Yep! To-morrow, you know, when the rush begins. Nothing like getting ready in time!"

"I see. Well, I've come here to do my prep—"

Fisher T. Fish shook his head.

"I'm really sorry—but you won't be able to do your prep here for a time, Bull. I require the study for business purposes. You're very chummy with Wharton, you know—you can go and do your prep in No. 1 for a week or two."

"Can I?" said Johnny Bull grimly. "So you're going to

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have the study for business purposes, and check it up with this silly lumber, and I'm to clear off?"

Fish nodded.

"Exactly!" he agreed.

"Not good enough!" said Johnny Bull. "You're going to shift all this rubbish out again, sharp, and I'm going to do my prep here—see?"

"Can't be did!"

"And if you don't do it sharp, I'll sling you out, and all your rubbish after you!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Now look here, Bull—be reasonable. I've got a scheme—a real topping, gilt-edged scheme, to make things hum some. I can't have it interfered with because of your silly schoolboy prep. Be sensible!"

"Are you going to shift this rubbish out?" demanded Johnny Bull, his voice growing quite sulphurous.

"Nope!"

"Then I'll shift it, and you, too!"

"Hyer, hold on!" roared Fisher T. Fish, as Johnny Bull seized him by the collar, and yanked him bodily across the table. "I mean, leggo! Chuck it! I tell you, I shall wallop you into a jelly, if you get my mad up. You leggo!"

Johnny Bull did not reply. There was not much danger of Fisher T. Fish walloping him, whether he got his "mad" up or not.

The American junior was whirled across the study, amid a general crashing of chairs displaced by his passage through them.

Then he went through the doorway in a heap.

He landed in the passage, and sat there, gasping. The bump in the passage brought several juniors out of their studies to see what was going on. They were amazed at what they saw. There was crash after crash, as chairs flew out of the study doorway, piling up round Fisher T. Fish as he sat and gasped. Chairs and forms and stools piled up in a kind of barricade across the passage, and the extra table followed. Then the study door was slammed.

"What on earth's the little game?" asked Mark Linley, staring in amazement out of the next study.

Fisher T. Fish only gasped.

He sat in a dazed state amid a barricade of upset furniture. A crowd of laughing juniors gathered round him. They guessed that there had been trouble—there had been trouble before in No. 14 Study when Fisher T. Fish had attempted to carry out his novel and stunning schemes there. Johnny Bull had no use whatever for Fisher T. Fish's stunning schemes.

Fisher T. Fish staggered up at last.

He was not a fighting-man—but such a disastrous termination to his great preparations for business was more than sufficient to get his "mad" up, as he would have expressed it in the beautiful American language.

"You watch me," he gasped. "I'm going to slaughter him! I'm going to scalp him! You watch me! You'll see that jay coming out on his neck, instant."

"Hurrah! Go it!" shouted the Removites, quite eager to see the American junior tackle Johnny Bull.

"Chuck him out, Fishy!"

"Pile in!"

"We'll see fair play."

"Go it!"

"I guess I'm going it. You watch me!" snorted Fisher T. Fish, working himself into a fury. "By gum, we'll see whether I can't carry on business in my own study! You look out, and see that jay come out on his neck, that's all!"

"We'll look out!" chuckled Bob Cherry, as Fish rushed for the study door. "But I kinder reckon and guess that it won't be Johnny Bull who comes out on his neck."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fisher T. Fish tore open the door of No. 14, and rushed in. There was a sudden and terrific uproar. Panting and gasping, and trampling of feet, could be heard, and the grinning juniors waited and watched for the result.

Suddenly a hurtling form came flying through the study doorway, and landed in the passage with a loud bump and a louder yell.

"My hat! He's chucked him out!" ejaculated Bolsover major.

"Ha, ha, ha! It's not Bull!"

"It's Fishy! Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors yelled as Fisher T. Fish sat up and blinked at them dazedly. The chucking-out had certainly come off, but not according to programme. It was Fisher T. Fish who had come out of the study "on his neck."

"Go for him again!" yelled Bolsover major. "Better luck next time, Fishy!"

Fisher T. Fish scrambled up.

"I guess I'm going to treat him with the contempt he deserves," he growled. "I'm not going to soil my hands on the rotter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

deserves," he growled. "I'm not going to soil my hands on the rotter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

In No. 14 Study, Johnny Bull did his preparation in peace, without further interruption; quite satisfied to be treated with the contempt he deserved.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter on the Track!

"TWELVE dozen jam-tarts!"

Billy Bunter pricked up his ears.

It was the morning after the great preparations in No. 14 Study, which had ended in such a painful manner for the enterprising American schoolboy.

Lessons were over for the day, as it was a half-holiday that afternoon. Fisher T. Fish was seated on one of the old oaken benches under the elms in the Close. He had a thoughtful frown upon his brow, and a pocket-book open upon his knee, and a stump of pencil in his long, thin fingers.

Evidently the Yankee schoolboy was making some important calculations. He was muttering aloud to himself as he did so, oblivious of his surroundings.

For Fisher T. Fish and his calculations Billy Bunter did not care one straw. But the mention of jam tarts made him prick up his fat little ears.

"Twelve dozen jam tarts!" murmured Fisher T. Fish. "twelve cakes, one gross of ginger-beer, one gross of lemonade, two dozen bottles of sweets."

Billy Bunter's eyes glistened behind his big spectacles. The Yankee junior's words made his mouth water. It sounded like the preparation for a feed upon an unusually gorgeous scale. Even Lord Mauleverer, the dandy of the Remove, when he was most hospitable, never laid in supplies on this gigantic scale.

"I say, Fishy!" murmured Bunter.

Fisher T. Fish started and looked up, and closed his pocket-book with a sudden snap.

"Waal?" he growled.

"I heard what you said, you know."

"I guess you generally do hear what you're not intended to hear, you fat oyster," said Fisher T. Fish. "You levant!"

"What!"

"Absquatulate!" said Fish.

"Wh-a-a-t's that?"

"Light out! Levant! Git! Buzz off!"

"Oh, I see!" said Bunter, showing no signs whatever of buzzing off, but seating himself on the oaken bench beside the American junior. "I say, Fishy, if it's a feed I don't mind helping you. If there's anything I can do—"

"You can ring off!" growled Fish.

"You're going to have twelve dozen jam tarts—"

"Shurrup!"

"And twelve cakes—"

"Oh, rats!"

Fisher T. Fish rose and put the book into his pocket, and the pencil behind one of his prominent ears, and walked away. Billy Bunter blinked after him through his big spectacles. He did not mean to lose sight of Fisher T. Fish that afternoon. If so tremendous a feed was on the way, the Owl of the Remove meant to be on the scene when it started. William George Bunter seldom or never stood a feed himself, but he seemed somehow to consider that he had a natural right to be present at all feeds stood by other fellows.

Fish walked away in the direction of Gosling's lodge. Bunter rose and rolled after him. He intended to hear what Fish had to say to the school porter. Bunter was very much interested indeed.

Fish stepped into Gosling's lodge. Gosling looked at him with a sour glance. Gosling was not a gentleman with an amiable temper, and he did not like boys; indeed, he had often expressed to the coachman his fixed belief that all boys ought to be "drowned" at birth.

"I guess I'm expecting something by the carrier this afternoon, Gosling," Fisher T. Fish remarked. And Billy Bunter, taking up his stand by the open window, listened with all his ears. He had, of course, only two; but they were very large ones, and seemed to be specially designed by nature for listening.

"Ho!" said Gosling. "Har you, Master Fish?"

"Yes. It will be a big packing-case, I guess, and it will have to be handled with care. When it comes I guess I want you to take it up to my study at once."

"Ho!" said Gosling again. He did not seem to relish particularly the idea of carrying a big packing-case up to the Remove passage.

"There will be breakables in it," went on Fish. "I guess you'll have to be careful. You can get Trotter to help you. I'll stand you threepence."

Gosling snorted. Fish was a very careful youth with his

money, and it really required an effort on his part to give anybody threepence. But threepence did not seem to Gosling a very munificent tip for carrying a big packing-case about.

"What time does the carrier get here, Gossy?" asked Fish, apparently not noticing the porter's expression.

"Arl-past three!" said Gosling surlily.

"Good! And don't forget it's three d. for you."

"I won't rob you, Master Fish," said Gosling, with crushing sarcasm. "I won't be so selfish as to go for to take all your week's pocket-money in that manner, sir!"

Fish did not seem to hear that sarcastic remark. He walked out of the lodge, whistling, and strolled away towards the School House. Billy Bunter stood in deep thought. Fish was expecting a packing-case by the carrier at half-past three, and evidently it must contain those excellent things he had been overheard muttering about.

"The rotter!" said Bunter, with virtuous indignation. "He's going to stand a feed all to himself, without asking a chap to it. The selfish beast, with twelve dozen jam tarts, not to ask a chap if he's got a tooth. It would serve him jolly well right to raid the blessed packing-case before he can get at it."

And Billy Bunter's little round eyes glistened behind his spectacles at the thought. He rolled away after Fisher T. Fish, and overtook him at the School House steps, and tapped him on the elbow. Fish glanced at him impatiently. His mind was full of his new scheme, whatever it was, and he did not want to be bothered by the Owl of the Remove.

"Oh, clear off, Bunter!" he said irritably.

"I say, Fishy, I heard what you said to Gosling."

"I guess you are a spying rotter!" growled Fish. "Get off!"

"I know you're going to stand a big feed. Are you going to ask me?"

"Nope."

"Whom are you asking, then?"

"Nobody, I guess."

"You're going to have all those things for yourself, you disgusting bounder?" exclaimed Bunter indignantly. "Well, you—you beast! Yaroooh!"

Fisher T. Fish reached out suddenly, and Billy Bunter sat down violently on the steps. Fish grinned, and went into the House. He "guessed" that he had disposed of Bunter.

But he guessed wrong, as he frequently did. Billy Bunter scrambled up, gasping, with a warlike gleam in his eyes, and shook a fat fist after the American junior.

"Beast!" he murmured. "We'll see! We'll jolly well see what we shall see!"

And that was certainly undeniable.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. Help Required!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were going down to the footer ground, when Billy Bunter intercepted them. The Remove were playing football that afternoon, one of the last fixtures of the season. Billy Bunter, however, was thinking of something more important than football—from his point of view, at least.

"I say, you fellows, hold on a minute," he exclaimed breathlessly. "There's something on. I want you chaps to help me."

"We're going to play the Upper Fourth," said Harry Wharton.

Bunter sniffed.

"Never mind that now. I say, Fishy is standing himself a whacking feed—hundreds of tarts and cakes and things—and he's not going to ask anybody to it."

"Blow Fishy!"

"But, I say, I've found out—"

"Never mind what you've found out," grunted Bob Cherry.

"We don't want to know what you've found out. Clear off!"

"But I say, you fellows—"

"Clear off!" roared Bob.

And the Famous Five walked on, leaving Billy Bunter glowering. There was evidently no help to be expected from them. Bunter reflected a few moments, and then spotted Peter Todd on the footer-ground, and bore down upon him.

Peter Todd was his study-mate, with his Cousin Alonzo and Dutton. The three of them were chatting, Peter being in football garb, as he was a member of the Remove eleven.

Bunter jerked at the sleeve of his jersey, and Peter Todd looked down at him.

"I say, you'll have to stand out of that blessed match this afternoon," said Bunter. "I've found out—"

"Catch me standing out," said Peter. "Gone off your dot, Tubby?"

"I've found out that Fishy is getting a packing-case this afternoon, a whacking big packing-case full of grub, and he's

going to stand himself a feed without asking anybody else to it!" howled the fat junior excitedly.

Peter Todd whistled.

"Well, he always was mean," he said. "But what does it matter to us?"

"I've found out that the packing-case is coming by the carrier this afternoon," said Bunter, lowering his voice cautiously. "My idea is to raid it. The four of us could lay for the carrier in the lane, you know, and collar the hamper—I mean, the packing-case—and—scoff it, you know!"

"I'm playing footer," said Peter; "and I'm not going to raid Fishy's grub, anyway. I don't care if he stands himself a feed. Mind your own business, Bunter!"

And Peter Todd sauntered away to join the footballers. Bunter turned an almost imploring glance upon Alonzo Todd and Tom Dutton. He had been counting on that packing-case as a certainty, and revelling in advance in the good things it contained. New the inestimable prize seemed to be slipping through his fingers.

"I say, Lonzy, you'll back me up, won't you?"

Alonzo Todd shook his head solemnly. Alonzo was an extremely serious and solemn youth, and he did not quite approve of Bunter.

"Certainly not, Bunter. We have no right to raid Fishy's grub. I am sure that my Uncle Benjamin would not approve of it. He would, in fact, be shocked at the idea—nay, disgusted."

"Blow your Uncle Benjamin!" howled the exasperated Bunter. "I tell you it will be the feed of the term—hundreds of jam-tarts, thousands of sweets—"

"I decline to discuss the matter with a person who speaks disrespectfully of my Uncle Benjamin," said Alonzo severely; and he walked away.

Bunter snorted, and turned to Tom Dutton. Tom Dutton had the misfortune of being deaf, or, as Peter Todd had put it, his friends had the misfortune of his being deaf. To tell Dutton anything was to tell all the school, as a rule, and even then Dutton did not always get the information right.

"What have you been talking about?" asked Dutton, who had not heard a word of what had passed. "What's the matter with Alonzo?"

"Oh, he's a silly ass, as usual!" snorted Bunter.

"Eh?"

"I want to talk to you, Dutton—"

"Walk with me?" said Dutton. "Where?"

"Come along!" exclaimed Bunter. And he slipped his arm through Tom Dutton's, and drew him away from the football ground. Dutton looked puzzled, but he acquiesced, and Billy Bunter walked him into the shady Cloisters, where he could speak in the required pitch without being overheard by half Greyfriars.

"Well, what's the little game?" Dutton demanded, as Bunter halted in the Cloisters. "What have you brought me here for?"

"Would you like a jolly good feed, Dutton?"

"Eh?"

"How would you like a ripping feed—hundreds of jam-tarts and things, and bottles of ginger-beer, and so on?"

"How can I go on when I haven't started? Are you joking?"

"I want you to help me raid a packing-case full of grub!" howled Bunter.

"There's the rub, is it?" said Dutton. "Where? What are you driving at? Blessed if I don't think you're going off your dot, Bunter!"

"Grub!" shrieked Bunter. "Not rub—grub! I want you to help me."

"I'll squelch you fast enough, if you're joking with me!" said Dutton, frowning. "I'm not going to have you pulling my leg because I'm a little deaf. I'm not really deaf, either. I can hear well enough."

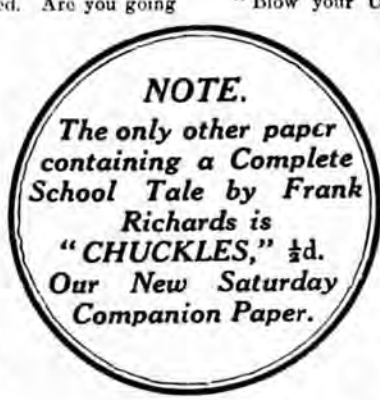
"Will you come with me?"

"What the dickens do you mean, talking about a gum-tree?" said Dutton, puzzled. "There aren't any gum-trees in England. They grow in Australia, I believe."

Bunter groaned. The labour of explaining the matter to Tom Dutton was really worth more than the feed if it came off. But he stuck heroically to the task.

"I'm talking about a feed!" he roared.

"Oh, a feed!" said Dutton, comprehending at last. "I might have guessed that! You don't often talk about anything else, you greedy bounder! You're standing a feed?"



"No. Fishy is."

"Eh?"

"Fishy is standing a feed to himself, and it's coming here in a packing-case—a big case full of grub!"

"Who's coming here in a chaise?"

"Case—packing-case!" yelled the hapless Bunter. "A packing-case full of grub! Fishy is going to keep it all for himself, and I want you to help me raid it."

"I don't believe Fishy could make a packing-case. He's not a carpenter. Besides, why should he make a packing-case?"

"Oh, you ass! You silly fathead! You—you door-post!"

"Eh?"

"I didn't say anything of the kind!" roared Bunter.

"Yes, you did! You said Fishy wanted somebody to help him make a packing-case. Well, I'm not going to help him. I'm going to watch the Form match."

Bunter put his mouth close to Dutton's ear, and screamed:

"Listen to me! Fishy is going—"

Tom Dutton jerked his head away.

"Don't yell at me like that!" he snapped. "I'm not deaf! I can hear you if you speak clearly. Of course, nobody could hear you if you mumble, as you always do. I didn't hear a word you were saying to Alonzo, the way you mumble."

Bunter panted.

"You silly ass! You're as deaf as a beastly post!"

"Taint time for the post yet," said Dutton, looking at his watch. "And don't tell me you are expecting a postal-order, and want to borrow something on it. I've heard that before, and I'm not taking any."

"Will you lend me a hand to raid a packing-case full of grub?" shrieked Bunter.

Tom Dutton looked round, and appeared to listen, with a perplexed expression. Then he put his hand to his ear, and listened more carefully.

"Rot!" he said at last.

"Eh?" gasped Bunter.

"There isn't any band."

"Band!"

"Yes, band, you fat duffer! What do you mean by saying there's a band? I could hear it all right if there was one. I knew you were only pulling my leg," said Dutton angrily, "and I don't like it. Shut up!"

And Tom Dutton seized Bunter by the shoulders in his powerful hands, and sat him down with great force on the stone flags of the Cloisters, and left him there, breathless, and walked away in high dudgeon to the football ground.

"Oh, the silly ass!" groaned Bunter, as he scrambled up and shook his fist after his deaf study-mate. "The blessed carrier will be here soon, and the chance will be gone. I can't raid the blessed thing alone. I've got to get somebody to help me. I wonder if Linley—no, he's playing footer—or Penfold—no, he's a beast—Ah, there's Coker!"

Billy Bunter's fat face brightened up as he thought of Coker of the Fifth. Of course, there was Coker!

Coker of the Fifth was always more or less on fighting terms with the Remove, owing to his inward conviction that it was his bounden duty to keep juniors in order.

Coker & Co. of the Fifth would be "on" to that packing-case in the twinkling of an eye if they knew anything about it. It was not so very long since the chums of the Remove, on an occasion when they had a special visitor to entertain, had raided a gorgeous feed from Coker's study for the purpose. Coker would be only too willing to return tit for tat.

"Coker, of course!" chuckled Bunter. "Coker's the man! Good egg!"

And the fat junior hurried away in search of Coker of the Fifth as fast as his fat little legs could carry him.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. Coker Takes the Lead!

HORACE COKER was in his study, looking wrathful. Potter and Greene of the Fifth were there too—grinning.

Coker dabbed ink from his classic features with a handkerchief. Evidently Coker had been in the wars. Coker often was in the wars. It was quite a maxim at Greyfriars that if there was any trouble knocking about, Coker of the Fifth was sure to find it.

"The cheeky little rotters!" Coker was saying.

"Awful nerve!" agreed Potter, with a wink at Greene. "How dare they ink you, Coker! Things are getting into a pretty state—especially your face."

"What did you do, Cokey?" asked Greene sympathetically.

"I wanted to know what that Yankee imbecile meant by his blessed F.E.P.," explained Coker, still dabbing. "He's

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been chalking up F.E.P. on the walls and on the benches, and the kids are simply wild with curiosity. So I was going to make him tell me. And what do you think the young rotters did? They're just as exasperated with that Yankee bouncer as I was, but they piled on me in the Remove passage because I clouted him—as if a Fifth Form chap can't clout a Remove fag when he likes!"

"Of course he can!" said Potter indignantly. "What's Greyfriars coming to, I'd like to know."

"Well, then, six or seven of them held me while Fish mopped ink on my chivvy," said Coker, breathing hard. "What do you think of that?"

"Rotten!"

"I think it's—it's—it's—well, there ain't a word," said Potter solemnly. "When I think of mere fags inking your majestic features, Coker, words fail me."

"Oh, don't be funny!" snapped Coker. "I'll jolly well ink you if you start any of your funny remarks with me, George Potter!"

"But I wasn't being funny," protested Potter. "You're funny enough—I mean, one funny merchant is enough for one study. I'm not going to start in competition."

"You silly ass!" roared Coker, glaring at his study-mate

"I've a jolly good mind—"

"That you jolly well haven't!" said Potter, with a shake of the head. "I don't believe you've got a mind at all, Cokey, let alone a jolly good one."

"Why, I—I—"

"What are we going to have for tea?" said Potter morosely. "If you've got such a jolly good mind, set it to work on that problem."

"Blow tea!" said Coker. "You know I'm stony to-day."

"Same here!" sighed Greene. "Really, Coker, it's too bad of you to leave us in the lurch like this! Why can't you write to your Aunt Georgina—"

"My aun't name is Judith, fathead!"

"Well, your Aunt Judith, then," said Greene. "I don't care what her name is, so long as she shells out the dubs."

"I've written to her," said Coker. "I haven't had the answer yet. I don't suppose it will come to-day, anyway. We can have tea in Hall for once."

"And you call yourself head of the study!" snorted Potter.

"Oh, rats!" said Coker.

And he dabbed away at his face angrily. Coker was head of the study, certainly; but, as Potter and Greene would have told anybody, he hadn't won the position by his brains. Coker was usually rolling in money, and he was very generous with it, and so, as a rule, Potter and Greene were faithful followers, and looked up to the great Coker with much respect, and hung, as it were, upon his lips for the pearls of wisdom that fell therefrom. But Coker rolling in money, and Coker in the sad and lamentable state known as stony-broke, were two quite different persons in the estimation of his chums. On the occasions when Horace Coker was stony, his chums could get fed up with him in a remarkably short space of time.

"You're making a beautiful muck of that handkerchief," said Potter, looking at it. "It won't be good for much when you've finished dabbing that ink with it."

"I don't care!"

"Well, you can afford to spoil a good hanky, I suppose?" sniffed Potter.

"Taint mine," said Coker calmly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" cackled Potter. "Well, I admit that's funny. You're not such a fathead as I thought, Cokey, old man. Whose is it?"

"Yours."

Potter's laughter suddenly died away. The funniness of the matter seemed to escape him on the spot.

"Mine!" he repeated.

"Yes. You left it on the table, you know."

"You—you're mucking up my hanky like that!" roared Potter.

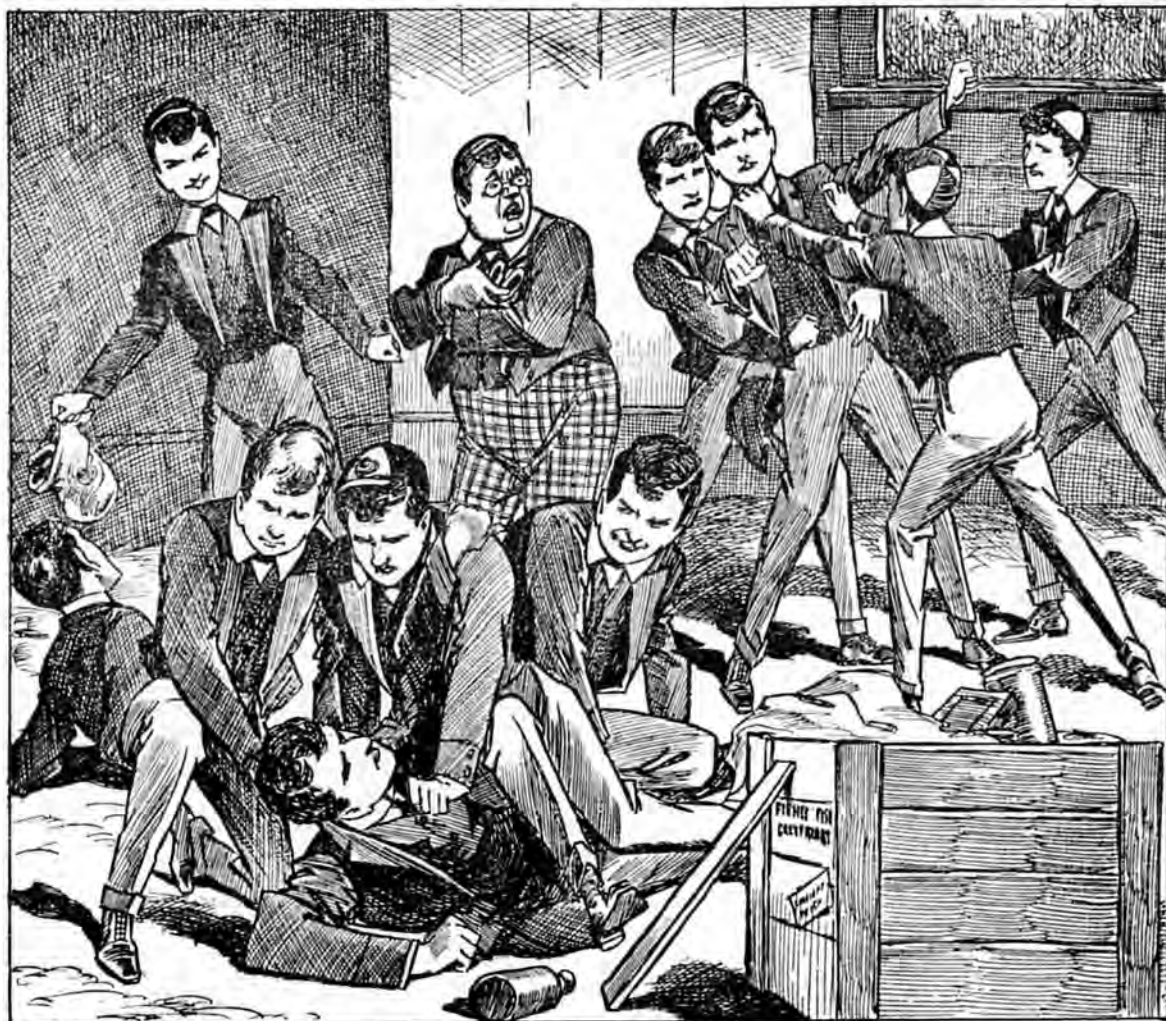
"Well, I shouldn't be likely to muck up my own, with this beastly ink, should I?" said Coker, in surprise. "I may be an ass, but I'm not such an ass as that."

"You—you—you—"

Words failed Potter once more. He came very near to rushing upon Coker, and committing assault and battery on the spot; but he didn't. Coker was an ass, but he was a dreadfully hard hitter, and he was just in a mood now to hit somebody hard. So Potter contented himself with saying things. He was still saying them, in a voice that could be heard the length of the Fifth Form passage, when a fat face adorned with a large pair of spectacles was thrust into the study.

"Kick that fag out!" said Coker, before Billy Bunter could speak.

"I say, you fellows—" began Bunter hastily.



The seven Highcliffe fellows hurled themselves upon the Greyfriars fellows, seated unsuspectingly round the feed. Coker & Co. were taken utterly by surprise. "Lend a hand, Bunter, you beastly funk!" gasped Coker. (See Chapter 6.)

"Kick him out yourself!" growled Potter.
"I say, you know, would you fellows like a stunning feed?" asked Bunter, closing the door after him, as he rolled into the study.

Would they?
The frowns vanished from the faces of the Fifth-Formers as if by magic. Where tea was to come from was a painful question in Coker's study that afternoon. Billy Bunter had rolled in in the nick of time.

"Come into a fortune?" asked Greene suspiciously.
"I know where any amount of tuck can be got," said Bunter, sinking his voice. "I suppose you chaps don't mind lending me a hand to raid it?"

"Whose is it?"
"Fishy's."

"Fish!" exclaimed Coker, giving his face a final dab, and then flinging Potter's handkerchief into the grate. "That Yankee bounder who had the cheek to ink my chivvy."

"Did he?" chuckled Bunter. "He, he, he!"

"What are you cackling at?" roared Coker.

"He, he, he—I—I mean, what an awful cheek to ink your face, Coker! That's what I really meant to say. I say, you fellows, Fishy is going to stand himself a tremendous feed. He's got a packing-case coming with heaps of grub in it."

"A packing-case!" exclaimed the three Fifth-Formers, in a breath.

"Yes. Hundreds of cakes and jam-tarts and things," said Bunter, drawing on his imagination a little. "It must be

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true, after all, about his pater being a millionaire. Even Mauly doesn't have feeds like that."

"But is it true?" said Coker doubtfully. "You're such a blessed Ananias!"

"I heard him giving directions to Gosling about the packing-case. And he's going to keep it all to himself. He says he isn't asking anybody."

"Greedy pig!" said Greene.

"I thought of you fellows at once, and came to tell you, before speaking to anybody else," said Billy Bunter. "The packing-case is coming here by the carrier. It gets here at half-past three!"

"Barely three yet," said Potter, looking at his watch.

"Considering the way that cheeky Yankee has handled you, Coker, I think we ought to raid his feed."

"They've raided my feeds more than once," said Coker. "One good turn deserves another. You're sure of this, Bunter?"

"Quite sure," said Bunter eagerly. "Of course, after the packing-case gets here, we can't get at it. Gosling will have charge of it. But we can lay for the carrier, and get it out of his cart, you know. We'll tell him some yarn, or—just take it by force, you know. You fellows can help me."

"Help you!" said Coker disdainfully. "Fat lot of good you will be. It will be easy to get it away from old Cripps, but—but there will be trouble afterwards."

"You're not afraid of Fishy, I suppose?"

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"Blow Fishy! I'm thinking of the Head. Old Cripps will complain to him if we take a packing-case out of his cart."
 "I've thought of that," said Bunter. "What about putting on masks?"

"Masks!" ejaculated Coker. "Yes," said Bunter boldly. "We could shove masks on, and jump out on old Cripps in a lonely part of the road, you know. Then we could lift the packing-case, and he wouldn't be any the wiser."

"Oh, my hat!"
 "And—and I'd speak to you as Ponsonby, and you could call me Gadsby, and then Cripps would think it was the Highcliffe chaps," said Bunter eagerly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "It would be a ripping joke up against the Remove," said Potter. "We'd tell them about it afterwards, of course."

"Of course, that would be the cream of the joke," Coker agreed. "Blessed if I know where you got such a ripping idea from, Bunter, you fat ass."

"Oh, I think of things, you know," said Bunter complacently. "I always was a rather brainy chap, you know. If you fellows follow my lead—"

"Catch us following your lead, you duffer," said Coker, with a sniff. "We'll take the matter in hand, and you can come along if you like."

"Oh, really, Coker—"
 "No time to lose, either, if we're going to catch old Cripps before he gets in sight of Greyfriars," Potter remarked.

"Well, let's get off," said Coker. "Are you coming, Bunter?"

The fat junior glared at him.
 "Am I coming?" he hooted. "Of course I'm coming, fathead!"

"What about the masks?" asked Greene.
 "Handkerchiefs will do, tied over the chivvy, with holes cut in for the eyes and mouth, you know."

"That will spoil the handkerchief," said Potter.

"Oh, rats! Got any other idea?"

"Well, no."

"Then shut up!"

"I think—"

"No time for thinking now," said Coker briskly. "Come on! We'll put on lounge jackets, and turn them inside out, see?"

"I say, fellows will stare if they see us going out wearing jackets turned inside out," objected Greene.

"Fathead!" roared Coker. "We turn them inside out afterwards, when we're on the spot."

"Oh, I see."

"Time you did!" growled Coker. "Blessed if being head of this study isn't like being chief in a home for idiots!"

"Look here—"

"Oh, come on!"

And Coker of the Fifth led the way from the study, followed by Potter and Greene and Billy Bunter; and the latter's fat little legs had to go like clockwork to keep pace with the strides of the Fifth-Formers.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. Amateurs of the Road!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. were busy on the football-field, playing the Upper Fourth Form eleven. Fisher T Fish was walking about the Close with his hands in his pockets, making mental calculations, and sometimes referring to his pocket-book, and dropping into Gosling's lodge every now and then to deliver further instructions on the subject of the packing-case. The coast was clear for Coker & Co. Nobody took any notice of them as they walked across the Close, and sauntered out of the gates.

Fisher T. Fish probably saw them, but he did not waste a thought upon them. He was thinking of more important things than Coker & Co. of the Fifth—of the mighty scheme he had been scheming, and which was represented by the weird and mysterious initials, "F.E.P."

Coker & Co. quickened their pace as soon as they were in the road.

The leader of the raiders gave the signal to halt, as they reached a portion of the lane where it was very narrow, and shaded on both sides by big thick trees. It was an ideal spot for the professional practices of gentlemen like Dick Turpin and Jack Sheppard, whom Coker & Co. were now understudying.

"Here's the place," said Coker. "Get out of sight in the hedge."

"There's a beastly ditch there," said Bunter, blinking about him. "It's more than a yard across."

"Can't you jump a yard, fatty?"

Bunter blinked doubtfully at the ditch. It was several feet deep, and though there was not much water in it, there was plenty of mud and slime, and a fall into it would have made Bunter feel extremely uncomfortable. Bunter was not given to athletic exercises, and he abhorred jumping.

"Get across," said Coker. "You've got to get out of sight, ass. You're fat enough to be seen a mile off."

"Oh, really, Coker—"

"Are you going to jump, or shall I sling you across?" Coker demanded.

"I—I—I'll jump!"

"Buck up, then!"

Billy Bunter took a run, and launched himself across the ditch. He scrambled on the other side, narrowly escaping rolling down the incline, and bundled head first through the gap in the hedge. Coker and Potter and Greene followed him.

They crouched behind the hedge, keeping keen eyes on the road for the carrier's cart.

"Mind, jump out when I give the word," said Coker impressively. "We'll stop him, and yank out the packing-case, and drag it away to the old barn. We can hide it there, and open it."

"Suppose it's too heavy to carry?" Greene suggested.

"Rats! There are four of us! Don't make difficulties," growled Coker. "After we've got it open, we can load ourselves up with as much grub as we can carry, and hook it. Old Cripps may come back with help, you know."

"My hat! If we were collared, and taken up to the school—"

"We'll take jolly good care we're not."

"Here comes somebody!" murmured Billy Bunter.

"Quick—the masks!" exclaimed Coker hurriedly.

The four highwaymen had been preparing their handkerchiefs to serve as masks. They tied them over their faces now, and the effect was certainly very curious, with their eyes gleaming through jagged holes in the handkerchiefs. Their features were effectually concealed.

"Jolly good!" murmured Coker, surveying his companions. "Nobody would know us from Adam now."

"I say—" began Bunter.

"Shut up! They'll hear us."

"It isn't the carrier!" muttered Potter.

"No; somebody on foot, but we don't want to be spotted. Shush!"

Coker peered into the road. Six or seven fellows in Eton jackets and Highcliffe caps were coming up the road. Coker recognized Ponsonby & Co. of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe School—the deadly foes and rivals of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars.

"Only Highcliffe kids!" said Coker contemptuously.

"They're looking this way!" murmured Potter, peering through the hedge.

"Let 'em look!"

"Hullo! Who's there?" called out Ponsonby.

"Mind your own business, and clear off, or we'll come out and wallop you!" called back Coker. "You know me—Coker of Greyfriars—and I could wallop half Highcliffe on my own! Sheer off!"

"My excellent Coker, your company is not sufficiently entertaining to detain us!" said Ponsonby politely.

The Highcliffians chuckled, and walked on.

"They're gone, thank goodness!" said Bunter.

But the Highcliffe fellows were not gone far. They halted when they had passed the bend in the lane, and Ponsonby winked at his comrades.

"There's some game on," he said, in a low voice. "I saw the silly asses—four of them—and they've got rags tied over their silly faces. They're lying in ambush for somebody."

"Not for us," said Gadsby.

"No, it seems not; but we'll jolly well see what they're up to," said Ponsonby. "It may be a chance to chip in, and score off Greyfriars. We owe them a long account, and we can pay up to Coker as we can't get at Wharton."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll get back along the hedge, on the other side of the road, and watch them across the lane," said Ponsonby, with a chuckle. "Then we shall see what the duffers are up to, and we can chip in if we like."

"Good egg!"

The Highcliffians plunged through the hedge, and crept back towards Coker's ambush, on the opposite side of the road.

In a few minutes they were directly opposite Coker's

ANSWERS

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ambush, and watching the road through the openings in the hedge.

But they were very silent, and Coker & Co had not the slightest suspicion of their proximity. Coker had already forgotten them, in fact; he was listening for the wheels of the carrier's cart.

There was a rumble of wheels and a cracking of a whip on the solitary road at last.

Coker's eyes blazed with excitement through the holes in the handkerchief.

"Here he comes!" he muttered.

"Oh, good!"

"Mind, jump out when I give the signal—all together. You, Potter, collar the horse. He will be quiet enough; he's too old to buck. I'll point my fountain-pen at Cripps, and tell him to stand and deliver."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shush! Bunter and Greene, you stand ready to collar him if he resists. I can't really blow his silly old brains out with a fountain-pen, of course; and it would be against the law, anyway."

Rumble, rumble!

Coker squeezed into the gap in the hedge, ready to jump.

The carrier's cart was in sight now, rumbling on at an extremely leisurely pace, with old Cripps sitting on the shaft half asleep, leaning back against a variety of packages and bundles. The old horse, too, seemed half asleep as he ambled gently along the lane.

"Jump!" muttered Coker.

"Right-ho!"

Coker leaped across the ditch into the lane. After him went Potter and Greene, quick as lightning. Billy Bunter scrambled after them—not at all eager for the fray, but very keen indeed to get at the packing-case. He missed his footing on the crumbling edge of the ditch, and there was a sudden squelch and a yell for help.

"Ow, ow! Grooh! Help! I say, you fellows, kummun help m'you!"

But the Fifth-Formers did not heed. Billy Bunter might have fallen as far as the centre of the globe without attracting the slightest notice from Coker & Co. at that moment.

Potter had seized the horse, and was holding him by the head. The horse came very willingly to the halt—he was much fonder of halting than of going on. Potter hadn't the slightest difficulty with him.

Coker and Greene ran at the carrier, who opened his sleepy eyes wide, and blinked at them in amazement, his straw nearly dropping from his mouth.

Coker levelled his fountain-pen.

"Stand and deliver!" he shouted.

"Wot!" ejaculated old Cripps.

"Hands up!" shouted Greene.

Coker & Co. had not been brought up to the business, of course, and so they really did not know what highwaymen would say under the circumstances. So Coker spoke in the style of Dick Turpin, and Greene after the manner of Deadwood Dick. But Cripps did not play up, as it were. He neither stood and delivered nor put his hands up. He simply sat on the shaft, and stared blankly at the disguised Greyfriars fellows.

"Which I'm dreamin'," he murmured. "I thort p'r'aps that last glass woz one too many. I thort as p'r'aps it was."

"Hands up!" repeated Greene.

"Tain't snakes this time, nor centipedes crawling up the walls," said old Cripps with some hazy recollection of an experience that had followed a glorious "burst" at the Pig and Whistle. "But it's a dream, all the same."

"Have the old idiot off that cart!" said Coker.

They grasped Cripps, and yanked him off the shaft.

The carrier dropped into the road with a bump, and perhaps the concussion on the hard ground convinced him that he was not asleep. At all events, he yelled loudly, and began to struggle.

"Sit on him!" gasped Coker. "Where's that fat idiot Bunter? He can sit on him!"

"Groo-hooh!" came from Billy Bunter.

He was crawling out of the ditch, and he looked a horrible object. His fat face was more effectually disguised by mud than by the tied handkerchief, and the scent he brought with him from the slimy depths of the ditch was appalling.

"Ow, ow, ow!" groaned Bunter.

"Sit on Cripps!" shouted Coker. "We'll get the packing-case out."

"Groo-hooh!"

"Do you hear me, you fat idiot?"

"Groo-hooh! I'm nearly suffocated! I—"

"Don't come near me!" shouted Greene. "You're too whiffy!"

"Ow, ow!"

Cripps, the carrier, made a sudden effort, and jumped up. Perhaps it had dawned upon his slow brain by that time that he was in the hands of a band of practical jokers, and THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 320.

FOR NEXT
MONDAY—

"APRIL FOOLS ALL!"

EVERY
MONDAY.

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

that they were neither highwaymen nor visions conjured up by strong overdoes of ale at the Pig and Whistle.

He made a jump for his whip, and grabbed it, and the thong sang through the air. It caught Bunter round his fat legs, and the Owl of the Remove jumped and roared.

"Yaroo! Ow! Stop it!"

"Collar him!" roared Coker.

"Hands up!"

The three Fifth-Formers of Greyfriars rushed at Cripps, and the carrier went down again. Then Greene planted himself on his chest, and pinned him down, old Cripps grunting all the time, and indulging in remarks that were really lurid. But he could not pitch Greene off, and he had to submit to his fate.

The horse, fortunately, stood still of his own accord. In fact, he seemed to have gone to sleep, standing. Coker and Potter shifted the articles piled in the carrier's cart, and dragged out the packing-case to view. It was a packing-case of considerable size, nailed up with care, and addressed in large, black, stencilled letters to:

"Fisher T. Fish, Esq., Greyfriars School."

"That's it!" exclaimed Coker.

"Good! Have it out!"

Bump!

The heavy packing-case descended into the road.

Coker and Potter lifted it, with combined efforts, and ran it through the hedge on the other side of the road, where there was, fortunately, no ditch in the way. The packing-case bumped and tore through the gap in the hedge, and six or seven fellows who had been watching the scene with wide-open eyes backed away among the trees out of sight as Coker and Potter came panting through after the packing-case. Ponsonby & Co. had not lost anything of what had passed, but it did not suit them to show themselves just yet.

The packing-case bumped down on the inner side of the hedge in the field close by the clump of willows where Ponsonby & Co. had taken cover. Coker jumped back into the road.

"It's all right," he gasped. "Put that old duffer into his go-cart and start him off."

"Good egg!"

Cripps was swung into the cart, and Coker gave the horse a smart cut, and the carrier went down the road.

Cripps shook his fists furiously at the masked raiders as he went. He had missed the packing-case from his cart, and he knew now what he had been stopped for. But Coker & Co. did not pay any attention to Cripps. They plunged through the hedge, and grasped the packing-case, and rushed it away towards the old barn—there to be opened, and the contents to be "whacked" out.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Raiders Raided!

"MY hat! It's heavy!" Coker gasped, as the packing-case was dumped down in the old barn.

"Must be an awful lot of tuck in it, if it's really tuck!" said Potter breathlessly. "What on earth can Fisher want all that stuff for?"

"We'll soon see whether it's tuck or not!" said Coker.

He ripped open the top of the packing-case.

Inside there was a straw-and-paper packing, and in the packing reposed the good things of which Fisher T. Fish was receiving so large a consignment.

There was no doubt about it.

There they were—the bottles of sweets, the large cakes, the tarts packed in cardboard, candied fruits, too, and other things luscious to the eye.

Billy Bunter's little round eyes grew quite distended behind his big spectacles. The sight of the opened packing-case seemed to take his breath away.

"M-m-my word!" murmured Bunter. "Isn't this ripping, you fellows? Isn't it simply gorgeous? I'm going to start on the tarts."

And he did!

Fat jam-tarts crunched up at a remarkable speed between his active jaws.

Potter and Greene and Coker were not slow to follow his example. It was the feed of their lives. There was ample to eat, and still to leave more than they could carry away in their pockets. As for Fisher T. Fish, they did not give him a thought. The fellow who could order such a consignment of tuck, and keep it all for himself, did not deserve any consideration.

So busy were Coker & Co. with the feed that they did not hear stealthy footsteps outside the barn; they did not see the grinning face of Ponsonby of Highcliffe peering in at the open doorway.

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of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars. Order Early.

The Highcliffians had followed them to the barn. It was time, as Ponsonby confided to his chums, for Highcliffe to chip in. A feed like that, to be had for the trouble of taking it, was not to be missed.

Ponsonby peered in, and then drew back and joined his comrades.

"They're feeding!" he whispered. "They've got tons of tuck—simply tons! Blessed if I know where it all came from! Jolly queer, I call it. But there it is, and we're going to have it!"

"We are!" murmured Gadsby.

"We is!" grinned Monson.

"Absolutely!" chuckled Vavasour.

"There's more than enough of us to handle them," went on Ponsonby. "There are only three. Bunter's no good in a fight—he'll hop it immediately. We're seven against three, and that will more than make up for their size. And we shall surprise them!"

"No doubt about that!" grinned Merton.

"A sudden rush, and we'll have 'em down," said Ponsonby. "I've got some whiplard here; we can tie their hands, you know, and mop the ground up with them. Then they can watch us feed."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hush! Don't let them hear us! They are Coker, Potter, and Greene. They've got their silly masks off now, and I've seen their faces. Coker is an awful slogger—three of you pile on him at once, and have him down!"

"Right-ho!"

"Now, come on!"

Almost breathless with excitement, the Highcliffe fellows crept towards the door of the old barn. The voice of William George Bunter could be heard.

"I say, you fellows, ain't this prime?"

"Prime isn't the word," said Potter. "It's topping, ripping, spiffing—absolutely IT! Never had such a feed!"

"Very good of Bunter to put us on to it," said Coker.

"You can eat as much as you like, Bunter."

Bunter grunted. He intended to do that, anyway.

"Rather a surprise for Fishy when the carrier gets there without the consignment," Greene remarked, with a chuckle.

"It will give him a tip not to ink the chivvies of Fifth-Form chaps, perhaps," said Coker. "Hand over that seed-take. I've finished the currant one."

"Here you are!"

"Pass the chocolate-creams, somebody."

"By Jove! This is all right!"

"All right, is it?" murmured Ponsonby, at the door. "Go for 'em, you chaps!"

There was a sudden rush.

Seven Highcliffe fellows came in like a whirlwind and hurled themselves upon the Greyfriars fellows, seated unsuspectingly round the feed.

Coker & Co. were taken utterly by surprise.

Ponsonby, Monson, and Gadsby collared Coker at once, and had him over on his back in a twinkling; two others piled on Potter, and two more on Greene. The three Fifth-Formers of Greyfriars sprawled helplessly on the ground, with their assailants rolling over them, clutching them and keeping them down.

Billy Bunter was not attacked; that was not necessary. The fat junior sat where he was, blinking at the startling scene through his big spectacles, and still mechanically munching chocolates.

Surprised, outnumbered, and overwhelmed as the Greyfriars fellows were, the fight was a terrific one.

Potter and Greene were soon subdued, with a couple of Highcliffians seated upon each of them, pinning them down by sheer weight, and punching them unmercifully at every attempt to struggle.

But the great Coker was not so easily dealt with.

Coker was a fighting-man from top to toe. There were three fellows clinging to him like cats, pommelling him, punching him, bashing him, as they rolled on the ground. But Coker never even thought of surrender.

He fought to the last gasp.

Had he been upon his feet, with his hands free, he would probably have knocked Ponsonby and Gadsby and Monson into three separate cocked hats.

But they had the advantage, and they kept it.

Coker succeeded in getting his right arm free, and hitting out, and Gadsby fairly flew across the barn, and landed on his back with a bump and a grunt.

Coker made a desperate effort to rise, but Ponsonby's arm was round his neck from behind, and he was dragged back to the ground. Monson piled on him heavily, and all the breath was knocked out of the unfortunate Coker.

Still he struggled, and it was not for some minutes that he was secured—not till he was quite exhausted.

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Then he lay panting under the weight of the equally breathless Highcliffians.

"Lend a hand, Bunter, you beastly funk!" he gasped, as he saw the Owl of the Remove still seated upon the packing-case, blinking.

"Oh, really, Coker—"

"Drag these beasts off!"

"I—I'll go and get help!" said Bunter, waking to a sense of his own danger, as soon as Ponsonby & Co's hands should be free.

"You fat funk!"

"Stop him!" exclaimed Ponsonby, as Bunter made for the door, both hands full of good things which he had grabbed up hastily.

But the Highcliffians were too busy holding their prisoners, and Bunter dodged out of the barn and fled.

"Never mind him!" said Vavasour. "We've got these rotters! Where's that whiplard?"

"Here you are! Tie them up, and mind you make it safe!"

"Absolutely!" grinned Vavasour.

"Don't resist," smiled Ponsonby. "If you give any more trouble you'll be hurt. Punch their heads if they wriggle, Vav!"

"What-ho!"

Potter wriggled, and his head was duly punched, and he roared. Then he submitted quietly to having his wrists tied together.

"That's one," said Vavasour. "Now for Greene. Are you going to be quiet, Greene?"

"Go and eat coke!" growled Greene. "Yow-ow! Leggo my ear! Ow!"

"Are you going to be quiet?"

"Ow! Yes! Ow!"

"Good!"

And Greene's hands were tied.

Horace Coker recommenced a furious struggle as Vavasour approached him, with a piece of cord in his hands; but now that the others were secured, the whole crowd of Highcliffians were able to pile on Coker, and he was almost squashed by them as they did so. In fact, hardly anything could be seen of Coker excepting his large hands, which emerged from the heap of juniors crowded on him, and which Vavasour was binding together at the wrists.

"That's done," said Vavasour.

"Quite safe—what?"

"Absolutely!"

"Good egg!" said Ponsonby. "Let the brute alone now."

Coker gasped, his face perfectly crimson with rage and breathlessness, as the Highcliffians left him. His hands were secured, and he was too exhausted to rise to his feet. He glared in speechless fury at Ponsonby & Co.

"Now for the giddy feed!" chuckled Ponsonby.

"That fat fool has got away!" said Monson. "Suppose he brings a gang of the rotters here? It's a half-holiday, you know. There may be a lot of them about. And if he brought Wharton and the rest here—"

Ponsonby nodded.

"Quite so," he agreed. "We'll collar the grub and get off. There's a lot of packing-paper here, and we've got some string. Pack up all we can carry, and we'll shove the rest down the necks of these fellows."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you rotters!" groaned Coker. "Oh, you cads! If I could get my hands free, I'd—I'd—"

"Shut up!" said Ponsonby.

"Why, you—you—"

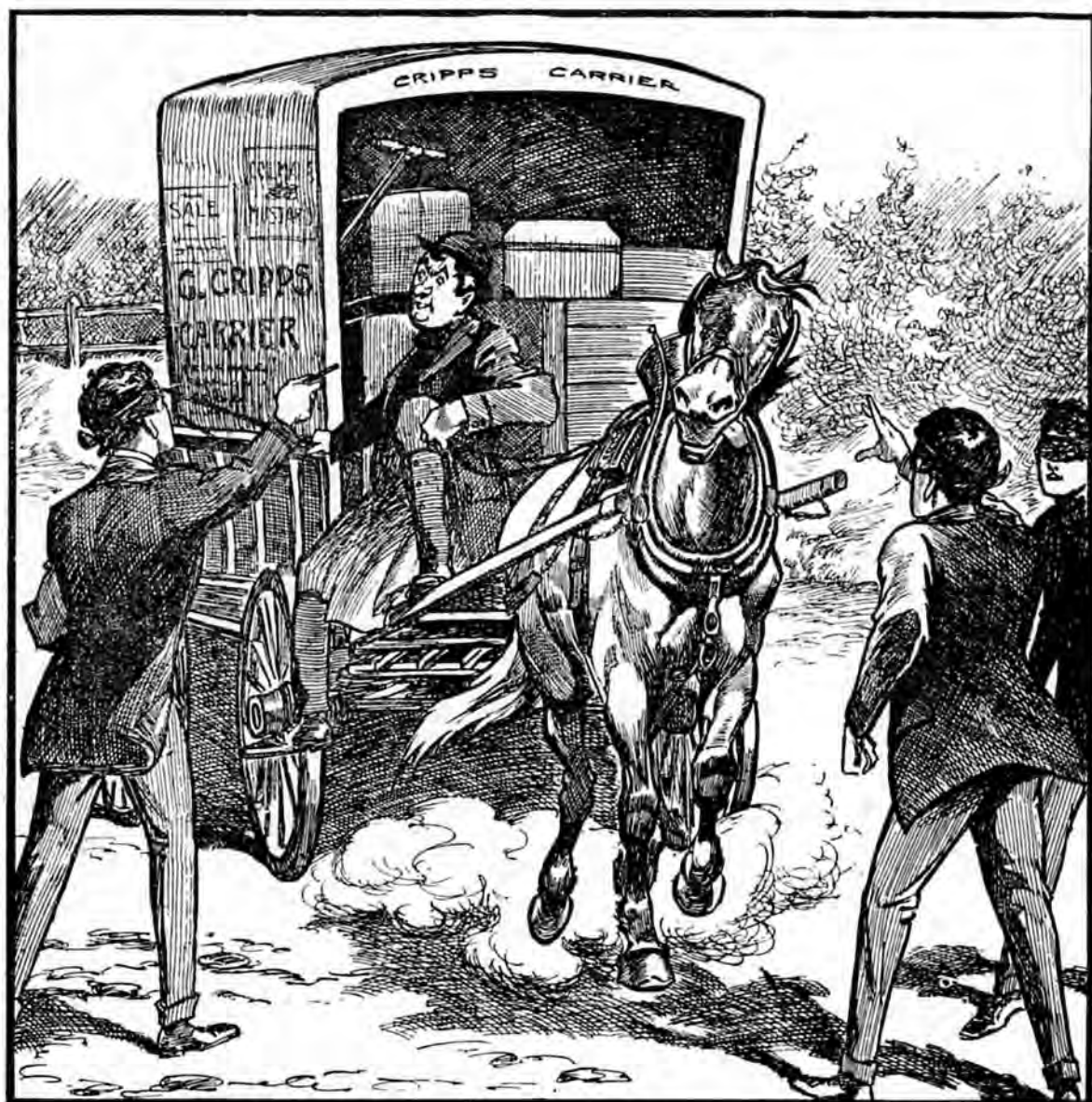
"Shove something into his mouth," said Ponsonby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monson screwed up a handful of packing paper and jammed it into Coker's mouth. The Fifth-Formers of Greyfriars spluttered wildly, amid yells of laughter from the Highcliffe juniors. But he did not pass any further remarks, and Potter and Greene maintained a diplomatic silence. They had had the worst of it, and they were at the mercy of the enemy, and, under such circumstances, a still tongue showed a wise head.

The raiders made up huge bundles of their plunder—tucking into the good things at the same time—with many chuckles. It was a very satisfactory afternoon to Ponsonby & Co. It was very seldom that they scored over the Greyfriars fellows; but they had undoubtedly scored this time. And the fact that Coker & Co., glowering with rage, were watching them, added to their satisfaction.

The three Fifth-Formers had risen to their feet. Their hands were tightly bound, and they could not interfere with the Highcliffians; but their legs were free. Coker made a sign with his head to the others, and the three of them edged towards the door. They had no desire to have the tarts and other things that could not be carried away jammed down the backs of their necks, as Ponsonby intended. The raiders



Coker and Greene ran at the carrier, who opened his sleepy eyes wide, and blinked at them in amazement. Coker levelled his fountain-pen. "Stand and deliver!" he shouted. "Hands up!" "Wot?" ejaculated old Cripps. (See Chapter 6.)

were too busily occupied for the moment to keep an eye on the Fifth-Formers, and it was not till the trio made a sudden rush through the doorway together that Ponsonby noticed them.

"Hallo! After them!" he exclaimed.

The Highcliffians ran to the door.

Coker & Co. were racing away across the field, running very fast in spite of the fact that their hands were bound.

"Oh, let them go!" said Vavasour. "We've licked them, anyway. No time to worry about them now. We want to get off with the loot."

Ponsonby uttered a sudden exclamation.

"Great Scott! Look there!"

"Cripps!"

"And Tozer!"

"Trouble, by gum!"

From the doorway of the old barn the juniors could see into the lane. Cripps the carrier was in sight, and with him P.-c. Tozer, of Friardale. The carrier was talking excitedly, and P.-c. Tozer was nodding his head as he listened.

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FOR NEXT
MONDAY—

"APRIL FOOLS ALL!"

Evidently the carrier had come upon the fat constable in the lane, and reported the daring highway robbery to him, and brought him along in the hope of capturing the raiders before they could escape with their plunder.

"Get into cover, quick!" muttered Ponsonby.

The Highcliffians dodged back into the old barn at once.

They were looking decidedly serious now.

Coker & Co. were gone, and Cripps and Mr. Tozer were coming along investigating. And if Ponsonby & Co. were discovered in possession of the plunder matters might turn out very serious for them.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER. With a Little Alteration!

"BETTER hook it!" murmured Gadsby.
"That's the sensible thing, Pon."
"Absolutely."
"We can drop out of the window at the back, and clear off, Pon."

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of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars. Order Early.

"Come on!"

Ponsonby shook his head.

"We're not going to clear off without the loot," he said.

"But they'll see us," exclaimed Gadsby, "and they'll see the bundles! Don't be an ass, Pon! Tozer is quite duffer enough to run us in for being found in possession of stolen property, or some such rot. You know what a chump he is!"

"Let's hook it, for goodness' sake!" said Merton uneasily. "You leave it to me," said Ponsonby. "I'm thinking this out. Look here, those two old duffers haven't sighted us. They don't know the packing-case is here. Shove the things out of sight, and load the case up again with something or other to make it weigh as much as before."

"What the dickens—"

"There's only one board been ripped off the top, and we can shove the nails in again," said Ponsonby. "Cripps won't know it's been opened."

"But—"

"Don't you see? We'll let him have it back to take on to Greyfriars."

"Oh crumbs!"

"It will be rather a surprise for the consignee when he opens it and finds it stacked full of turf and old bits of wood and things."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We can hide the plunder here, and come back for it when those two chumps have cleared off," added Ponsonby.

"Good egg!" said the Highcliffians heartily.

They lost no time.

The remains of the contents of the case were whipped out, and the whole of the loot was quickly hidden out of sight in a heap of old straw in a corner of the barn.

Then the packing-case was refilled, straw and turf being ready to hand, as well as several chunks of wood and pieces of brick.

The packing-paper and cardboard were carefully replaced, the last trace of them being sedulously picked up from the floor.

Then Ponsonby replaced the piece that had been removed from the top of the packing-case; and the nails were driven in again in their places.

The packing-case, with its big stencilled address to Fisher T. Fish of Greyfriars, presented now exactly the same aspect as when Horace Coker and his comrades had dragged it into the barn.

Ponsonby glanced cautiously out of the door again.

Cripps and Mr. Tozer were in the field, and were coming slowly towards the barn. They were evidently in search of the stolen packing-case and the raiders.

"They'll see us if we clear," Vavasour murmured.

"And they know us by sight," said Monson. "We don't want to be reported to Dr. Voysey for this, Pon."

"That's all right," said Ponsonby. "Get into the loft. They won't think of looking there, and if they do we can crawl out on the roof."

"But, I say—"

"Buck up. They'll be here in a few minutes. There's old Tozer pointing towards the barn. He's thought of looking here already."

Ponsonby remained close to the trapdoor to watch.

Full five minutes elapsed before Cripps the carrier and Mr. Tozer entered the old barn. Mr. Tozer was not a believer in hurry. The strenuous life did not appeal to him at all.

He uttered an exclamation as he entered the barn.

"My heye, look at that, Mr. Cripps!"

Cripps stared at the packing-case.

"Is that the one wot you 'ave lost?" asked Mr. Tozer.

"That's it!" said Cripps.

"Then it ain't been stolen at all," said Mr. Tozer. "It was a joke of some of them young rips from the school, like I told you all along."

Cripps grunted.

"I wish I knowed which of the young rips it was, that's all," he said. "I'd report 'em to the 'Ead, and get 'em flogged. I would!"

"Well, there's your packing-case," said Mr. Tozer. "Not damaged at all, fur as I see."

"It looks all right," grunted Cripps. "I s'pose it was only a joke, arter all? Course, I didn't really believe they was 'ighwaymen."

"You told me you did," said Mr. Tozer.

"Look 'ere, I s'pose you wouldn't mind lendin' me a 'and with this 'ere case back to the road?" said Cripps.

Mr. Tozer obligingly lent a hand, and the packing-case was carried out of the barn.

"All serene!" murmured Ponsonby.

And the Highcliffians descended.

From the barn they watched Cripps and Mr. Tozer bear the packing-case across the field, into the road, and place it in the carrier's cart.

Then Mr. Cripps drove away once more in the direction of THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 320.

FRANK RICHARDS

Contributes a Splendid, Complete School Tale
in our New Saturday Companion Paper—

"CHUCKLES," ½d.

Greyfriars, and Mr. Tozer resumed his stately and stolid march towards Friardale.

"Coast's clear!" chuckled Monson.

"Absolutely."

"Get out the bundles, and we'll travel," grinned Ponsonby. "I fancy that this time we can consider that we have dished and done the Greyfriars rotters all along the line."

"Yes, rather!"

"Hurrah for us!"

"And what a giddy feed we'll have at Highcliffe," said Gadsby.

"What-ho!"

And the triumphant Highcliffians disinterred the good things from their hiding-place, and left the old barn, loaded up with bundles of plunder.

At Highcliffe that afternoon there was a most tremendous feed in Ponsonby's study; and the feed had an added relish from the knowledge that the good things had been plundered from their old rivals at Greyfriars.

But at Greyfriars—

That was another story.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

All Ready!

"I GUESS that carrier's pretty late!"

"Tain't my fault!" grunted Gosling.

"You said half-past three," said Fisher T. Fish discontentedly. "Now it's half-past four. What's the matter, hey?"

"Which I don't know," said the Greyfriars porter. "And wot I says is this 'ere, tain't my business. Soon as the carrier comes, you gits your box, but I ain't going out looking for him, Master Fish!"

And Fisher T. Fish strolled out of the porter's lodge with a knitted brow, and took a glance along the road from the gates, in the hope of spotting the carrier's cart. But the carrier's cart was not in sight. Fish sauntered back, his brow more knitted than ever. His great scheme, whatever it was, was to be carried out that afternoon, and it depended upon the safe arrival of the packing-case. The delay in the delivery was most exasperating under the circumstances.

The Remove footer-match was over now; they had beaten the Fourth Form—as usual, as Bob Cherry put it. Harry Wharton & Co. had come along to the tuckshop for refreshment in the shape of ginger-beer, after changing. They spotted the Yankee junior wandering disconsolately in the Close, with his hands thrust deep into his trousers pockets. Bob Cherry called to him.

"Come and have a ginger, Fishy, and cheer up!"

Fisher T. Fish joined the Removites.

"My packing-case ain't arrived," he explained. "It gets my mad up! You see, I'm carrying out the scheme this afternoon."

"What scheme?"

"What scheme!" snorted Fish. "F.E.P., of course!"

"Blessed if I hadn't forgotten all about your silly F.E.P.," yawned Bob. "What does it stand for, anyway?"

"I guess you'll see," said Fisher T. Fish, sipping his ginger-beer. "You hop along to my study when the packing-case arrives, and you'll know, I guess."

"Been making any more preparations in the study?" growled Johnny Bull. "If you have, you know what's going to happen, Fishy."

"I guess I can carry on a business in my own study if I want to!"

"Then you've guessed wrong," said Bull grimly. "No businesses are going to be carried on in Study No. 14."

"I reckon—"

"So it's a business, is it?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Yep!"

"Lemme see—you've tried a moneylending business, and a pawnbroking business, and a shopkeeping business," said Wharton, laughing; "they weren't brilliant successes, any of them, that I remember."

"I guess this is a new line—quite slick."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, there's the carrier!" said Bob Cherry. Cripps had arrived at last.

A crowd of Removites accompanied Fisher T. Fish as he hurried out of the tuckshop. The packing-case was lying outside Gosling's lodge, and the carrier was gone when they arrived there. Cripps was in a hurry to finish his round; he had lost a considerable amount of time over Coker's raid.

"Waal, I guess it's come at last," said Fisher T. Fish, surveying the packing-case with great satisfaction. "Hyer it is!"

"What's in it?" asked Wharton.

"Tuck!"

"Tuck!" exclaimed all the juniors, in a breath.

"Yep!"

"You're going to stand a big feed?"

"Nope!"

"Starting shop-keeping again?" howled Bob Cherry.

"Nope!"

"Then what is the little game?" demanded a dozen voices at once.

"Help me get this case to my study, and you'll see," said Fisher T. Fish.

Some of the juniors obligingly lent a hand with the packing-case. Many hands make light work, and the case, big and heavy as it was, was safely conveyed into the School House, up the stairs, and dumped down in the end study. Quite a crowd of fellows collected there, to see what was to follow. Fisher T. Fish's mysterious advertisement had excited great curiosity; and the news that he had received a packing-case full of tuck, brought the curiosity up to burning-point.

Billy Bunter came into the School House, looking very muddy and fatigued, and he paused on his way to the dormitory, to ascertain the cause of the commotion in the Remove passage.

"What's the little game?" he asked.

"Fishy's got a packing-case full of tuck, by the carrier!" Skinner explained.

Billy Bunter nearly fell over.

"He's got it!" he gasped.

"Yes; it's just arrived."

"Just arrived!" stuttered Bunter.

"Yes," Skinner stared at him. "What do you know about it, Bunter?"

"Oh, n-n-nothing!" stammered Bunter. "B-b-but it can't have arrived, you know. Have you seen it?"

"Yes; it's in Fishy's study now!"

"Well, my hat!"

Bunter rolled along to No. 14, and looked in. There was the packing-case, right enough, unopened. Fish had no time to open it just then; he was busy with other things.

Billy Bunter blinked at the packing-case as if his little round eyes would burst through his spectacles. He was utterly mystified. But he did not intend to let Fisher T. Fish know his connection with the raiding of the packing-case, so he held his peace. But he waited with much interest and curiosity to see the packing-case opened. He felt that Fish would be surprised when he saw the interior. The Highcliffe raiders had evidently allowed the carrier to have it again, to bring it on to Greyfriars; but it was not likely that they had left the original contents in it. Bunter's fat face broke into a grin as he reflected what the contents of the case probably were.

Fisher T. Fish had taken a huge sheet of cardboard from the study cupboard. Something was written upon it, in huge letters, evidently in preparation for this moment, when the great announcement was to be made.

The juniors caught sight of the initials that had puzzled them so much—"F.E.P."

"Look here!" exclaimed Bolsover major. "We're jolly well going to know what that means, Fishy. If you don't explain, we'll bust that packing-case open and scoff the tuck."

"Hear, hear!" said Skinner.

"Good idea!"

"File in!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Fisher T. Fish hurriedly. "I guess I'm going to explain now. This is the announcement."

"Buck up, then!" growled Bolsover.

"Hyer's the announcement—read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest," said Fisher T. Fish impressively; and he set the big cardboard up on the study mantelpiece, where the whole crowd could see it and read.

And the Removites read, with ejaculations of surprise and wonder. Of all the weird and wonderful ideas they had seen of Fisher T. Fish's, this was undoubtedly the weirdest and wonderfulest.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

No Sale!

FISHER T. FISH surveyed the amazed crowd of juniors with a pleased eye as they read the famous announcement. He was extremely satisfied with the impression he was making. The Yankee junior dearly loved the limelight. And the announcement was certainly both surprising and interesting. It ran:

"NOTICE!

F.E.P.

FISH'S EASY PAYMENTS.

"Gentlemen with Limited Incomes can now obtain Accommodation in purchasing Tuck by dealing with Fisher Tarleton Fish, in No. 14 Study, Remove Passage, Greyfriars.

"F. T. Fish supplies Tuck of the Best Quality on the Easy Payment System.

"Tuck to the Value of Sixpence may be purchased on the THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 320.

FOR NEXT
WEDNESDAY—

"APRIL FOOLS ALL!"

EVERY
MONDAY.

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

Initial Payment of One Penny, the remainder to be paid in regular weekly instalments of One Penny Each for six weeks.

"Larger Amounts on the same scale.

"All Goods Best Quality! All payments Easy! Roll up in your thousands, and support the Old Firm!"

F.E.P.

FISH'S EASY PAYMENTS.

ROLL UP!"

The juniors read the notice through, and stared at Fisher T. Fish. The mysterious meaning of F.E.P. was explained at last. It stood for Fish's Easy Payments. After all his other great schemes, Fish had hit upon the brilliant idea of running a tuck business on the instalment system. He had invested a sum of ready money in a supply of tuck—bought on wholesale terms from the manufacturers—hence the big packing-case. And now he was prepared to retail it to the Removites—at a profit, of course—on the Easy Payment System!

It was really a well-chosen moment, as it was near tea-time, and, of course, a good many of the juniors were in a state well-known to schoolboys, of stony impecuniosity. Easy payments were likely to appeal to the minds of those youths who had run through their pocket-money, and did not expect to receive any more for some days.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry at last. "So that's the idea!"

"I guess that's it!"

"Grub on the instalment system!" chuckled Frank Nugent.

"Well, this beats all the other giddy schemes, I must say!"

"And that's the rotten business you want to run in my study, is it?" growled Johnny Bull.

"I guess I'm going to run my own business in my own study—some."

"Not half a bad idea, either," said Bolsover major. "I'm out of cash, and I was going to have tea in Hall—I'm blessed if I won't be a customer."

"Faith, and so will I!" said Micky Desmond. "But phwat do you mean intirely by six payments of a penny each, after one penny down, Fishy? That doesn't make sixpence; that makes sivenpence intirely!"

"I guess that's the firm's profit," said Fisher T. Fish. "I'm not in business on the instalment system simply for my health, you know."

"So you're going to make a penny on every sixpence?" said Bob Cherry. "How many per cent. is that, Fishy?"

"About seventeen per cent.," remarked Johnny Bull.

"Well, I've got to wait half a blessed term for the last penny, haven't I?" demanded Fisher T. Fish. "A business man must make a profit somehow to pay for the expenses of running a business, and the loss of interest on capital sunk in the concern."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Bolsover major. "I sha'n't miss the extra penny in another six weeks' time."

"May even forget all about it by then!" grinned Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess customers won't be allowed to forget their liabilities in this hyer firm," said Fisher T. Fish emphatically.

"Customers will be expected to pay on the nail. In default of regular payments, all subsequent payments become due at once, on the spot, and have to be paid in spot cash!"

"And how will you collect it?" queried Harry Wharton.

"I suppose there's such a thing as common honesty in this school!" Fisher T. Fish exclaimed indignantly.

"If there is, it isn't much in your line, Fishy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nuff chin-wag!" said Fisher T. Fish. "Who's going to deal with the F.E.P. Company? Customers are requested to roll up!"

"I'll have a tanner's-worth!" said Ogilvy.

"Put me down for half-a-crown," said Bolsover major.

"The payments on half-a-crown last thirty weeks, I suppose?"

"That they jolly well don't!" said Fish promptly. "I'm not running this business as a provision for my old age. Half-a-crown is five sixpences—you pay fivepence down, and fivepence a week for six weeks!"

"Oh, that alters the case! I'll have a bob's worth, then!"

"Twopence down, and twopence a week for six weeks, for a bob," said Fish.

"All serene! Hand out the tuck!"

Quite a number of the juniors had decided to start business with the F.E.P. Company.

Even those who were stony were able to raise or to borrow the necessary penny or twopence for the first payment. A dozen voices called on Fisher T. Fish to hand out the tuck.

A Magnificent, Long, Complete School Tale
of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars. Order Early.

The American junior took a hammer, and started on the packing-case. The Removites stood round, watching him with great interest—especially Bunter. Bunter was intensely curious to learn what would be disclosed when the lid was off the packing-case. He was pretty certain that it would be nothing eatable.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Wrench!

The top came off the packing-case.

Fisher T. Fish dragged away the paper packing inside, and then—

Then a sudden change came over his face.

His eyes opened wide, and his long, thin nose seemed to extend and dilate in his astonishment and dismay.

"Great George Washington! What—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the matter?" asked Bob Cherry, peering over Fish's shoulder. "Why, what on earth have you got there?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stones, and turf, and chunks of wood!" ejaculated Harry Wharton. "What in the name of the dickens is all that stuff good for, Fishy?"

"Are you charging a penny down and a penny a week for old firewood and things, you ass?" roared Bolsover major.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fisher T. Fish's face was a study as he dragged out the contents of the packing-case.

Nothing of an eatable nature was disclosed.

There were a considerable number of ginger-beer bottles, certainly, but they were empty; and there were cardboard

boxes that had contained cakes and tarts, but there were no cakes or tarts in them.

"Waal, I swow!" ejaculated Fish. "What the deuce? What the dickens? My only summer bonnet! Who's been doing this?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So it's one of your little jokes, and you've been pulling our leg all the time, Fishy?" growled Bolsover major.

"Tain't a joke!" roared Fish. "Somebody's been raiding my packing-case, and putting in all this bosh instead of the grub. My grub's been stolen!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cackling jays!" yelled the exasperated merchant of the Remove. "Which of you has been raiding my tuck?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites roared with laughter.

It was too funny, after the flourish of trumpets with which Fisher T. Fish had announced the opening of the great new wheeze, to find that the whole stock of the F.E.P. Company had been raided, and useless lumber substituted in its place.

The easy payments would evidently have to be deferred. Nobody was likely to pay a penny down, and a penny a week for six weeks, for anything that was contained in that packing-case.

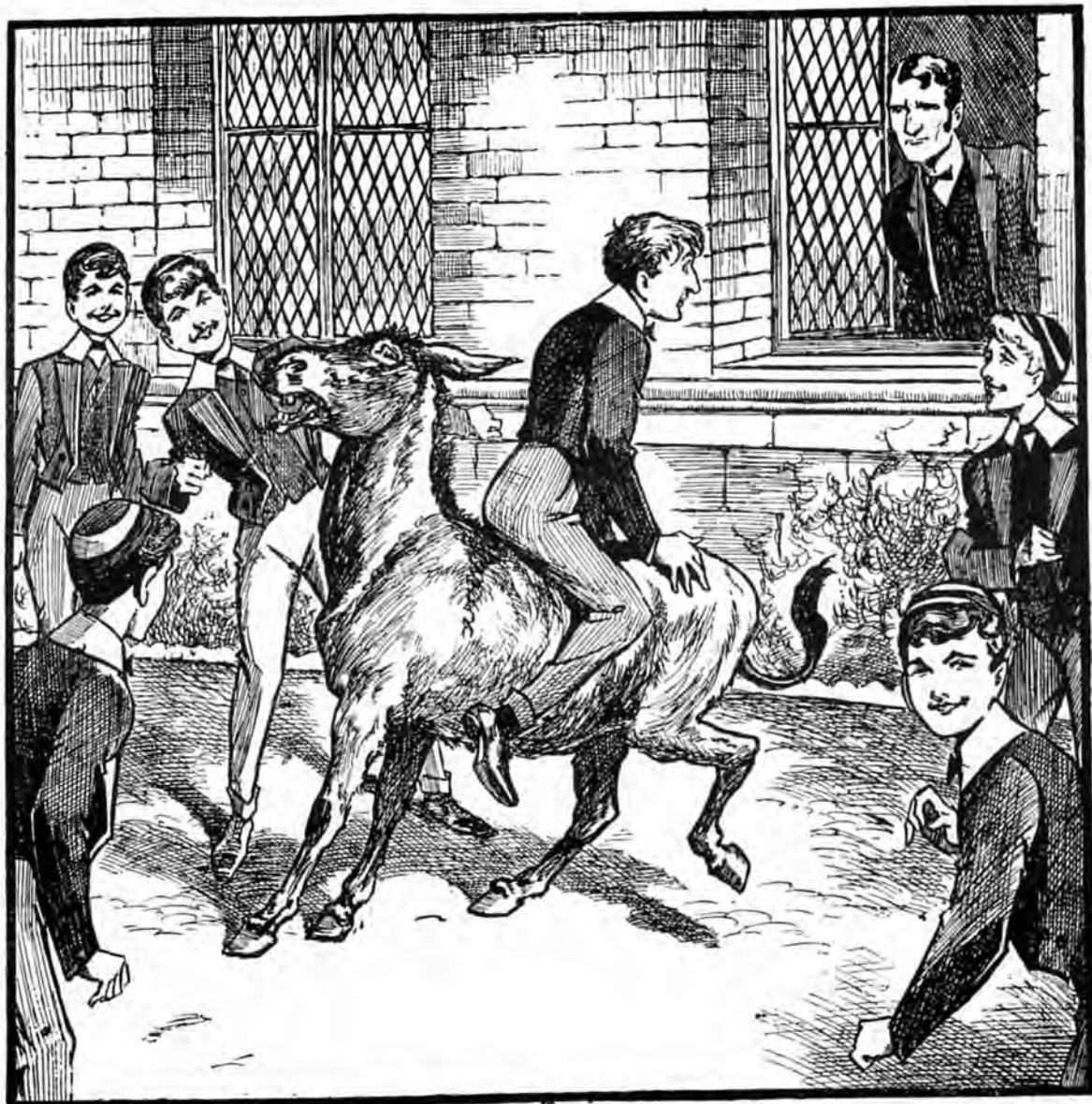
Fisher T. Fish seemed almost dazed.

Not the slightest suspicion had entered his mind. The packing-case was exactly as he had received it from the carrier.

Evidently it had been tampered with somewhere on the



A Magnetite does his elder brother a really good turn by accompanying him round the golf-links and carrying his clubs for him, a regular "caddy" being unobtainable.



"Fish!" roared Mr. Quelch. "How dare you ride about the grounds in this ridiculous manner!" "Ow! I guess— Oh, dear!" gasped Fisher T. Fish. "I think he's fastened to the moke, sir!" said Bob Cherry. (See Chapter 12.)

road—but where, and by whom, was a question he could not possibly answer.

Only one thing was certain, and that was that the great business on the instalment system would not be started in No. 14 Study that afternoon.

And Fisher T. Fish did not receive any sympathy at all from the juniors. They only howled with laughter. The yelling Removites streamed out of the study, leaving Fisher Tarleton Fish alone—with feelings that could not possibly be expressed even in the most expressive terms of the great American language.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER. Unavoidably Postponed!

COKER & CO. kept their own counsel on the subject of the raid. They didn't want to confess how they had been "done" by a set of Fourth-Form juniors from Highcliffe. Billy Bunter kept his own counsel, too. Bunter was not a fighting-man, and he did not want to have
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the exasperated American descending upon him in his wrath.

The mystery of the raided packing-case would have remained a mystery, had not enlightenment come from an unexpected quarter. Ponsonby & Co. had triumphed, and they could not forbear letting all Greyfriars know that they had scored.

On the following day a postcard arrived for Fisher T. Fish. It bore the Highcliffe postmark, and written upon it was the single word:

"THANKS!"

That was all. There was no signature, and no clue save the postmark to the identity of the sender.

But that was sufficient.

As soon as the indignant Fish displayed the postcard, the Removites all knew where the original contents of the packing-case had gone to.

"Highcliffe!" grinned Bob Cherry. "They must have got it away from the carrier somehow, Fishy, and cleared it out, Fancy Ponsonby & Co. bringing off a wheeze like that! I never thought they had sense enough!"

Fisher T. Fish snorted indignantly.

"I guess I'm going to have my grub back!" he exclaimed. Bob chuckled.

"That won't be easy; it's all eaten before this!"

"Then I calculate they'll have to pay for it. I guess I'm going to make them. I'm not going to be done out of two quids' worth of tuck for nothing. It's more than a joke, I guess!"

"Oh, it's all in a day's work!" said Harry Wharton. "We've raided them, you know. Why, we've raided them in their own quarters before now!"

"I don't care! I'm going to make them pay up!"

"Better take it as a joke. You won't get anything out of them; and you can't prove that they did it, anyway!"

"I guess this hyer postcard is proof, if I show it to the Head of Highcliffe!"

Harry Wharton's face grew very grave.

"Better not do that, Fishy. It's rather rough, losing so much tuck at one giddy fell swoop, but there's no good to come of sneaking. That's what it amounts to. We've always been down on the Highcliffe chaps because they drag the masters into the rows, and make complaints. We don't want to imitate them."

"Who's going to pay for my grub?"

"Grin and bear it!" suggested Johnny Bull.

"I guess I'll grin as wide as you like, but I'm not going to bear it. I guess I'm going to have two quids out of Ponsonby!"

"You won't get it!"

"Then I'll make his headmaster pay up!"

"Look here, Fishy—"

"No good chin-wagging," said Fish. "This isn't a joke, this is business—cold business from the word 'go.' As a matter of fact, I've sent a fresh order to the wholesale firm, and the goods will have to be paid for. Where are the quids coming from?"

"You can cancel the order, you know."

"Then what's going to become of the easy payments business?"

"Chuck it!" suggested Nugent.

"I guess I'm not chucking a first-class, gilt-edged wheeze like that. Ponsonby & Co. have got to whack out two quids, or I'll know the reason why!"

"Now, look here, Fishy—"

"Nuff said! I mean business."

And Fisher T. Fish walked away. The chums of the Remove regarded one another uneasily. The Highcliffe raid had certainly been disappointing to Fish, but they were all agreed that it was not the "game" to complain to the headmaster of Highcliffe. They had always been down on Ponsonby & Co. for sneaking in like manner. It was "up" to the rival juniors to take what knocks they received with fortitude, and to depend upon themselves to get square with the enemy. But the enterprising Yankee did not look at it in that light. It was business with him—business from the word "go," as he expressed it in his wonderful language.

"He's jolly well not going over to Highcliffe to complain!" said Harry Wharton, with a frown. "It will let us all down! The rotters will be able to say that we don't play the game any more than they do."

"We can't fall from our high estate in that way," agreed Bob Cherry. "But Fishy means to bike over to Highcliffe after dinner, all the same. I suppose we can't collar him and tie him up—what?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Well, no. But—"

"Going to bike over, is he?" remarked Peter Todd. "Suppose he found a set of punctures in his bike?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Toddy!" said Bob Cherry approvingly. "There won't be time for him to walk over there and back before afternoon class, so that will put it off, anyway."

Peter Todd grinned and strolled away towards the bicycle-shed.

After dinner, Fisher T. Fish, looking very determined, came out of the School House. Quite a number of the Remove accompanied him, curious to see what he was going to do. Fish made his way to the bike-shed, somewhat puzzled by the fact that a dozen of the Remove followed him.

"Going for a spin, Fishy?" asked Bob Cherry blandly.

The Yankee junior grinned.

"I'm going over to Highcliffe, I guess."

"You haven't thought better of it?"

"Nope!"

Fish took his machine off the stand. Then he gave a yell of wrath. His tyres were as flat as pancakes! "Oh, gum, I'm punctured!" he exclaimed. "Some silly ass has been playing tricks with my bike!"

"Oh, you know those American bikes!" said Bob Cherry disparagingly.

"I guess an American bike can lay over anything you can produce in this old country!" snorted Fisher T. Fish. "But I can't ride this jigger. Will you lend me your bike, Cherry?"

"Nope!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Will you lend me your jigger, Wharton?"

"I guess not."

"Will you, Nugent?"

"I calculate that I won't."

"Bull, old man—"

"I reckon not."

"I say, Linley—"

"Nothing doing!" chuckled Mark Linley.

"Look here, how am I going to get over to Highcliffe?" demanded Fisher T. Fish wrathfully. "I guess there isn't time to walk there and back."

"Better chuck up the idea."

"I guess not. I'll go over after lessons!" growled Fish.

"Now all you silly jays can clear off while I mend these rotten punctures!"

The juniors cleared off chuckling, and Fisher T. Fish was kept busy mending punctures till the bell rang for afternoon classes.

He looked decidedly ill-tempered when he came into the Remove Form-room, with a smear on his face and his hands decidedly dirty. Mr. Quelch, who was a great stickler for personal cleanliness and tidiness, spotted him at once, and called out to him in stern tones:

"Fish!"

"Yes, sir!" growled Fish.

"What do you mean by coming into the Form-room in that dirty state?"

"I guess I've been mending punctures, sir, and I hadn't time to clean up after the bell rang, sir."

"You must not come into the Form-room like that. Go away and clean yourself at once! You will take a hundred lines, and stay in after lessons to write them out."

"Oh, I swear!"

"Don't make ridiculous ejaculations here, Fish, or I shall cane you!"

"I say, sir, I've got an engagement after lessons—a most important engagement!"

"That is enough, Fish."

"But I guess, sir—"

"Silence!" said Mr. Quelch in a terrific voice, with an Olympian frown. And Fisher T. Fish said no more, but left the Form-room to clean up. He came back looking certainly cleaner, but more cross than ever.

After lessons he had the pleasure of remaining in the Form-room to write lines, while the rest of the Remove were dismissed. And when his lines were finished and taken in to the Form-master's study, it was too late for the intended visit to Highcliffe, which had to be postponed once more. Harry Wharton & Co. hoped that by the following day Fisher T. Fish would have thought better of it, but they did not know their Fish.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Looking Backward!

"WHERE'S Fishy?"

It was the following day, and Fisher T. Fish had hurried out of the Form-room the moment morning lessons were over. He had certainly not gone out on his bike, for that morning the unfortunate "jigger" had been discovered suffering from a fresh set of punctures. But he had disappeared.

"The rotter!" said Bob Cherry wrathfully. "He's gone over to Highcliffe on Shanks's pony, I suppose. I hope they'll scalp him!"

The Famous Five looked about for Fisher T. Fish, but he was not to be found. He was not in his study, but on the door of his study was pinned a large sheet of paper, with a notice daubed on it in big letters.

"NOTICE!"

BUSINESS UNAVOIDABLY POSTPONED TILL SATURDAY AFTERNOON!

"On Saturday afternoon the F.E.P. Company will resume business on the same premises, and customers are invited to roll up in their thousands. Tuck of the best quality supplied on easy terms: (Signed) FISHER TABLETON FISH."

A 7d. NOVEL THAT COSTS 3d.!

The "Fiction Lover's Library." at all Newsagents' and Booksellers'. Published twice a month. Equal in quality and quantity to any 7d. or 1/- novel.

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OUR COMPANION PAPERS: "THE GEM" LIBRARY, "THE PENNY POPULAR," "CHUCKLES," 1d. Every Wednesday. Every Friday. Every Saturday, 2

"So there's a fresh supply arriving to-morrow," growled Johnny Bull, "and he's gone over to Highcliffe to get the quids to pay for it."

"He won't get them, anyway."

"More likely to get it in the neck," growled Johnny Bull, "and serve him jolly well right, too! He's jolly well not going to turn my study into a tuck-shop!"

And Johnny Bull tore down the notice from the door and deposited it in fragments in the waste-paper basket.

Meanwhile, Fisher T. Fish was on his way to Highcliffe.

Having found his bicycle unridable, the Yankee junior had walked off, at the risk of missing his dinner, by being late back. The second supply of tuck had been ordered, and was to be delivered, and the money had to be found. Fisher T. Fish often declared that his "popper" in New York had so many millions of dollars that it would hardly be possible to count them; but it was noticeable that the dollars did not find their way to Greyfriars in any large number. For the son of a multi-millionaire, Fish was remarkably careful with his money, and did not seem to be over-supplied with it. Apparently the loss of two pounds was sufficient to nip the great easy payments business in the bud.

As it happened, Fish did not need to go so far as Highcliffe School to see Ponsonby. Ponsonby and Gadsby and Vavasour were outside the school, and amusing themselves with the gentle occupation of pelting a donkey in a neighbouring field, when they sighted the Greyfriars junior on the road. That kind of amusement was a favourite one with Ponsonby & Co., and they roared with laughter at the unfortunate donkey careered about the field in the vain attempt to escape the whizzing stones.

"Hallo, here's a Greyfriars cad!" Gadsby exclaimed suddenly.

"And all on his lonesome!" Ponsonby said, with a grin. "It's Fishy! Collar him!"

Fisher T. Fish marched directly up to the Highcliffe juniors.

"I guess I was looking for you," he announced.

"I guess we were looking for you too!" said Ponsonby. "What a coincidence!"

"You owe me ten dollars," explained Fish. "You raided my packing-case the other day. Ten dollars, please!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess you're going to pay up!" said Fish, glowering at them. "I'm a business man. If you don't shell out, I'm going to your headmaster!"

"And how are you going to prove that we did it?" asked Ponsonby pleasantly.

"I guess I've got your postcard hyer!"

"My what?"

"The postcard you sent me."

"My dear chap, you're dreaming! I never sent you any postcard!" said Ponsonby, with a look of astonishment.

"Look at that!" said Fish, taking the postcard from his pocket and holding it up for the Highcliffe juniors to see. "What do you call that? Hyer, hands off—you rotter—yah—you cad!"

Ponsonby had snatched at the postcard, and he jerked it away from Fisher T. Fish. The American junior sprang at him, but Gadsby and Vavasour interposed, and Ponsonby calmly tore the postcard into fragments and threw the pieces into the ditch. Fisher T. Fish gasped with rage. With all his boasted outeness, he had allowed the Highcliffe fellow to deprive him of his only piece of evidence. Fisher T. Fish prided himself upon never "getting left," as he called it, but he had decidedly "got left" this time.

"I don't think you'll show that postcard to Doctor Voysey," said Ponsonby sweetly.

"Look here!" roared Fish furiously. "You're going to pay up!"

"I guess not!" grinned Gadsby.

"Absolutely not!" smiled Vavasour.

"Besides, it wasn't us raided your blessed packing-case!" said Ponsonby. "It was your Coker. We only got it away from him. Coker had scoffed a lot of the tuck before we dropped on him."

"Coker!" ejaculated Fish.

"Coker and Potter and Greene and Bunter," said Ponsonby. "They got it away from the carrier, and we got it away from them. But if you go to Doctor Voysey with any yarn on the subject I'm afraid we sha'n't know anything about it. In fact, we weren't anywhere near the place that day. Were we, you fellows?"

"Hardly!" said Gadsby. "We had gone over to Lantham to—see a football match, I think."

"Exactly!" agreed Ponsonby. "We were at Lantham, and we can produce a dozen fellows who saw us there—if necessary."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fisher T. Fish glared at the Highcliffians. His chances of extracting two pounds from Ponsonby & Co. seemed decidedly slim now.

"I guess I'll get it out of Coker!" he muttered angrily.

"You're welcome to," chuckled Gadsby. "I say, you're THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 320.

"APRIL FOOLS ALL!"

EVERY
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

not going, are you? Don't deprive us of the pleasure of your company so soon."

"I guess I'm off."

"Ain't you tired with walking so much?" asked Ponsonby, with a wink to his comrades. "I really think you ought to ride back to Greyfriars. And there's another donkey here all ready."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess—Hands off, you jays!"

Fisher T. Fish struggled as the three Highcliffians closed round him and collared him. But he had no chance against the three of them. According to Fisher T. Fish's own glowing accounts he was a terrific fighting-man when he got his "mad" up. But perhaps his "mad" was not "up" just now. At all events, Ponsonby & Co. made short work of him.

"Hold him while I catch his relation!" grinned Ponsonby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look hyer, I guess—"

"Shut up!" said Gadsby, closing his finger and thumb upon Fisher T. Fish's long and prominent nose. "This is where you cheese it!"

"Gerrroogh-hoo!" gurgled Fish.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Leaving Fish a helpless prisoner in the grasp of Vavasour and Gadsby, Ponsonby jumped the ditch, and caught the donkey in the field. He led the scared animal out into the road.

"Whoa!" said Ponsonby. "Now, shove him up, you fellows! Face to the tail, so that he can admire the scenery."

"Yow-ow! You rotters! Ow!"

"Heave-ho!" chuckled Gadsby. "Up with him!"

Fisher T. Fish was heaved upon the donkey's back, with his face to the animal's tail. Fish was not a good rider at any time, and in that uncomfortable position he was less expert than ever. He jammed his knees convulsively against the donkey's ribs to avoid being pitched off into the road.

"Beautiful rider, ain't he?" said Ponsonby. "We shall have to tie him on to make him safe. Don't want to break his valuable neck."

"Look here, you rotters—Yow-ow!"

Ponsonby took the rope from the donkey's neck, and fastened Fisher T. Fish's feet with it, under the animal.

"Now lead him home!" grinned Ponsonby.

And the Highcliffe juniors, roaring with laughter, led the donkey away down the road towards Greyfriars.

Fisher T. Fish was crimson with wrath.

But he was helpless, and he had to hold on to the donkey's rough hide with both hands to avoid slipping sideways, which would have led to disaster.

Right down the road to Greyfriars Ponsonby & Co. led the donkey, Fisher T. Fish addressing them all the time in fluent American.

Outside the school gates they halted. The gates were wide open, and they could see some of the Greyfriars fellows within.

"I guess you're not going to send me in like this," howled Fisher T. Fish. "Look hyer, you let me go, and—and I guess I won't say anything more about the two quid."

"You can say as much as you like about it, my dear chap," said Ponsonby. "You can go on talking about it till you're black in the face, if you like."

"I guess—Ow—ow!"

"Start him!" said Ponsonby.

The donkey was headed into the gateway, and Ponsonby gave him sharp cut across the legs. The donkey broke into a run, and disappeared through the school gates, and the Highcliffians, yelling with laughter, ran back down the road.

Fisher T. Fish, clutching wildly at the donkey's back, charged backwards through the gateway into the Close.

He could not see where he was going, as his face was turned to the animal's tail, and it was all he could do to hold on and keep his seat. There was a roar in the Close at the sight of the donkey and his peculiar-looking rider.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"It's Fishy!"

"He's brought his brother here."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaroo!" roared Fish. "Stop him! Help! Yah! I guess I'm just going to fall! Yaroo! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The donkey, startled and scared by the yells of the Greyfriars fellows, was fairly galloping now.

Fisher T. Fish clung wildly and convulsively to his back.

The donkey raced round the Close, and fellows gathered from all sides to watch the extraordinary sight.

The roars of laughter brought Mr. Quelch to his study window, and he looked out into the Close, his eyes growing wide at the sight of the Yankee junior careered along with his face turned to the donkey's tail.

FOR NEXT
MONDAY—

A Magnificent, Long, Complete School Tale
of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars. Order Early.

"Fish!" he shouted.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Hellup! Yaroooh!"

"Wharton! Nugent! Coker! Stop him at once!" shrieked Mr. Quelch. "This is—disgraceful. Stop him! Bring him here! Goodness gracious!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fellows made a rush for the careering donkey, and headed him off just in time from the doctor's garden. The donkey backed away from the crowd, and backed towards the School House, and the juniors succeeded in cornering him under Mr. Quelch's window. The donkey's tail being turned towards the house, Fisher T. Fish was facing the Form-master at the window, and the expressions upon their faces as they looked at one another made the Greyfriars fellows shriek.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

No Payment!

MR. QUELCH stared at Fisher T. Fish, and Fisher T. Fish stared at Mr. Quelch.

The donkey, quiet at last, was backing against the window-sill, the circle of fellows in front of him keeping him from bolting again.

Mr. Quelch waved his hand.

"Silence!" he exclaimed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence, I say. Fish, how dare you ride about the grounds in this ridiculous manner. You know perfectly well that you are not allowed to ride in the Close, especially in that utterly absurd manner, like a—a—a circus performer."

"Ow! I guess—Oh, dear—"

"I think he's fastened on the moke, sir," said Bob Cherry demurely.

"On the what, Cherry?" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"The—donkey, sir."

"Unfasten him at once."

The grinning Bob cut through the rope, and Fisher T. Fish was free. He rolled off the donkey's back, and landed with a bump and a yell upon the hard and unsympathetic ground.

The donkey, startled by his yell, threw up his heels and bolted, the fellows making room for him to pass, and with a clatter of heels the frightened animal disappeared out of the gates.

Fisher T. Fish scrambled breathlessly to his feet.

He was dusty and dishevelled, and utterly out of breath, and he stood gasping like a newly-landed fish.

"Now, Fish, explain what this means," said Mr. Quelch sternly. "What is the meaning of these extraordinary antics?"

"Ow! I guess I couldn't help it," stuttered the Yankee junior. "I kinder reckon I didn't ask them to fasten me on to the burro, sir."

"Oh, you were fastened upon the donkey against your will?" asked Mr. Quelch, his frown relaxing a little.

"I guess so, sir."

"Kindly name the persons who played this absurd joke," exclaimed Mr. Quelch, his gimlet eyes roving round upon the grinning crowd.

"It was the Highcliffe chaps, sir," panted Fish.

"Oh, that alters the case! You may go and make yourself tidy, Fish."

"Groo! All right, sir!"

Mr. Quelch closed his study window sharply. He did not want to hear any more complaints about the Highcliffe fellows. There had been more than enough trouble with the neighbouring school of late.

Fisher T. Fish staggered away, still panting. He was followed by yells of laughter from the crowd in the Close. Fish's wild ride round the Close on the mettlesome donkey was a sight not likely to be soon forgotten by the Greyfriars fellows.

Fisher T. Fish was still looking flushed and breathless when he came in to dinner. But there was a determined gleam in his eye. He had not succeeded in getting anything but a free ride from the Highcliffe fellows, but he had obtained the information that Bunter and Coker were responsible for the raiding of the packing-case. And so he still had a lingering hope of recovering his two quids.

After dinner, his long, thin fingers closed on Bunter's fat shoulder as the Remove fellows came out. Bunter blinked up at him.

"I want to know," remarked Fish.

"Leggo!" growled Bunter, alarmed by his expression.

"You had a hand in raiding my tuck the other day," said Fish, compressing his grip. "You and Coker and Potter and Greene."

"Oh, really, Fish, it was the Highcliffe chaps—"

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FRANK RICHARDS

Contributes a Splendid, Complete School Tale "CHUCKLES," 1st in our New Saturday Companion Paper—

"Ponsonby's told me."

"Ahem! Coker might have had something to do with it," said Bunter, in a reflective sort of way. "Now I come to think of it, I saw him there. But I wasn't there myself. I was miles away."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "How did you see Coker there, if you were miles away? Those specs of yours must be a real marvel!"

"I—I mean that—that—I— Ahem—"

"You meant to tell whoppers," said Fish. "You owe me ten bob, Bunter. That's your share of the damage. Pay up!"

"You—you see, Fishy—"

"I see that I'm going to be paid for my tuck," said Fish. "Where's that ten bob? Or do you want me to go to Mr. Quelch about it?"

"If you're going to take it like that, I'll settle up my share," said Bunter, with a great deal of dignity.

Fisher T. Fish held out a bony hand.

"Shell out, then!" he said laconically.

"At the present moment I happen to be short of money," said Bunter. "But I am expecting a postal-order this evening—"

"Good old postal-order!" chuckled Harry Wharton. "If Fishy waits till then, and lives to get it, he will beat Methuselah hollow!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"I guess I want two dollars and a half out of you, Bunter," said Fisher T. Fish, "and I guess I'm going to get it! Shell out!"

"I tell you I'm stony!" howled Bunter. "Leggo my shoulder. I'll settle up when my postal-order comes, you Yankee beast!"

"I'll give you till this evening," said Fish. "I guess I'm going to see Coker now. Anybody know where Coker is?"

"Coker's in his study," grinned Bob Cherry. "If you make Coker shell out, it will be worth seeing. I rather fancy you won't get anything but a thick ear."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fisher T. Fish sniffed, and walked away to the Fifth Form passage. Coker and Potter and Greene were in their study when he arrived there. Peace and plenty reigned once more in Coker's study. Aunt Judy had come up to the scratch, as it were, and Coker was in funds again, and no chums could have been more chummy than Potter and Greene.

"Hallo! What do you want?" demanded Coker of the Fifth, as Fish presented himself without ceremony in the study.

"I guess I want two dollars and a half out of each of you merchants!" said Fisher T. Fish promptly.

"When will you have it?" queried Potter banteringly.

"Now, or when you can get it?"

"I guess I'll have it now."

Coker picked up a cricket-stump.

"Where will you have it?" he asked.

"Look hyer," said Fish, backing away a little. "I know all about it. You fellows raided my packing-case the other day, and the Highcliffe chaps raided you. That packing-case of grub cost me two quid, wholesale prices. You've got to pay. Two dollars and a half from each of you galoots, and Bunter. Shell out!"

The Fifth-Formers laughed in chorus.

"I guess I'm going to have the spondulics!" howled Fish. "If you think I'm going to stand a loss like that, you're mistaken! You hear me?"

"I hear you," assented Coker. "I could hear you at the end of the passage for that matter. You Remove kids have raided my feeds often enough. This is a Roland for an Oliver. See? Now get out!"

"I guess I'm not going without my money. Two dollars and a half from each of you."

"There's two ways of going out of a study," said Coker cheerfully. "On your feet, or on your neck. Which way do you prefer?"

"I guess I want my durocks!"

"Feet or neck?" asked Coker.

"I guess—"

"My hat! He thinks it's a guessing competition!" said Coker. "I'm fed up with his guessing! Chuck him out!"

"Hands off!" yelled Fish, as the grinning Fifth-Formers collared him. "I guess I want to be squared! I guess—Yaroooh!"

Bump!

Fisher T. Fish descended violently into the passage, and the study door was slammed after him.

The Yankee junior picked himself up slowly and painfully, and shook a bony fist at the closed study door, but did not venture to open it again. There was evidently nothing to be had from Coker & Co.

Fisher T. Fish limped away, a sadder, if not a wiser, junior.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! How did you get on with Coker?" asked Bob Cherry, as the Removites met him at the end of the passage.

Fish groaned.

"Ow! The beasts chucked me out! Ow! I guess I'm hurt!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I kinder reckon I'm going to have the tin!" declared Fish. "I guess I'm going to their Form-master now!"

Harry Wharton held up his hand.

"You're not!" he said.

"I guess—"

"Sneaking's barred."

"Do you think I'm going to be done out of two quids' worth of tuck?" howled Fish.

Wharton nodded calmly.

"Yes, I do!"

"Why, I—I—I—" Words failed the indignant Fish.

"We've raided Coker often enough, and you've had your whack in what we've raided," said the captain of the Remove. "Now you've got done you've got to grin and bear it, same as we do when we get done. See?"

"I guess I—"

"Never mind what you guess. You're not going to Mr. Prout, and you're not going to Mr. Quelch, and you're not going to the Head. You're going to take it quietly, and make the best of it," Wharton explained.

"I suppose I can do as I like!" roared Fish.

"That's where you make a mistake," said Harry. "You can't! So long as you belong to the Remove, you've got to play the game. Mind, if you say a word to the masters you'll get a Form licking. We bar sneaks in the Lower Fourth."

"But this is a matter of business," protested Fish. "It isn't a joke, you know. This is cold business from the word go."

"And if you complain," went on Wharton, "how long do you think you'll be allowed to carry on an instalment-system business in the Remove, you ask? As soon as Quelch hears of it, he'll be down on you like a ton of bricks."

Fisher T. Fish started. He had not looked at it in that light.

"I guess this is rotten!" he groaned. "Slap goes ten dollars of good American money! I guess it's not good enough!"

"Well, chuck up the silly business, and stop playing the giddy goat," Bob Cherry suggested comfortingly.

Fisher T. Fish snorted defiantly.

"I guess that business is going on, and it's going to hum!" he said. "I guess this hyer firm don't shut down for one loss! No, siree! I guess the F.E.P. Company is still going strong! You hear me!"

And Fish walked away, with his long nose high in the air, realising at last that he had no choice but to cut his losses, but as determined as ever to carry on the famous business of supplying tuck of the best quality on easy terms to suit all purses.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Not To Be Let In!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. observed that Fisher T. Fish wore a slightly worried look the next day.

There was a new notice up on the door of Study No. 14, announcing that the business of the F.E.P. Company would be going strong in the afternoon. And Fish had announced his intention of going down to Friardale, and accompanying the new packing-case to the school in the carrier's cart, to make sure of safe delivery. All was plane sailing as far as that was concerned, and yet Fisher T. Fish wore a worried look.

The fact was, that Fish had ordered the second supply, to pay cash the same day; and he had nothing like two pounds to pay with, and no immediate prospect of raising the required sum.

To wait for two pounds to come in at the rate of a penny or twopence a week from each of his clients would take a very long time.

The firm that supplied him would expect payment by a remittance on Monday morning at the latest, and Fish knew that it would be weeks before he would have the cash to send the remittance.

Hence his worried looks.

In the afternoon he laylaid the Famous Five on their way to the football grounds. His manner was bland and confiding—a sure sign that he wanted something.

"I guess I've got a really topping thing to let you fellows into!" he began.

"Thanks!" said Wharton. "But you're not going to let us in—not if we know it."

"I guess I don't mean it that way," said Fish. "What I mean is, I guess that a big business like the F.E.P. Company—it's going to be a big business, you know, later on, with branches at Eton and Harrow and Winchester. I guess a business that size ought not to be a one-man show. I'm going to let you fellows into the company."

Fisher T. Fish made that announcement with a really magnanimous air. But the chums of the Remove did not seem to be duly impressed. They exchanged grins.

"Go on!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"You don't mean it!" ejaculated Nugent. "You shouldn't do these generous things all of a sudden, Fishy."

"The fact is, I intend to treat you generously," said Fish, in the frankest possible manner. "Mind, it isn't every fellow I'd make this offer to; but I have reliance on you chaps. You're straight."

"Thanks!"

"Not at all. Now I'm willing to give you shares in the business, say at the ridiculous subscription of eight bob each—that will be two pounds in all. Pretty reasonable, I call that. Don't you?"

"Eight bob each?" said Bob Cherry, with a shake of the head. "That isn't enough, Fishy. To run a big business like this, on the proper lines, you require capital. No good fooling about with shares at a few shillings. Make it a pound each."

Fisher T. Fish's eyes glistened. Bob's face was so solemn, that the Yankee junior, with all his boasted cuteness, did not suspect him of pulling his leg, and the Co., taking their cue from Bob, looked equally solemn and serious.

"Well, I guess that would be more O.K.," Fish agreed eagerly. "Say a quid each—that's five dollars in real money, and call it a go."

"Hold on, though!" said Bob meditatively. "This is really a good thing, isn't it?"

"Yep!"

"Quite reliable—certain profits, and things?"

"You bet!"

"And you're going to be quite square—no playing us for giddy goats, or anything of that kind?"

"Square as a die!" protested Fish.

"Then why not go the whole hog?" exclaimed Bob enthusiastically. "Instead of a miserable quid each, make it five pounds each, and do the thing on a proper scale."

"I—I guess that would make things hum," said Fish, scarcely believing in his good luck. "That would be twenty-five quid for the lot of you. Why, I could find a tremendous business with a capital like that. In a short time I'll have branch establishments in every public school in England. Fish's Easy Payments will become as well known as Standard Oil in the Yew-nited States. You're a jolly good business man, Bob Cherry. You know a real solid business proposition when you see one."

"Or, better still," went on Bob, with growing enthusiasm, "make it ten pounds each."

"Twenty pounds!" said Nugent, with a solemn wag of the head. "Twenty pounds, Fishy! That will make a total of

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fifty pounds. Of course, we shouldn't have the slightest difficulty in raising the money."

"Not half!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"I guess that would be O.K.—if you fellows don't object."

"All I object to is the smallness of the sum," said Johnny Bull. "If we're going into this thing, why not take a regular plunge? Make it fifty quid each, and chance it?"

"Good egg!" chorused the Co.

But Fisher T. Fish was getting a little suspicious by this time. He looked rather queerly at the Famous Five.

"Well, may I put your names down?" he asked.

"Certainly."

"And write down twenty quid against each name?" said Fish, taking out his pocket-book and a stump of pencil.

"Go it!"

"Good!" said Fish, making the entries. "Wharton, Nugent, Cherry, Bull, and Hurree Singh—twenty quid each, as members of the F.E.P. Company. Now, hand over the cash."

"Eh?"

"Of course, you haven't got it about you. You'll have to raise it. How long do you think it will take?" asked Fish anxiously.

Bob Cherry pondered.

"That's the question," he said seriously. "When do you want it, Fishy?"

"Waal, I guess I want it instanter."

"Ahem! I'm afraid it wouldn't be possible to-day."

"Monday, then?" asked Fish.

"Well, perhaps not Monday; that's rather sudden."

"Well, fix your date," said Fish. "I don't want to nail you down. When will you be able to hand over the dubs?"

"Say the thirty-second of February—"

"The what?"

"In the year 1990."

"What? I guess—"

"That's it," said Harry Wharton, with a nod, "Feb. thirty-two, Nineteen-hundred-and-ninety. You can absolutely rely upon it on that date—when it comes round. Good bye!"

And he gently pushed the gasping Fish out of the way, and the Famous Five walked on towards the football ground, grinning. Fisher T. Fish looked after them with feelings too deep for mere words. He realised at last that his cute Trans-Atlantic leg had been pulled, and that the Famous Five were not to be let into the great business—or, indeed, "let in" in any manner whatsoever.

"Oh, the jays!" murmured Fish—"the slabsided mug-wumps! Wasting a business man's valuable time! Poof! I guess I shall have to look somewhere else for shareholders in the F.E.P. Company."

There was not much doubt on that point. Fisher T. Fish drifted away, looking for shareholders. But, somehow or other, all the fellows who had any money seemed to fight shy of the Yankee junior's tempting offers. Dividends at the rate of ten and twenty per cent. on invested capital did not seem to attract them in the least. Perhaps they believed in the old adage concerning the enhanced value of a bird in the hand compared with two birds still in the bush. At all events, nobody was anxious to come forward and sink capital in the Fish Easy Payments Company. Fish was almost in despair when he came upon Lord Mauleverer, the dandy of the Remove, sauntering by himself in the Close. Fish's face lighted up at the sight of the schoolboy earl. Lord Mauleverer was simply rolling in money, and was very careless with it. Fisher T. Fish bore down upon him with renewed hope. Lord Mauleverer quickened his pace a little—the sight of Fisher T. Fish, brimming with eagerness, imparted a little energy even to the slacker of the Remove. But Fish quickened his pace also, and caught the schoolboy earl by a button, and stopped him, and Mauleverer sighed and resigned himself to his fate.

"I guess you've heard of the F.E.P. business, Mauleverer?" Fish began.

"Yaas."

"I'm looking for a shareholder," explained Fish. "It's a ripping, topping, really gilt-edged scheme, you know, and there are pots of money in it. I wouldn't make this offer to everybody, but I've got reliance on you. I know you're straight."

"Yaas."

"All I need is capital to the extent of two quid to make things fairly hum," said Fish. "I'm willing to put your name down as a preference shareholder. I promise you ten per cent., at least. Got that?"

"Yaas."

"Then you'll come in?"

"I'm going for a walk," Lord Mauleverer explained. "I don't want to go in yet."

Fish snorted.

"I mean, will you come into the business," he exclaimed.

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OUR COMPANION PAPERS: "THE GEM" LIBRARY, "THE PENNY POPULAR," "CHUCKLES," &c. Every Wednesday. Every Friday. Every Saturday, 2.

"Mind, if it wasn't a first-class gilt-edged investment, I guess I wouldn't ask you. But you're just the fellow I want—a fellow who's keen and businesslike, and up to snuff—ahem! You plank down the ten dollars, and I do the rest. See?"

"Yaas!"

"Then you'll take shares?" asked Fish eagerly.

Lord Mauleverer cocked his head thoughtfully on one side. Fish watched his thoughtful expression with growing hope. He felt that he had found his man, at last.

"You say there's a big profit?" asked Mauleverer, at last.

"Yep!"

"No chance of my losing the money?"

"Nope."

"Quite certain to make a lot out of it?"

"Heaps!"

"Then it won't do," said Lord Mauleverer solemnly. "I've got enough money, thanks—I don't want any more."

Much obliged for the offer, all the same. Good-bye!"

And Lord Mauleverer walked away.

Fisher T. Fish, feeling as if life in a sleepy old country that wanted waking up was not worth living, made his way down to Friardale to look after his packing-case, with the problem of paying for the consignment still unsolved.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Business Proceeds!

"BUSINESS now proceeding!"

That notice appeared in large letters on the wall beside the door of No. 14 Study, at the end of the Remove passage.

The door itself was wide open.

The Removites, as they came in after the football match, crowded along the passage to No. 14.

They were curious to see the business that was now proceeding.

The study was soon crowded.

The new packing-case had come, and Fish had unpacked it. Good things of all sorts and sizes and varieties were crowded upon the table—a sight that made Billy Bunter's mouth water when he blinked into the study.

The consignment had arrived—unraided this time. Fisher T. Fish had seen to that. He had sat on the packing-case, in the carrier's cart, all the way from Friardale to the school, and it had been carried up to his study under his personal supervision.

Now all was ready for business, and business was proceeding.

Fisher T. Fish was in his shirt-sleeves behind the table which served as a counter, and he had his big ledger open to enter therein the names of all his clients, with the amounts due from them.

Few of the juniors had any objection to getting tuck on easy terms—they took the good things, and disposed of them internally with wonderful despatch, and trusted to luck about making the payments afterwards.

Exactly how Fish was to collect the weekly payments if the purchasers did not choose to make them was a point the smart Yankee junior had probably not thought out at all carefully. It was quite certain that in case of non-payment he would not be able to recover the goods. On that point there could not be any possible doubt whatever.

"I'm jolly well going to be your best customer, Fishy, old fellow!" said Billy Bunter affectionately. "I think this easy-terms bizney is a topping idea. Lemme see. It's a penny down and a penny a week for sixpennyworth. What?"

"Yep!"

"How much down for ten bob's worth?"

"One and eightpence," said Fish; "and the same regularly every week till the whole amount is squared."

"I'll tell you what," said Bunter, in a burst of confidence. "You don't charge enough. You'll ruin yourself with these easy terms. They're too easy. Why not make it, say, two bob a week, or even half-a-crown, and—nothing down? That initial payment is the only defect in the system."

"Get off!"

"You see, I'm expecting several postal-orders shortly, and I shall be able to keep up the payments as easy as anything," Bunter explained. "The only difficulty is that I happen to be short of money at the present moment. I'll make it half-a-crown a week—three bob if you like—and—nothing down. Is it a go?"

"Next customer," said Fish.

"Oh, I say, Fishy—"

"Get out!"

"Look here, Fishy; isn't my money as good as anybody else's?" roared Bunter indignantly.

"Your money is, if you've got any—but your gas isn't. Get out of the way. You're taking up my time, and time's money."

Bunter went despairingly through his pockets. As he had said, it was the initial payment that presented difficulties. He would have promised to pay anything in the future, and would have fixed any date and any amount that was desired. He fished out a halfpenny that had already been refused by Mrs. Mimble in the school shop, and by Uncle Clegg in the village.

"I suppose I can have threepennyworth on the same terms?" he growled.

"That's a halfpenny down and a halfpenny a week for six weeks," said Fish.

"Here you are. I'll have tarts."

And Bunter helped himself as Fish picked up the halfpenny. The next moment there was a roar of wrath from Fisher T. Fish.

"Let those tarts alone! This is a bad 'un!"

"It's all right!" said Bunter, gobbling away at the tarts at express speed. "You look at it again, Fishy. Ow, ow, ow! Leggo!"

The indignant merchant seized Billy Bunter, and there was a sound of a bump in the passage. But Bunter had a tart in his mouth, and one in either fat hand, so there was a contented grin on his plump face as he picked himself up and travelled.

Fortunately for the Yankee merchant, all the customers were not like William George Bunter. Quite a little harvest of coppers rattled into the money-box Fish was using as a till.

But when the supply of ready cash was exhausted, Bunter's suggestion of purchases without any initial payments being made seemed to gain general favour. But Fisher T. Fish wasn't taking any, as he put it.

Customers who could not pay were politely told to clear off. Bolsover and Skinner were rather inclined to raid the amateur tuckshop, and help themselves by force, but the Famous Five generously came to Fish's aid at that perilous moment, and put their foot down on it.

When the business had finished proceeding, so to speak, and the crowd had cleared off, Fisher T. Fish was left with a considerable stock on hand, which he packed up carefully in the packing-case, announcing that business would be restarted on Monday after lessons.

Fish was counting over his gains when Johnny Bull came into his study later on to do his preparation. No. 14 did not look tidy. There were fragments of eatables, and empty ginger-beer and lemonade bottles, and corks, and bits of packing paper strewn over the carpet and in the grate, and Johnny Bull looked round with a discontented frown.

"Pretty sort of a bear-garden this!" he growled.

"Well, you can clear it up, can't you?" said Fish. "You can't expect a busy business man to waste his time on such things. I tell you, this hyer business is going strong—it's going strong, sir. You hear me? Nine and ninepence in cash. That's not bad for the first day, on the easy-payment system. What?"

"Blow your nine and ninepence!" said Johnny Bull crossly. "Who's going to clear up all this muck?"

"Oh, that will be cleared up in time, if it's left!" said Fish, without looking up from his account-book. "Don't bother a busy man with such trifles!"

"It's going to be cleared up—and it's not going to be left!" said Johnny Bull grimly, taking up a cricket-stump; "and you're going to do it."

"Don't bother!"

"Are you going to clear up this study?" roared Johnny Bull.

"Nope! I guess— Yaroooh! Keep that stump away, you jay!" yelled Fish. "By gum, if you rap me again I'll go for you and slaughter you! Yaroooh! Don't you do that again, you silly mugwump! Gerroooh! Stoppit! Chuckit! I'll clear up the rotten study if you like!"

And he did.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Sad End of a Great Business!

IN spite of that eminently successful start of the great easy-payments business, Fisher T. Fish did not look happy the next day or two. On Monday afternoon business proceeded again, but it was not lively. Money was not so plentiful, and the best part of the stock had been sold off. At the end of the week considerable sums were due to Fisher T. Fish from various members of the Remove, the Third, and Fourth. But the debtors had no intention of paying up before the money became due; indeed, there was some slight doubt as to whether all of them would pay up even then. Easy terms of payment did not bring in much ready money, and Fish was haunted by the knowledge of the bill he had to meet.

The first consignment had been paid for in advance, and so the wholesale firm had trusted him with the second lot—on the understanding that a remittance was to be sent off immediately on receipt of it.

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The remittance had not been sent off. With the result that on Monday evening Fisher T. Fish received a typewritten letter, gently pointing out to him that Brown, Jones, and Robinson had not received their cheque, and hinting that they expected to receive it on Tuesday; otherwise, their collector would have the pleasure of calling for the account on Wednesday.

Whether it was a pleasure to the collector to call or not, there was no pleasure whatever in the prospect for Fisher T. Fish.

Indeed, for those few days the thought of Messrs. Brown, Jones, and Robinson's collector haunted him, and considerably detracted from his satisfaction in having made so excellent a start in the instalment-system business.

He made desperate efforts to induce unsuspecting juniors to take shares in the business, but in vain.

The shares were at a fearful discount.

Skinner offered to purchase his remaining stock at half cost price, if he liked; a generous offer, which Fish refused with deep indignation.

Billy Bunter offered to take it all off his hands at full price, payment to be made on the arrival of a postal-order which Bunter was expecting hourly. That offer also was declined, without thanks.

Fish was reduced to the necessity of writing a letter to Messrs. Brown, Jones, & Robinson, requesting them to send their collector for the small account on Saturday, by which time he would be able to meet it with ease.

The reply of Messrs. Brown, Jones, & Robinson was decidedly icy. However, they agreed to let the promised visit of the collector stand over till Saturday, adding that on that date he would call without fail.

Fish had no doubt that he would call without fail; what would fail would be the expected payment.

But on Saturday the first fruits, so to speak, were to fall in—Fish had a large number of pennies to collect. Not enough to make up the required two pounds, certainly; but he had a vague idea of offering the collector half the amount, and requesting him to allow the rest to stand over for another week or two.

On Saturday Fish was very busy.

He caught the Famous Five as they came out of the Form-room, and presented his little account. Each of the Co. was indebted to him to the extent of sixpence, and they paid up their penny each cheerfully.

But the other customers were not so accommodating. Bolsover major explained that he was short of money. There was fivepence due from Bolsover major, and he declared that he would make it tenpence instead on the following Saturday. Fisher T. Fish objected strongly to that arrangement, and insisted upon payment in spot cash immediately, and there was quite an argument, which ended in the Yankee junior being bundled neck and crop out of Bolsover's study.

Fisher T. Fish looked decidedly glum as he limped away in search of his next customer. He had devoted his great business abilities to working up that great business, and had left out of consideration certain little difficulties that might crop up afterwards. They were cropping up now, and the business man of the Remove did not quite know how to deal with them.

He ran Billy Bunter down in the passage, and demanded a halfpenny. Bunter blinked at him with great indignation. "Well, of all the spoofers!" he exclaimed. "Do you call that business? You refused my ha'penny—you know you did! Lots of fellows saw you refuse it!"

"But you had the tarts!" shouted Fish.

"That's got nothing to do with it. You refused to take my money, and so the transaction fell through, of course!"

"Look here, I want half a brown from you!"

"You can want it, but you jolly well won't get it!" said Bunter.

"Then I'll take it out of your hide!" exclaimed the exasperated Fish.

"I say, Fishy, I'll tell you what. I'm expecting a postal-order this evening, and—"

Bunter had no time to finish. Fisher T. Fish had heard quite enough about the postal-order he was expecting, and was fed up on the subject. He went for Bunter right and left, and mopped up the passage with him—passing on to Bunter, as it were, what he had received from Bolsover major. He left the Owl of the Remove roaring, and there was some slight satisfaction in that—but no cash! And it was cash of which Fisher T. Fish was sorely in need.

Skinner was the next man, and Skinner blandly informed the worried merchant of the Remove that he was short of cash, but would settle the whole amount due in a lump sum at the end of the term. Fish looked at him as if he would eat him.

A Magnificent, Long, Complete School Tale
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"Please excuse us, Miss Primrose!" said Harry. "We've heard about Clara, and we can't possibly believe—" "Oh, my hat!" interrupted the shrill voice of Plato, blinking from his perch. "This way to the canteen! Now for it! It does you credit! Hurrah!" (An incident from a grand complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars and the Girls of Cliff House, entitled, "CONDEMNED ON SUSPICION," by Frank Richards. This splendid school story is contained in the current issue of our new Halfpenny Companion Paper, "CHUCKLES," which is now on sale everywhere. Get it To-day!)

"You know what the arrangement was, I guess?" he shouted.

"Do I?" said Skinner carelessly. "I've forgotten! What was it, Fishy?"

Skinner asked that question in quite a casual way, as if the matter did not really possess very much interest for him.

"You had two shillingsworth of tuck," said Fish, consulting his notebook. "That was fourpence down, and fourpence a week for six weeks. I want fourpence out of you!"

Skinner turned out his pockets, disclosing a ball of string, a stick of toffee, a broken fountain-pen, and several other articles, possessing a certain amount of interest as examples of the remarkable contents of a schoolboy's pockets, but of no value whatever to Fisher T. Fish.

"Take your choice, and call it square!" he said generously.

"I guess I want fourpence."

"And you won't be happy till you get it?" asked Skinner agreeably. "You'd better go to Lloyd George—he's a fourpence and ninepence merchant, you know. I'll see you another day, Fishy!"

"Look here, I've got an account to meet," said the hapless Fish. "I simply must have my money, you know. I haven't been able to pay for the things yet!"

"Did you agree to pay cash?" asked Skinner.

"Yep!"

"And you haven't done it?"

"Nope. I haven't been able to."

Skinner chuckled.

"Then we're both in the same boat," he said. "You agreed to pay cash, and you haven't been able to; I agreed to pay, and I'm not able to. I sympathise with you, Fishy, and you ought to sympathise with me, instead of growling in that manner. Good-bye!"

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And Skinner walked away whistling. Fish's troubles did not, apparently, weigh very heavily upon Skinner's mind.

"Oh, gum!" groaned Fisher T. Fish. "I guess I never expected this part of the bizney. Blessed if it isn't like drawing teeth to get my own money out of the galoofs! I sha'n't raise much at this rate!"

And he didn't. After his round of collecting was over, he found his available capital increased only by the moderate sum of eighteenpence. Some of the fellows made excuses, and some didn't; but nearly all of them failed to pay up. Some of the excuses were reasonable enough, but they were utterly useless to pass on to Messrs. Brown, Jones, & Robinson's collector, who was to call at four o'clock that afternoon.

Messrs. Brown, Jones, & Robinson had stated very clearly in typewriting—there was no chance of misunderstanding—that "our Mr. Twist" would call at four that afternoon; and as the hand of the clock in the tower crawled round towards four, Fish's apprehensions of the call of our Mr. Twist grew more and more acute.

When our Mr. Twist discovered that the debtor possessed in the wide world only the sum of eleven shillings and threepence, there was no telling what our Mr. Twist would do. As our Mr. Twist had positive instructions not to depart without the money, and as Fisher T. Fish hadn't the money to pay him, it looked like an insoluble problem. Our Mr. Twist could scarcely take up permanent quarters at Greyfriars; but if he refused to go without the money, there was certainly nothing else that could be done.

At four o'clock Fisher T. Fish was in his study in a most unenviable frame of mind. He had asked Trotter, the page, to show our Mr. Twist up to the study the moment he came, being extremely anxious to keep our Mr. Twist from meeting any of the masters. Fish knew that it meant very serious

trouble for him if his Form-master or the Head discovered that he had been ordering large quantities of goods that he could not pay for.

It would certainly lead to punishment, and to his allowance being stopped till the bill was liquidated, if to nothing worse.

Promptly at four o'clock our Mr. Twist arrived.

Trotter showed him up to No. 14 Study. He was a large man, with a silk hat and an aquiline nose, and a very decided manner. Probably Mr. Twist had been warned by Messrs. Brown, Jones, & Robinson that he had to deal with a schoolboy, who had recklessly ordered goods, without being in a position to meet the bill; and, consequently, Mr. Twist's manners were cold and formal in the extreme.

"Master Fish?" he asked, as the grinning Trotter vanished down the passage.

"That's me, I guess," said Fish. "Won't you sit down?"

"Thank you; my business here will not detain me long," said the collector, declining the proffered chair. "There is a small amount due—two pounds, I think."

"Yep! Just so! Rather warm to-day, ain't it? Can I offer you some lemonade?" groaned Fisher T. Fish.

"Thanks, no. As a matter of fact, I am rather pressed for time," Mr. Twist explained, consulting his watch. "I should be obliged to you if you would settle up that small matter now, Master Fish."

"Lemme see! I—I suppose you've got the bill with you?" said Fish desperately.

"Certainly; here it is!"

Mr. Twist laid the bill on the table, and prepared his fountain-pen to sign the receipt.

"Sure you won't have some—some ginger-beer?" murmured Fish, with a vague idea of placating and softening Mr. Twist.

"Thank you, no!"

"The—the fact is," said Fish haltingly, "I guess I can't settle up the whole of this amount this afternoon."

Mr. Twist's manner had been cold. Now it became positively freezing. The unhappy Fish almost thought he could detect a change of temperature in the study, so icy did Mr. Twist become.

"I am instructed to take the money, and, in fact, not to depart without it," Mr. Twist said, in a grinding voice. "If not forthcoming, I have instructions to apply to your headmaster!"

"Oh, gum!"

"You will therefore oblige me by settling the matter at once, and saving further waste of time!"

"I—I guess I'll scout round and see if I can raise it," groaned Fish. "Some of the fellows may stand by me. Oh, gum, this is the last time I'll try to wake things up in this sleepy old place! They can snore on till Doomsday, for all I care!"

"My time is valuable," said Mr. Twist.

"I—I guess I won't keep you long," said Fish miserably. "Sit down! I'll be back before you can say 'no sugar in mine'!"

Mr. Twist sat down stiffly, and Fisher T. Fish hurried from the study. The hapless merchant of Greyfriars had no clear idea where he was to borrow the money; but he knew that he had to borrow it somewhere and somehow, or else face serious trouble in the Head's study.

Fish thought of Coker—Coker had raided his packing-case and caused all the trouble—but Coker & Co. were gone out for the afternoon. He thought of Mauleverer, but there was no sign of Mauleverer. Harry Wharton & Co. were playing football; but the match was near its termination, and Fish hurried down to the playing-fields as a last resource.

"Goal!" the juniors were shouting as he arrived there.

Fish did not care much for goals just then, and he did not care twopence whether the Remove beat the Shell, or the Shell beat the Remove.

"I say, Wharton—" he called out anxiously.

The teams were lining up after the goal. Wharton glanced for a moment towards the Yankee junior, but did not trouble to answer him. He was not likely to pay much attention to Fisher T. Fish while engaged in playing footer.

But Fish was desperate. He ran on the field, only to be collared by a linesman, and bundled off faster than he came.

But the match finished at last, amid a roar of cheering. The Remove had beaten the Shell by three goals to two. Fisher T. Fish had not even noticed the winning goal, so great was his anxiety and agitation.

As the players came off the field he rushed up to the captain of the Remove, and caught him by the arm.

"I guess I want you!" he gasped.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "You been watching the match for once, Fishy?"

"Watching the match!" granted Fish. "Blow the match! I say, I want you fellows to help me—I'm in a awful hole!"

"Something gone wrong with the Easy Payment business?" grinned Bob.

"Yep!"

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FOR NEXT
MONDAY—

"APRIL FOOLS ALL!"

EVERY
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tain't a laughing matter, you jays!" roared Fish. "There's a man waiting in my study for two pounds, and I've only got eleven-and-threepence. And if I don't settle up, he's going to the Head!"

"My hat!"

"He may be gone already!" groaned Fish. "You know what that will mean?"

"Trouble!" grinned Bob.

"You shouldn't play the giddy ox, Fishy," said Nugent comfortingly. "Let this be a lesson to you, my young friends! Let—"

"Oh, don't cackle! Lend a galoot a hand when he's in a corner," said Fish indignantly.

"I suppose we've got to," said Harry, half-laughing, and half-angry. "It means booking up all our pocket-money."

"I guess I'll settle—some day—ahem—"

"You'll hand over all you've got left of the tuck, if we settle the bill," said Harry Wharton. "We can use it for tea, anyway."

"Oh, come off! At wholesale prices—"

"Rats! The stuff isn't worth one pound eight-and-nin-pence, I know that. It's the least you can do, I think."

"Waal, I guess I'll do it!"

"Then we'll see the man," said Wharton, "and mind, if you ever enter into any business of any kind, on any occasion again, we'll take you out and bump you till you're black and blue. That's understood?"

"I guess you can make your own terms. Come on!"

And Fisher T. Fish hurried the Famous Five into the School House. The chums of the Remove contrived to collect the required sum by combining their resources, and then they accompanied Fish to Study No. 14. They found our Mr. Twist growing decidedly impatient.

"You have kept me waiting a very considerable time!" exclaimed the representative of Messrs. Brown, Jones & Robinson. "I expect the matter to be settled at once, Master Fish. Otherwise—"

"I guess I can pay you up now!" said Fish.

"Please do, then!"

And the two pounds—in coins of all sizes and value—being duly handed over to Mr. Twist, and that gentleman, having counted the sum, and found it correct, the receipt was handed over to Fisher T. Fish; and our Mr. Twist took his departure—leaving behind him a certainty that Fish would never be able to do any more business on credit with Messrs Brown, Jones & Robinson.

Fish heaved a deep sigh of relief as he watched the collector go.

"I guess I'm well out of that!" he remarked. "Now, I owe you fellows one pound eight-and-nin-pence—"

"You owe us all the stuff you've got left in that packing-case," said Wharton grimly, "and we'll take it with us now."

"Look here, I guess—"

"And if you spring any more new ideas on us, we'll bump you on the spot," said Harry sternly. "That's a promise."

"I guess—"

Fisher T. Fish was left to waste his guesses upon the desert air. The chums of the Remove departed, taking the remainder of the stock with them—and that afternoon there was a feed in Study No. 1—a partial compensation for their loss of the sum of one pound eight shillings and ninepence.

But if anybody had expected Fisher T. Fish to hide his diminished head after the lamentable failure of the F.E.P. Company, that person would have been woefully disappointed. Fisher T. Fish showed no signs whatever of hiding his diminished head. Instead of that, he was using the said head for the purpose of thinking out still more stunning schemes; and a couple of days later he came up to the Famous Five in the Close, with the bland and confidential manner they knew so well.

"Just you listen to me, you fellows," he said impressively.

"I've got simply a stunning scheme for making money—"

Before the enterprising Yankee could get any further, the Famous Five had seized him, and he descended upon the ground with a heavy bump. He had forgotten the promise Harry Wharton & Co. had made him—but they had not forgotten; and they proceeded to fulfil it—without mercy.

Bump! bump! bump!

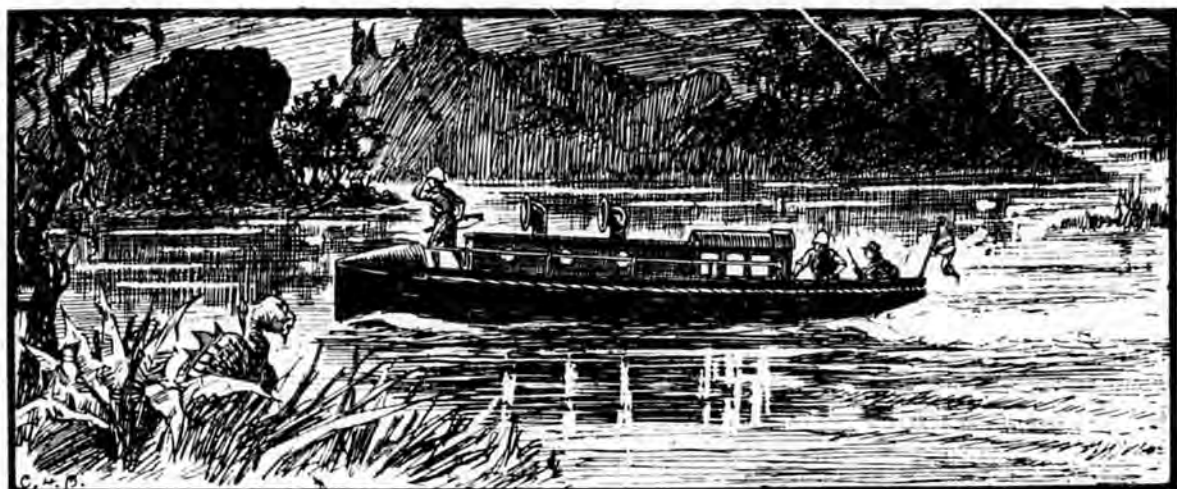
And then they walked off and left Fisher T. Fish gasping, with his new and stunning scheme unuttered. It remained unuttered. That lesson was enough even for Fisher Tarleton Fish; and nothing more was heard of the new and stunning scheme.

THE END.

(Another splendid, long, complete tale of the chums of Greyfriars next Monday, entitled "APRIL FOOLS ALL!" by Frank Richards. Order in advance. Price One Penny.)

A Magnificent, Long, Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars. Order Early.

THE BLUE ORCHID!



Grand Story of Ferrers Lord, Ching-Lung & Co.

By **SIDNEY DREW.**

READ THIS FIRST.

Ching-Lung (Prince of China), Rupert Thurston, and Gan Waga (the Eskimo), with Prout, Maddock, and the rest of the famous crew of the Lord of the Deep, the marvellous submarine belonging to Ferrers Lord, the multi-millionaire and adventurer, find themselves on board the Philomel, a little paddle-steamer, which is puffing up the broad bosom of the mighty Amazon River. Ferrers Lord himself is in command of the expedition, and he tells them that he is in search of a "field" of blue orchids, the secret place of which was mapped out and given to him by a dying man. A rascally German millionaire, named Hausmann, determines to secure these plans, and pursues the Philomel in his magnificent yacht Medea. A storm comes on, and the flashes of lightning reveal the position of the Philomel, and a shell is sent hurtling towards her from the Medea. The Medea collides with a Brazilian warship, and the small but fast little launch which the former was towing is captured by Ferrers Lord. The Philomel's cargo is transferred to the launch, which has been renamed the Blue Orchid. After an uneventful voyage the Blue Orchid is anchored at the edge of the trackless Brazilian forest, and Rupert Thurston, with Ferrers Lord, Ching-Lung and Barry O'Rooney, set out for a trip in the forest.

(Now go on with the story.)

In the Forest—The Fight—Vasco the Native.

"It's pretty thick," said Thurston. "We shall have to hack our way through by the look of it!"

The underbrush was very dense, and huge lianas and giant creepers formed a green wall that looked almost impassable. Ferrers had leapt ashore and looked at his pocket compass. He turned to Maddock.

"That will do," he said.

Maddock saluted, and pulled back to the Blue Orchid.

"You may keep your axes in your belts, lads," added the millionaire, "and scramble through as best you can. It will be easier going when we get further in. I do not want to leave a trail."

Without any further explanation he pushed his way through the thick vegetation. They struggled after him, doing their best to elude the numerous thorns. At last they broke clear of the luxuriant belt of brushwood, reeds, and cactus, and stood among the giant trunks of the hugest forest in the world.

"By Jove, it's quite dark in here after that glaring sunshine!" said Rupert Thurston. "I can hardly see!"

"Permit me to strike a match!" grinned Ching-Lung, lighting a cigar. "Is that better?"

It was Thurston's first experience of the pathless Amazonian forests. Where they stood no solitary ray of sunshine could pierce the matted leaves about them. The ground was brown and spongy, for the leaf-mould, the accumulation of ages, was hundreds of feet thick. A few tropical ferns tried bravely to live and grow, but they were pale and stunted, for they needed more light. Thurston was disappointed.

"There's a remarkably fine display of timber," he said; "but it's not pretty. Is there anything to shoot?"

"Just like a Britisher!" laughed the prince. "Is there anything to shoot? Same old question."

"I fancy you asked me that very same question yourself one day, not a thousand miles from this spot," said Ferrers Lord, smiling. "Have you forgotten?"

"Silence! No tales out of school, please, old chap! That

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little affair has nothing to do with the case. Let us proceed through the flowery woodland, and look for something to shoot for Rupert, and something to drink for Barry from Ballybunion. We might find a whisky-tree with bottles growing on it."

The air was hot and steamy, but they walked briskly enough.

"You've been here before, then, Ching?" said Rupert.

"Not here, old man," said the Prince. "But it's not my first visit to the Amazon. I made a bit of an ass of myself on the occasion Lord mentioned. I'll tell you about it another time. Now, Rupert, you wicked scoffer! What about not being pretty, eh?"

An ancient giant of the forest had fallen, bringing down with him several other trees, and letting in the light of heaven. Nature, like a magician, had covered the fallen trunks with jewels, and filled the air with luring gems and the perfume of vanilla. Myriads of blossoms had sprung up, and shimmering humming-birds hovered over them to suck the honey and sweet syrups. Lizards, little less gorgeous in colour than the humming-birds, stalked the flies, and a grey old sloth hung from a dead branch as motionless as one of his stuffed relations in the glass case of a museum.

"I give in, and withdraw the remark," said Thurston merrily. "It's gorgeous!"

"Bodad, ut may be gorgeous, sor," remarked Barry O'Rooney, "but ut manes a bit of choppin'. Sure, ut's as thick as the pay-soup me Aunt Bridget used to make. We used to ate that wid a saw and a hatchet, and sole our boots wid what was left."

"Cut away, then."

Barry swung his axe to the terror of the lizards and the tree-frogs, and left devastation behind him. Ching-Lung gave the sloth a dig in the ribs that made that astounded animal travel further in one minute than it usually travelled in three months. Gaining a higher branch, the curious creature gazed down at them with a gaze so full of mild reproach and bewilderment that they all laughed.

"He's got his eye on you, Barry me bhoy," said Ching.

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Lung. "He knows you. Well, I'm blessed! Look at the cunning little rascal feeling if he's lost his watch and chain!"

The Irishman severed a thick creeper with one slash of the keen-edged axe, and brought it down again against a sapling. He sliced the sapling cleanly, and pushed forward to make another stroke. Then, letting out a yell of alarm, Barry O'Rooney vanished from their sight.

"Help! Murther! Bedad, phwat! Howld back, or Oi'll Help!"

Barry's frenzied but muffled yells were drowned by a pandemonium of hoarse grunts and shrill squeals. Ferrers Lord whipped out his own axe, and slashed at the undergrowth. The next moment they were bending over a hole in the ground. Out of the hole came more howls, squeals, and gruntings. Barry was whirling round like a top, clinging for dear life to some creature whose terrified movements were so rapid that it was utterly impossible to tell what it was, except by guess. Certainly it was not a jaguar, for jaguars never grunt, and, except in their earliest youth, they never squeal. The animal to which the bold Barry clung, as famous John Gilpin clung to his runaway steed, did both. Ching-Lung put his hands to his sides, and laughed until the tears came.

"Only a tapir," said Ferrers Lord, and his grey-blue eyes twinkled.

"For the love of marcy, for the love of— Ow! Ut's the head of me that's swimming loike a cork!" yelled Barry. "Ut's dead Oi—"

The living teetotum stopped dead with a last piercing squeal. Barry went on, but not far. He bounded against the side of the pit, rolled over, and sat up. The curious pachyderm, pretty well exhausted, rolled over also, and then scrambled up on its haunches. Man and beast, both panting, terrified, and perspiring, gazed at one another. And Ching-Lung, overcome with laughter, lay down and wept.

"Faith, ut's only an overgrown ould pig, afther all!" gasped the Irishman, scratching his head. "Troth, Oi thought ould Davy Jones had got me that time. How are ye, darlint?"

The tapir dropped in a heap as a bullet from the millionaire's revolver crashed through its skull. He caught hold of a branch with his left hand, and extended his rifle to Barry.

"Come!" he said.

Aided by Ching-Lung and Thurston, Barry scrambled out, little the worse for a very exciting five minutes.

"Poor ould tapir," said Ching-Lung. "I wish we could have let him go—he deserved it."

"The Indian who dug this pit would not have thanked us, Ching," said Ferrers Lord. "It is not right to stand between even a savage and his food. The poor beast is better dead than waiting there in terror until the hunter takes it into his head to visit the camp. Death is often merciful."

"But what about the ants, old chap? If Mr. Hunter doesn't hurry up, he won't find anything except the skeleton. They're on the warpath already. They've got a better nose for anything dead than Gan has for a bullet."

Hordes of ants were already streaming into the pit.

"Bedad," said Barry, taking a last look at the tapir, "my poor ould Uncle Dennis would have gone woid wid joy to see a pig that seize! Troth, he's got a funny sort of a snout, but he's a beauty!"

"You ass, it's a tapir—not a pig!" said Ching-Lung. "Don't you know what a tapir is?"

"Come, lads, come!" interrupted Ferrers Lord.

Ching-Lung nimbly seized and pocketed a few tree-frogs, hoping that they might come in useful later on. They hurried to overtake the millionaire. Barry lighted his pipe and tramped behind them. All at once a bird flew past his face with a shrill, eager twitter, turned, almost grazing his cheek, and began to circle round him.

"Go away, yez little spalpeen!" said the man from Ballybunion. "Oi don't carry canary-seed about wid me. Go away, Oi tell yez, and don't be rude—we've not been introduced!"

The bird flew closer, and twittered more noisily.

"Faith, Oi belave ut takes me for a big worm!" grinned the Irishman. "Phwat is ut afther at all, at all?"

He called to Ching-Lung, and the prince looked back.

"Hallo," he said, "there's a honey-finder making love to Barry."

Finding that no notice was taken of all his attentions, the bird flew away in disgust. Had they followed the clever little rascal he would have led them to a tree where the wild bees had laid up a store of honey, relying upon their generosity to give him his share; but they were not seeking honey. They saw no signs of game, but there were plenty of monkeys. Several times Ferrers Lord consulted the compass.

"I have not been here for thirteen years," said Ferrers Lord, "and yet I remember that tree." He pointed to a gnarled giant of the forest.

"Why do you remember that one so particularly?" asked Thurston.

"Because, my dear friend, it was the tree specially selected for my execution. They were going to honour it by hanging

me on it. I persuaded them that the idea of hanging me was absurd. Then they decided that they would fill me with poisoned darts fired from their blow-pipes. I objected again. I would not like to say how many I killed, but I made the survivors my very good friends."

"Tell us the yarn," said Thurston.

"Over coffee and cigarettes, one of these evenings, but not now," said Ferrers Lord. "It was rather exciting. Life is a hazardous thing in these forests, but if it has spared poor Vasco I will show you a South American Indian who is both a gentleman and a hero."

"What a fellow you are!" said Thurston. "Is there a single spot on the map of the South you don't know?"

"Only the gaols," added Ching-Lung.

"You make a mistake there, prince. I have been in gaol many times. I was in gaol in Colombia for eight months. When I got out I started another insurrection merely to get even with the governor of the prison. He had my cell for eight months! When we have nothing better to do we must go to Colombia and set up an insurrection; it is most amusing. The last time—"

He bent forward, holding up his hand.

"That was a gun," he added, after a moment's silence.

"Did you hear it?"

"I heard something," said Thurston.

"Listen!"

The sound that came drifting through the trees was only like a whisper, but it was unmistakable. The millionaire quickened his pace, then he broke into a swift trot. Ching-Lung sniffed the air like an old warhorse who hears the stirring notes of a bugle. The reports were irregular, but they could hear them distinctly.

"There are only three things for it, Ru," he said—"a

game-drive, a feast, or a fight."

"How do you make that out?"

"Because the niggers don't waste powder for nothing. If it's a feast, they'll bang away till all's blue for the sake of making a row; if it's a game— Look out!"

Ferrers Lord sprang like a stag, and cleared another tapir-trap that his quick eye had detected in time in spite of its cunning covering of branches and ferns. Ching-Lung dragged back Thurston in the nick of time to save him from an ugly fall.

"They ought to label the brutal things," said Rupert. "You could break a limb or your neck without any trouble. It must be a feast, Ching; there's a native village not far away."

They could hear hoarse shouts. As he ran, Ferrers Lord unsung his rifle.

"Fighting!" he called, looking back over his shoulder.

The trees were thinner and the sun shone through. A wall of brown reeds ten or twelve feet high rose where the trees ended. Ferrers Lord beat a way through them with his rifle, disturbing myriads of black flies that rose in clouds. The shouts came more clearly, and a few guns cracked. Then water shone before them, barring the way, and they halted, watching an odd scene.

In the centre of the shallow lagoon clustered thirty or forty huts raised on piles, and linked together by platforms of logs. They were flimsily built, and thatched with reeds and palm-leaves. They were surrounded by canoes. Arrows flew in clouds from the canoes, and now and again a bullet from an old gun brought one of the defenders toppling from the platform, his death-shriek strangled by the splash of his fall. Some of the arrows were ablaze; and the thatches of several huts were burning like tinder. The defenders were outnumbered, but they were fighting gallantly. So far the most deadly of all weapons at close range had not come into use—the blowpipes with their death-dealing darts. The canoes were not near enough.

Crack-ack-ack-ack-ack-ack-ack!

The millionaire's repeating-rifle spat out a stream of flame and lead. A canoe overturned, spilling half a dozen men. There was a sudden panic, and then a pandemonium of wolfish shrieks. The next moment, as if controlled by a lever, all the canoes were flying towards them as fast as the brown arms could work the paddles.

"Stop them, lads! Don't let them get near enough to use their blowpipes!" shouted Ferrers Lord.

Four rifles barked at once, and the leading canoe lurched over. A shower of arrows whistled through the reeds.

"Again!" said the millionaire quietly.

Barry O'Rooney yelled "Hurroo!" as a bullet sang past his ear. The native who had first leapt into the air, and, crashing back upon his comrades, settled the fate of the canoe. The next moment the flotilla was scuttling away in the direction of the opposite bank. Imagining they were out of range, the maddened natives stopped, shrieking and gesticulating.

"Shoo! Git away wid yez!" grinned Barry, taking steady aim. "There's a little present from Oireland, bedad!"

It was a long shot, but it was a successful one. Another man sprang into the air and fell back. Terrified, the natives made for the shore and rushed away into the forest. Those who had been upset swam like otters.

"And now, if it's all the same to you," said Ching-Lung, reloading his rifle, "may I ask you why we did that? I'm not inquisitive, but I like to know. Was it a mere case of helping the little 'un'?"

"I happen to know the little 'un, as you call him," answered Ferrers Lord. "That is to say, I knew him years ago, and I always like to do a friend a good turn. Hola! Hola!"

His shout rang across the water. The natives had taken advantage of the astonishing change in their fortunes, and were making desperate efforts to extinguish the flames.

Presently a large canoe put off, paddled by three men. One of them vaulted overboard and waded through the shallow water. Blood oozed from a wound in his left shoulder and trickled down his muscular, copper-coloured chest. He was a pure-blooded Indian, but remarkably tall and handsome for a son of such a degenerate race, for, except in Patagonia, the South American natives are, as a rule, undersized and weak. The hot, reeking forests do not breed big, hardy men. He looked hard at the millionaire, and then uttered a cry of recognition.

"The White Jaguar! The White Jaguar!"

Sinking on one knee, he caught Ferrers Lord's hand and pressed it to his naked breast.

"You are Vasco's son. You are the lad who used to carry my spare rifle?" said the millionaire.

"No, I am Vasco, Excellency."

"Then where is your father?"

"He died ten minutes ago, Excellency," said the young man, speaking perfect English. "He died fighting, as he wished to die. It is a good death. Had you not come we should all have gone with him. The dogs were too strong for us. Our men are away seeking rubber, and they knew it."

"What was the quarrel?"

"I slew three of them, Excellency, whom I found stealing our nets."

Ferrers Lord nodded, and slung his rifle over his shoulder. "Your father is dead, and he died as a warrior should die," he said. "And he owed me three lives. He was an old man and a mighty hunter. When you have buried him send to your men and bid them come home, for they need gather no rubber. I will pay them far more than they can earn. And then follow our trail, Vasco, for I need you."

"I am your slave, Excellency."

He stepped into the canoe. Standing there, he bent his left arm back. The bullet showed like a marble under his coppery skin. He drew his knife and made one slash. Then, bending his head, he bit out the bullet and spat it into the lagoon.

"That youth doesn't suffer from nerves," said Ching-Lung. "What?"

To his amazement, Ferrers Lord had actually sighed.

"I apologize, Ching," said the millionaire, with the ghost of a smile. "I was thinking of his father. May he sleep light. For a mere savage, poor Vasco was one of the bravest men I ever knew, and a perfect gentleman. If the son is even a very poor imitation of his father I shall be satisfied. And now for home!"

How Prout Objected to Gan-Waga's Music—And How the Eskimo Forgave Him and Brought Him a Present.

Having been summarily ejected from one bed, Gan-Waga, after getting rid of the condensed milk, sought another. It was an excellent marble bath of the newest pattern, and fairly commodious. Gan turned on the cold water, lighted a cigar, and took a nap.

Instead of his usual sealskin suit, the Eskimo had been provided with an outfit of excellent silk pyjamas, an attire better suited for the warm climate of the Amazon than heavy furs.

The pyjamas cost something like three guineas a suit, but the way the blubberbiter treated them was utterly disgraceful. Luckily, he had not to pay for them himself, or he would have been more careful. Waking refreshed, he dressed—an easy task, for he had discarded boots and stockings—and waddled on deck.

Madcock was snoring like a grampus, and Prout, leaning on the rail, was gazing at the muddy river in a sad way.

Gan looked round him. The boards, even under the awning, were so hot that they scorched his feet. The very paint was blistering in the fierce rays. The fat son of the lands of ice and snow pattered down the occasional ladder and cooled his toes in the river. The effect was so soothing that he began to sing. And when Gan-Waga sang, exploding bombshells were peace and joy.

"Prouts has a fat red necks,

Oh, paints dat red-necks blue,

And paints him bald heads greens!

Oh, do, do, do, do, do!"

Prout listened to this tuneless music, and bore it like a martyr. Then Gan started his own special idea of how "Killarney" should be sung. That was too much. Soaking a mop, Prout tiptoed forward. The steersman had a very wooden type of face, but his mouth worked as if he had been eating unripe lemons sprinkled with vinegar. Gan was just struggling to get out a top note. Prout shortened the handle of the mop, and then drove it hard into the back of the songster's neck.

Gan disappeared with a splash.

"I've got a fat red neck, by honey, 'ave I?" growled the steersman, gazing at the bubbles. "And I ought to paint it blue, did I? 'Oh, do, do, do, do, do!' Ain't I done it? I'll paint your'n blue, my beauty!"

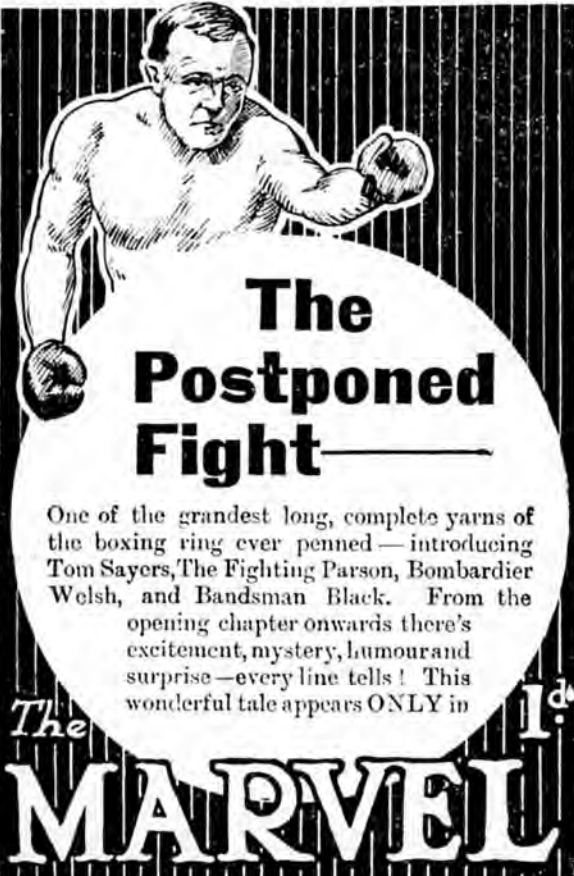
Gan-Waga bobbed up and put his fingers to his snub nose, but he uttered no word of reproach. He was as amphibious as a seal. Floating gently down, he caught the cable with his toes, folded his arms upon his bosom, and began to sing "Killarney" all over again. Prout went to find some coal to throw at him.

When he returned with the ammunition the Eskimo had disappeared. Gan had no use for coal.

Gan had slipped on board again and taken a coil of rope and Joe's pipe. Refilling and lighting the pipe, he had lowered himself gently into the water. He had taken the rope with the intention of tying it to the cable, resting his foot in the loop, and having a quiet and cool sleep.

He found the water so pleasant that he decided to have a swim first of all, and then a snooze. He floated on his back, occasionally propelling himself as he smoked the carpenter's pipe.

"It butterfals, it good 'nough lovelifuls!" he gurgled.



The Postponed Fight

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The MARVEL

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 320.

FRANK RICHARDS

Contributes a Splendid, Complete School Tale in our New Saturday Companion Paper—

"CHUCKLES," 1/2

An alligator drifted by his side, watching the swimmer with ugly eyes, and wondering if he was good enough to eat. Gan drew his knife and kept perfectly still. The alligator, its suspicions lulled, came closer. Gan chuckled, and drove the knife upwards through the reptile's jaws.

There was one remarkably sick alligator in the Amazon after that, and the Eskimo chuckled again.

Then, having smoked the pipe, Gan-Waga put it in his pocket and rolled over. The yacht was a good way off, and the current had drifted Gan in near the shore. Branches and verdure had formed a natural bridge over the mouth of what seemed to be a little tributary of the river. Gan paddled under it.

He was in a little creek, and in the centre of the creek was a muddy islet. Gan dived without causing a ripple, and came up after bumping his knees on the bottom within six inches of the island. His snub nose was within a foot of the nose of a slumbering alligator—a youthful reptile about a yard and a half in length from the tip of his snout to the end of his tail.

"Didn't prospects me to call, hunk?" murmured the Eskimo. "Tinks I takes yo' backs homes wid me, Mr. Ugliness; yo' do nice fo' silly Prouts to play wid. How you likes to sleeps in Prout's hammock, hunk?"

Gan's face lighted up with unholy glee at the glorious thought of the things that would happen if the steersman found himself sharing a bed with a lively alligator.

He made a slip-knot in the rope. Two seconds later matters had become highly exciting. Gan-Waga clung to the rope for dear life, and floundered about in the mud which the half-strangled reptile was pounding into a kind of black blanchange with its tail. Gan slipped and slid, and flopped and skated, but he did not let go. It was bad for his nice pyjamas, but it was worse for the alligator.

"Yo' chucks it, yo' silly little silly!" gasped the Eskimo. "Yo' get a bad 'nough awfuls sore neck if yo' do dat. Ow! What fo' yo' slap dat mud in my faces? Yo' gotted plenty by-and-by, hunk? Ho, hoo-hoo!"

The alligator gave it up, but there was more trouble before Gan succeeded in getting a hitch over its tail and linking it up to its foreleg. Then Gan went to find a nice log. He ruthlessly tore up his pyjama jacket and tied the prisoner to the log with the strips, and rolled the whole lot into the water.

It was getting near sundown when Gan-Waga proceeded to swim up-stream with his prize in tow. He found it a difficult task, but by taking advantage of the slack water near the bank he made slow and certain headway. As he hung by the cable of the yacht to get his breath the fireflies were dancing in the dark glades of the forest like living sparks.

"Ahoy!" cried Ferrers Lord, from the shore.

"Ahoy!" bellowed Maddock, from above.

Joe and the bo'sun tumbled into the boat. Gan reached the ladder with his prize; it was a back-breaking weight, but he managed to get it on deck and cover it with a tarpaulin. Making sure that Prout was looking the other way, Gan-Waga lifted his queer load and staggered below. He put it in the bath.

"Grub, Joe—grub!" said the merry voice of Ching-Lung. "We're starving—ravenous!"

"Me, too, Chingy," gurgled the Eskimo, reappearing in another suit of pyjamas. "All hollowfulness in de insides, Chingy. I could eats bricks spreaded wid marmalades, Chingy. Kisses me, Chingy!"

He clasped the Chinaman to his breast, and whispered: "Gots a live sallygator in de baf's fo' Prout, Chingy. He makes yo' laffs. Ho, hoo-hoo, butterfuls, Chingy!"

Ching-Lung said not a word until dinner was over. Lighting a cigarette, he went in quest of Gan, and discovered that stout and festive young gentleman easily.

Gan sat on the floor of the prince's cabin. He was very busy indeed, stirring a mixture of blacking, soot, and molasses, with a stick. As he worked at his pleasant task he crooned concerning Prout's red neck and the advisability of painting it blue.

"Child," said Ching-Lung gravely, "what is that abominable stuff?"

"Dat 'bominables stuff is hair-restorers for silly Prouts, Chingy," lisped Gan. "I kinds to Prouts, hunk?"

"Most kind, dear Eskimotor-car; but will you explain to me how you intend to apply it?"

"Ole Prouts him nots on duty to-nights, Chingy," grinned Gan-Waga. "Ho, hoo-hoo! I gotses butterfuls braimes in my hands, Chingy, and de balf-room keys in my pockets. And de sallygator him in de balf, Chingy! Ho, hoo-hoo, ho-o-o! I knows, Chingy. I not borns next week, Chingy!"

He rolled on the carpet, rumbling with mirth; and then, picking up the pail, he winked at the prince and stole out.

There was nobody in the fore-castle. Standing on a chest, Gan fitted a piece of tarpaulin neatly into the bottom of the steersman's hammock, and poured in the contents of the bucket.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 320.

FOR NEXT
MONDAY—

"APRIL FOOLS ALL!"

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ONE
PENNY.

"I fastens de sallygator's mouf and legs up, Chingy," he murmured, wiping the tears out of his little eyes, "but him tail all right, Chingy! Ho, hoo-hoo! What we bofe cryings fo', hunk?"

"I w-was th-thinking of the p-p-poor alligator be-being so w-wet!" sobbed Ching-Lung.

Then they crept away.

Prout Finds Something Nasty in His Hammock, and Something Nastier in the Bath.

Thomas Prout had enjoyed a lazy day, and he was therefore in no particular hurry to retire to his hammock. As the accommodation of the saloon was somewhat cramped, the yacht-piano had been transferred to the fo'c's'le. It was a splendid little instrument, and Joe, in his folly, had promised to give the steersman a few lessons. But the difficulty arose when Prout got his huge hands on the keyboard. There were hardly enough keys visible to write one's name on, and Joe gave it up.

"You want 'ands to play a piano with," he said, "not legs o' pork like them things. You wants a piano wi' a 'andle to it. Buy yourself a mouth-organ, and be 'appy."

Prout was not angry. He shut down the lid of the instrument, and blew his nose violently.

"There's another blessed nigger arrived, souse me," remarked the bo'sun, sauntering in.

"Is he as pretty as that greaser, Pedro, Ben?"

"A long sight prettier, souse me," said Maddock. "We was waiting for the beauty. Now we're orf."

A bell clanged, and they hastened on deck to get up the anchor. In bright moonlight the Blue Orchid began to churn her way upstream. Prout and Joe took a long look at the native who stood beside Ferrers Lord.

"He ain't no baby, by honey!" muttered the steersman. "He'd be a narsty egg to smash in a rough-and-tumble, Joev. You'd want a big mouth to take him down at one swallow."

Barry O'Rooney was in charge of the engines, for Filson, the engineer, was still on the sick list and quite unable to attend to his duties. The night was so cool and bright that it seemed sheer waste of time to go to bed. Perched on the winch, Ching-Lung played sweet music on a tin whistle. Gan had both his little beady eyes on Prout.

"He goings at last, Chingy," he whispered.

The big steersman stretched out his powerful arms and gave a ponderous yawn.

"I'm orf to my cradle, Ben," he said. "Are you comin'?"

Ching-Lung and Gan-Waga slid down the companion in the wake of the two seamen. Prout exchanged a few words with Barry, and growled "Good-night!" The conspirators glided into the cook's galley.

"I fink I busts, Chingy," said Gan-Waga, with a snort. "It hurts not to laughs when you wants, hunk! It painfulness, Chingy. I tickles bad enough alls over the insides parts."

"S-sh!" whispered the prince.

Ching-Lung crawled out on hands and knees. Prout was unlacing his canvas shoes while the bo'sun, peering into a little cracked mirror, carefully examined a lump on his nose, left there as a souvenir by a mosquito.

"It's arter orchids we are, souse me," said Maddock suddenly.

"Who tolled you?"

"I 'eard Mr. Rupert talkin' about it to the prince. The big yacht was arter 'em, too, and that's why they peppered us, souse 'em. All I knows is that the silly things are flowers o' some sort, and they've got to be blue. Heigho! Drat the 'skeeters! They bites like sharks."

Ching-Lung gently pressed Gan-Waga's ear as the steersman approached his hammock. He was an expert at getting into a hammock, but he failed on this occasion. As he grasped it to roll in, it tilted up and poured its loathsome contents over him. Prout's anguished howl was loud enough to bring a mummy back to life. In stony horror, Maddock gazed at the fearsome object. Prout was black from crown to toes, and the black, sticky mixture dripped from him, forming an inky pool on the floor. Pure treacle was a dream of joy to this, as mustard-ice was a dainty article in comparison. Benjamin, the bo'sun, slowly closed his eyes and slowly reopened them to make sure they told the truth.

"Souse me!" he gasped out. "Ow did you do that?"

Prout shuddered, shaking down a shower of black, glutinous drops. He was speechless. His mouth worked, but no sound came. He looked at his hands as if he expected to find some money in them. Then he uttered a hollow moan of deepest anguish.

(Another long instalment of this magnificent serial next Monday.)

A Magnificent, Long, Complete School Tale
of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars. Order Early.



My Readers' Page

WHOM TO WRITE TO:
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"THE PENNY POPULAR"
 EVERY FRIDAY.

The Editor is always pleased to hear from his Chums, at home or abroad.

FOR NEXT MONDAY:**"APRIL FOOLS ALL!"**By **FRANK RICHARDS.**

In our next long, complete tale of the chums of Greyfriars, the first of April is celebrated by japes innumerable at the school. Harry Wharton & Co. plan an elaborate one, of course, while the high-and-mighty Horace Coker of the Fifth Form scores a distinct success. Billy Bunter brings off a hoax which has a definite purpose at the back of it, and his cunning meets with a substantial reward in the shape of a well-filled hamper. The fun is fast and furious all round, and by the end of the day the chums of the Remove, Fourth and Fifth Forms are constrained to admit themselves

"APRIL FOOLS ALL!"**TWO SPLENDID SPECIAL ARTICLES.**

Among the features of next Wednesday's issue of our grand companion paper, "The Gem" Library, are two special articles of more than ordinary interest, more especially to my boy readers of fifteen and upwards. One of these is entitled:

"HOW TO GET ON IN CANADA,"

and is a straightforward, telling account of things as they really are out West, written by a returned emigrant. It is full of helpful tips and strange experiences, and is just what every boy who has ever felt "the call of Canada" wants most.

The second article is from the pen of no less an authority than Admiral the Hon. Sir E. Fremantle, and is entitled:

"THE NAVY AS A PROFESSION FOR BOYS."

The admiral, in this special "Gem" Library article, deals with his subject in a direct, breezy, yet comprehensive manner, and in consequence his contribution forms a valuable guide to all boys who are thinking of the Royal Navy as a career, no less than to parents who are puzzled by the problem of "What to do with our sons!"

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

Vander (Halifax) and others.—Here are appended six names and addresses of coin dealers:

- G. C. Kent, 26a, The Lanes, Brighton.
- G. H. Wilson, 25, Wardour Street, W.
- W. S. Lincoln & Sons, 69, New Oxford Street, W.C.
- E. Lincoln, 144, Kensington High Street, W.
- Rollen & Fearnant, 6, Bloomsbury Street, W.C.
- R. W. Talbot, 55, Rathbone Place, Oxford Street, W.
- H. O. H. (Mansfield).—I am always pleased to hear from chums. Write as often as you like.

What a Headmaster Writes About The Two Famous Companion Papers.New College,
Clacton-on-Sea.

Dear Sir,

I am writing to express to you my appreciation of the School Stories which appear week by week in the "Gem" and "Magnet" Library. I never have any hesitation in purchasing both papers for the boys of this school, and hope you may long continue your excellent stories. The stories are never without a sound moral, and there is a splendid healthy tone running throughout each tale.

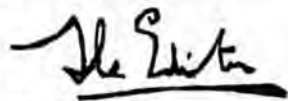
I am,
 Yours very truly,
 (Signed) G. R. S. TOWNSHEND,
 Headmaster.

An Entirely Unsolicited Testimonial!

which are sold for fabulous prices. I have known Carriers to be purchased for £150 each, Owls and Turbits frequently have brought their breeders £100 apiece, and the Dragoons frequently are sold for sums ranging from £50 to £80.

Of late pigeon culture has made great strides in England and in some parts of the Continent. It possesses a large and influential body devoted to its interests, known as "The United Kingdom Pigeon Club." Pigeon shows, large and small, are held throughout the length and breadth of the land, such as the Great National Show held every autumn at the Crystal Palace, and numerous provincial and county exhibitions, such as those held at Manchester, Bristol, Edinburgh, and endless other places. The great advantage attendant on pigeon-keeping, however, is that it is essentially one of home recreation and enjoyment, and this it affords to men of all ages, requirements and callings. In its past and early history, the pigeon among birds was man's companion, and so it is to the present time.

(Next Week: A Special
 Article on Cage Birds.)



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ANIMALS AS CINEMATOGRAPH ACTORS: ELEPHANT, LION, AND APE IN NEW FILM.



The ape climbs a tree to gather a banana for the child, and then watches it eat it.



The ape and the child.



The villain killed by an angry elephant.



Pursued by a leopard.



The starving lion swims out to the raft.



The struggle to beat it off.

This is probably the finest publicity ever given to a film. The above is a representation of the front page of a recent number of the *Daily Mirror*, of which 900,000 copies were printed and sold. The magnificent yarn founded on the wonderful Selig animal-picture has been specially written up for this week's number of The "PLUCK" Library. As can be seen from the photographs that compose the above page, the tale is packed with excitement, and indeed it was needless to say that, for the *Daily Mirror* would not have given their front page, which no payment could have bought, had not the film been an exceptional one.

Therefore you should not fail to get this week's number of

The "PLUCK" Library.

The story of this film only appears in "PLUCK."