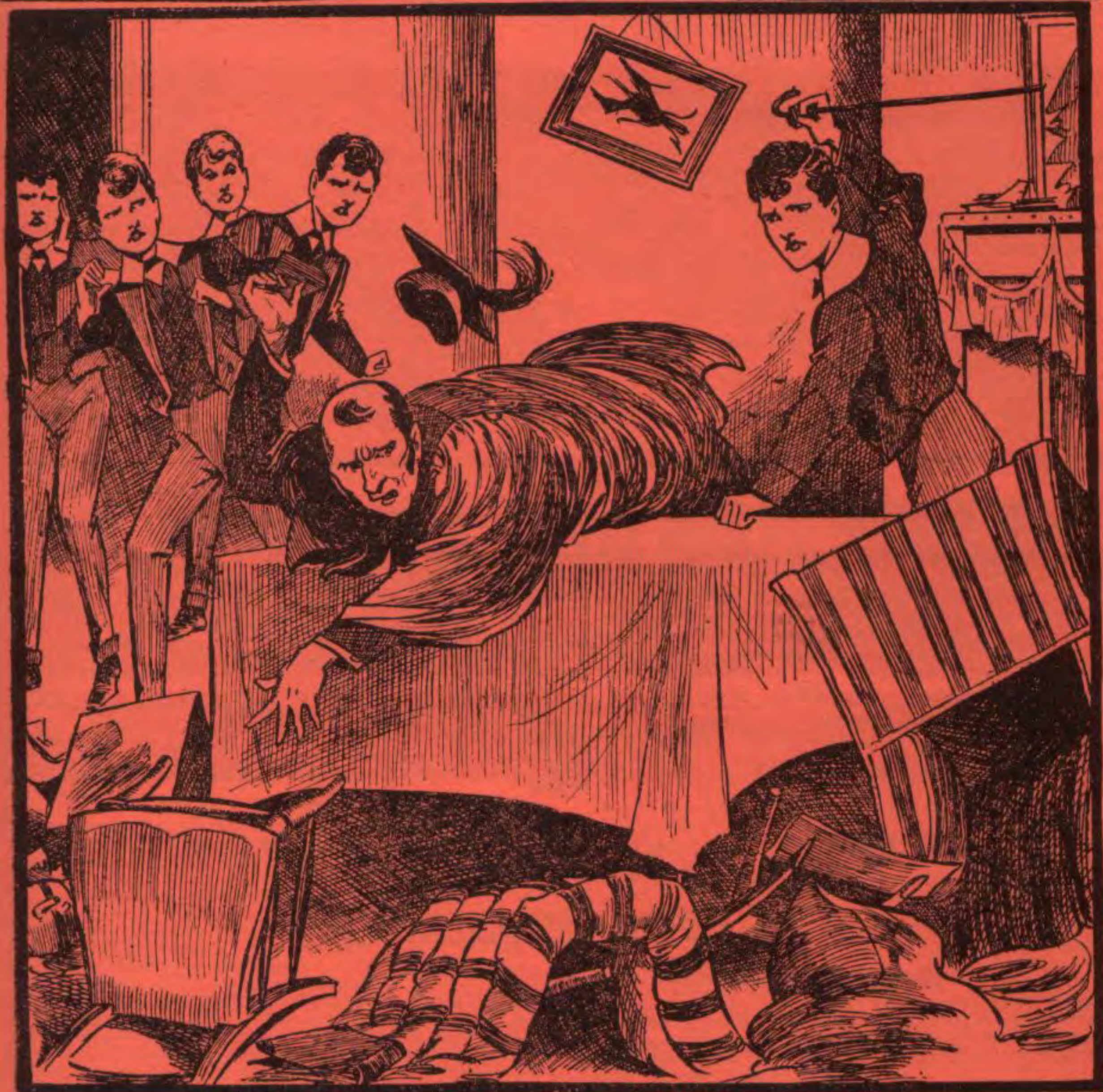


"A WORLD AT STAKE" & "RUCTIONS AT HIGHCLIFFE!"

TWO GRAND STORIES IN THIS ISSUE.



No. 344. Vol. 8. September 12th, 1914.



A WARM TIME FOR THE SNOBBISH SCHOOLMASTER!

Mr. Mobbs made a spring at Squiff to regain the cane, and Squiff caught the skinny little man by the shoulders, and swung him across the table with a powerful wrench, and then the cane rose and fell like lightning! Thwack! Thwack! (A striking incident in the grand long school story contained in this issue.)

The EDITOR'S WEEKLY CHAT WITH HIS READERS.

FOR NEXT MONDAY:

"SPIRITED AWAY!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.

In this splendid, long, complete story of the boys of Greyfriars School, the machinations of an American "crook" of the most daring type are directed against a new fag, who has come to the school under unusual circumstances. Harry Wharton & Co.'s first encounter with the notorious Five-Hundred-Dollar Smith is an exciting one, and the juniors can claim a decisive victory. It is not long, however, before the cute Yankee is able to reverse the position in the most startling fashion. The aid of one of the most celebrated detectives of the day is called in to dispel the amazing mystery which is completely puzzling all Greyfriars; and the manner in which the detective performs his work is most masterly and decisive. But for him the chances of rescue would have been remote indeed for the junior who had been so mysteriously

"SPIRITED AWAY!"

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

John Fitzgerald (Queen Anne's Gate).—The adventures of the Fool of the Navy have been published in "The Boys' Friend" 3d. Library, entitled "Max, the Middy." Now on sale.

"A Grateful Reader" (Liverpool).—Re knock-knees. It depends how bad the complaint is. Follow out my instructions until you have completely cured yourself.

"Manx Cat."—I am afraid Billy Bunter has never acted the "real hero."

"New Reader."—The Ingersoll watches are generally recognised as being good value for money.

Rogelio Cardoso (Acton).—The approximate ages of the Famous Five is 15; Bunter is 14½.

W. Allen (B'head).—Many thanks for your letter.

"Seafarer" (Ashton-under-Lyne).—I am afraid the reply to your query would take up too much space. Send me your name and address, so that I can write you.

"A Reader" (Ipswich).—I will try my best to do as you suggest.

T. Burland (Belfast).—Many thanks for your letter, also for your endeavours to get new readers.

"A Faithful Reader" (Rhyddlan).—It is undecided as to whom is the better boxer between Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry. The answer to your second question is in the negative.

L. Peters (Liverpool).—Thanks for your card. As regards your suggestion, I will most certainly do my best.

F. E. Stoneman (Northampton).—Billy Bunter's father does pay for him at Greyfriars. Fluffy will be heard more of soon. Marjorie Hazeldene has never yet said whom she likes best out of the Famous Five.

"A Loyal Reader."—The place and characters in the stories you mention are purely fictitious.

E. Heywood (Delph).—I think the names you mention constitute the principal characters in this paper.

George Edwards.—Thanks very much. What about your address?

THE ONLY REMEDY.

A number of reports have been reaching me again lately, to the effect that a good deal of difficulty is being experienced in some places in getting the "Magnet," and its companion papers.

In these times of stress, there is an inclination for some of the more timid newsagents to hold smaller stocks of weekly papers, with the result that when the popular papers become sold out—as they quickly do—inferior ones are offered in their places. In this way, there is no doubt attempts have been made to put off "Magnet" and "Gem" readers with other publications of far inferior merit and interest. This state of affairs, however, is one that can easily be remedied by my readers themselves; if they will only order their favourite papers in advance, they will not "get left"! That is the only way in these times that my chums can be sure of getting the "Magnet" and its companion papers regularly. More than ever before, it behoves you all to remember now, and act up to, the oft-repeated maxim:

"ORDER IN ADVANCE!"

EVERY READER CAN HELP!

In this time of a great national emergency, the question everyone is asking is, "How can I help?" Our Prince's Fund is being raised on purpose to give everyone a chance of helping. Every subscription sent to this Fund, however small, represents so much practical help given to the Nation in its time of need; I am sure all my chums will lend this fund their warmest support.—EDITOR, The "Magnet" Library.



I enclose £ s. d. toward the Prince of Wales'

NATIONAL RELIEF FUND

Name.....

Address.....

This coupon should be filled in, and the envelope, which need not be stamped, addressed to H.R.H. The Prince of Wales, Buckingham Palace, London.

A SPECIAL WAR SERIAL!

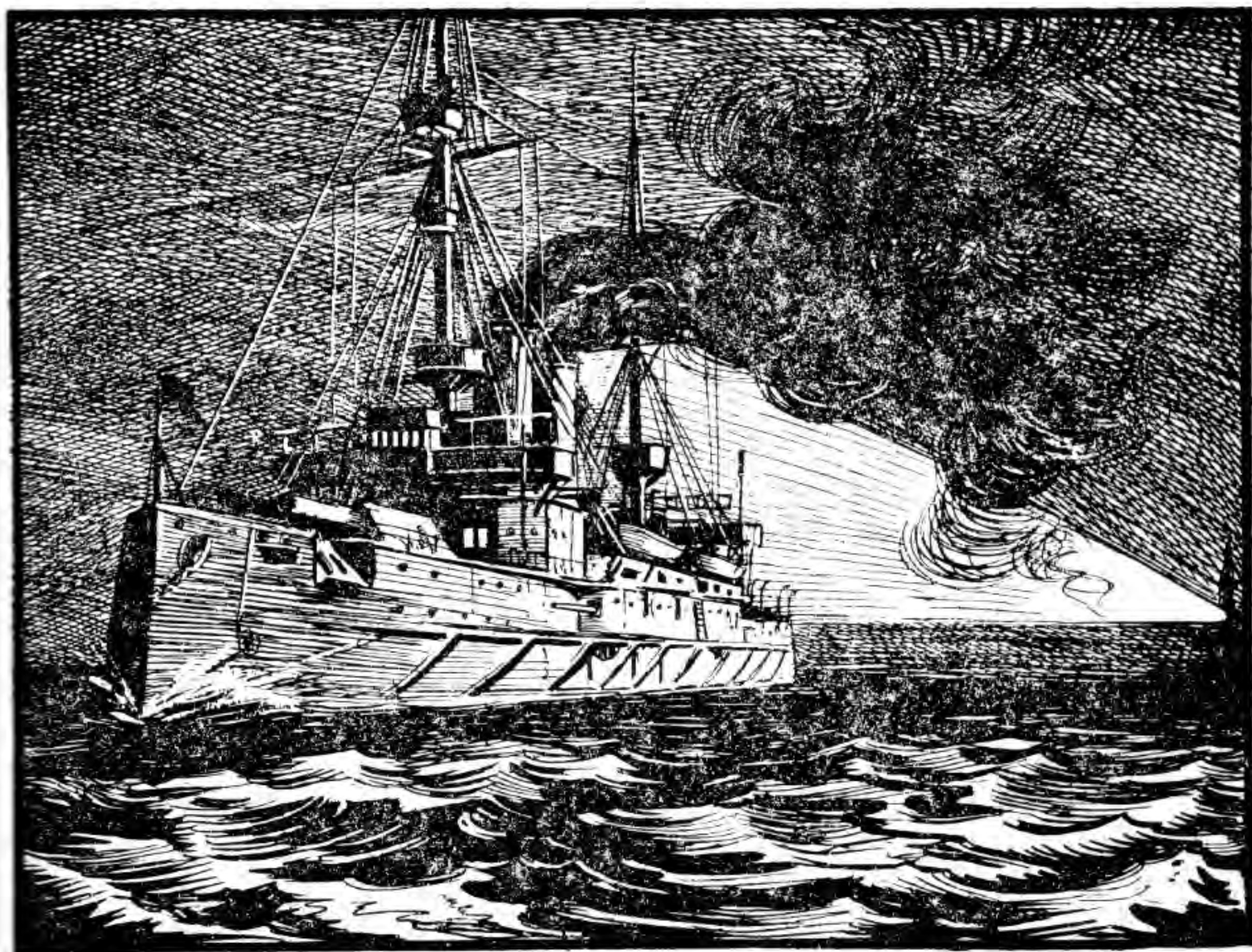
THE OPENING CHAPTERS!

A WORLD AT STAKE!

A Stirring Story of the Supreme Struggle between the
British Empire and its Hated Foe.

By **W. B. HOME-GALL.**

(Now Serving His Country with the British Army.)



READ THIS FIRST.

THORPE THORNHILL, a practically penniless inventor, who has constructed a wonderful air-ship, with the aid of his brother.

DECK THORNHILL, who astonishes

FIELD-MARSHAL LORD ROBERTS, who is in command of the British troops at manoeuvres, and tells that officer, when he alights, that the British Government had refused to buy the invention. With Roberts are the military attaches of Germany and France.

COLONEL GIRAUD, who represents France, and

MAJOR SEIGNER, the German attache, both attempt to buy the airship for their respective nations. Giraud, when he hears that Thorpe will not sell his invention to anybody save the British Government, retires gracefully. But Major Seigner, offering a million pounds and a principedom of the German Empire, resorts to threats, and is thrown out of the house. It is then that

CAPTAIN HORSHAM, an old school friend of the Thornhills, visits them, and warns them to beware of the German. He goes with Thorpe to the place where the inventor builds his wonderful craft, and is astounded at there being no visible guard. He remarks upon the subject, and

Thorpe invites him to try and get in. Horsham steps into the bushes, comes across a man in the garb of a gamekeeper, and bribes him, as he thinks, to show him the ships. But he is escorted by the gamekeeper to a shed, pushed inside, and the door locked upon him. Then he becomes aware he is a prisoner!

(Now go on with the story.)

Followed by the Spy—Caught!

But barely had Horsham time to realise how nicely he had been trapped when the door was opened, and Thorpe Thornhill, roaring with laughter, appeared. Close behind him stood half a dozen men, all clad like gamekeepers, and each carrying the same rifle-like weapon.

"Have I taken sufficient precautions to protect the Falcon, Horsham?" he asked, grinning.

"Rather! But I must have hit upon an exceptionally honest man. There are not many fellows who would refuse an offer of twenty pounds."

"All my men would," returned Thorpe proudly. "I pay

them too well to betray me. But come on. We are nearly at our destination."

So saying, he led the way for about a hundred yards further, when they came to a clearing, where, resting on blocks beneath a wall-less shed, was the airship Horsham had seen hovering over Salisbury Plain the preceding day.

With the enthusiasm of an expert, he listened whilst Thorpe Thornhill explained the mechanism of his wonderful invention.

It was so simple that one man could work it, and yet so strongly constructed that it would carry a dozen.

Its guns were splendid weapons, made of an aluminium alloy, the secret of which was in Thornhill's sole possession, as was the volatile gas with which every hollow rib, every double steel plate, was filled.

Mounting a platform beneath the airship, Thorpe invited his companion to seat himself; then, grasping the steering-wheel, touched a lever by his side.

So gently that Horsham could scarcely realise that they had started, the wondrous invention moved out of the shed, then soared high above the trees.

Captain Horsham was delighted. Exultantly he paced the light but substantial maindeck of the flying-ship, now peering amongst the whirring mass of piston-rods, wheels, and cylinders in the engine-room; now examining, with an expert's enthusiasm, the four long, light guns, two fore and two aft, with which the Falcon was armed, so mounted as to be easily fixed in any direction, to left or right, backwards or forwards, up or down.

Then he approached a well-like opening in the centre of the craft, the sides of which were studded with mirrors, so arranged that the steersman could see the country over which they were sailing without moving his head even to look behind him.

"What do you think of her?" asked Thornhill, with pardonable pride, as he relinquished the wheel to a man standing near.

"Thornhill, she's wonderful! I congratulate you! A real ship of the air has been invented at last!" cried Horsham enthusiastically.

The young inventor smiled, well pleased.

"Yes; I think she is all I have claimed her to be," he said modestly. "But come below. So far you have only seen the outside of the vessel."

Descending the companion-way, Thornhill escorted his guest through a series of plainly but comfortably-furnished cabins, with accommodation for three officers and twelve men; then through a number of store-rooms, well filled with ammunition and provisions for a long voyage, to a balcony in the stern of the Falcon, from whence the two men surveyed the ever-changing panorama beneath them for a few minutes ere returning to the upper deck.

By this time the Falcon had pierced the low-lying strata of clouds immediately above the earth, and was flying through the air at express speed.

Presently before them appeared a dark, black mass—the smoke of London.

"What do you say, Horsham? A description of the airship has already appeared in every paper; shall we give the good people of London a view of the Government's latest purchase?"

"All right; there is no harm in that," assented Horsham.

And ten minutes later they were hovering within five hundred feet of the wilderness of houses known as London.

Words cannot describe the sensation made by the sudden appearance of the Falcon as it floated like some enormous bird of prey over the City. Pedestrians stopped on the pavement, even bus-drivers and cabmen pulled up their vehicles to look at the phenomenon, until the traffic became congested, and for a few minutes all was confusion.

Enjoying the dismay his arrival had created, Thorpe Thornhill skimmed over the tops of the houses, passing from the Mansion House, down Queen Victoria Street, then along the

Embankment, to the War Office, where he came to a halt within twenty feet of the ground in the Horse Guards' Parade.

He had no intention of remaining there long. Already a tremendous crowd had gathered, and well he knew that Major Karl Seigner's threats had not been vain ones.

But in this brief halt, as in all else he did, Thorpe Thornhill had a definite point in view.

Just as an officious inspector of police thrust his way through the crowd to obtain his name and address, with a view of summoning him for causing an obstruction, the Falcon rose slowly, and, passing leisurely over Birdcage Walk, flew across Hyde Park on its way westward.

"I'd rattle on a bit if I were you, Thornhill. There may be a dozen foreign spies in the streets watching us," suggested Horsham, as they flew at about eight miles an hour over the Edgware Road.

"There is one, at any rate, who does not mean to be shaken off easily," replied Thorpe from his seat at the wheel, pointing towards a man on a large racing motor-bicycle, who was following their every movement.

"Pshaw! The Falcon can leave him hopelessly behind in ten minutes," returned Horsham contemptuously.

"If I wanted to; but I don't. If, as I believe, he is an emissary of our German friend, a lesson will not be lost, either on him or his master. I will soon see whether he means business or not," declared Thornhill. "Rise to five hundred feet, then go full speed ahead," he added, turning to the telephone.

Like a pigeon startled by the report of a sportsman's gun, the Falcon soared gracefully aloft ere darting forward at increased speed.

The two men on the airship exchanged amused glances as they saw the frantic efforts of the motor-cyclist to keep up with them, despite the abjurations of startled pedestrians, and the loud, imperative orders to stop from every policeman he passed.

Fortunately, they had by this time left Cricklewood behind them, or the reckless rider would undoubtedly have come to grief.

Skilfully handled by her owner, the Falcon kept just far enough ahead of her pursuer to lure him on, until she neared the wood from which they had emerged that morning; then she slowed down, sinking to her shed like a bird to its nest, just as the motorist, hot, dusty, and still trembling from the vibrations of his machine, sprang to the ground, and disappeared amongst the trees.

As Thorpe and his guest descended from the airship, the tinkling of an electric bell sounded in their ears.

Immediately half a dozen stalwart guards emerged from an adjacent house made of corrugated iron, and dived into the wood.

"They've gone to see our bicycle friend does not get lost in the wood," explained Thornhill, seeing Horsham's look of surprise. "But come inside. A little light refreshment after our trip will not be amiss."

"Willingly. I'm as hungry as a hunter, and as thirsty as two!" laughed Captain Horsham, following the young inventor into the little iron house, in one room of which they found sandwiches and bottled beer awaiting them.

Barely had they commenced a determined onslaught upon the viands ere there was a knock at the door, and in response to Thornhill's loud "Come in!" a couple of keepers entered, guarding a frightened, trembling prisoner, evidently a German, whilst through the open door could be seen a third, wheeling a motor-bicycle.

"Found wandering in the wood, sir. Thought as you were here you would like to see him," said one of the keepers, saluting his employer.

"All right. Leave him. Well, sir, what have you to say for yourself?" he demanded, turning angrily upon the German. "Speak up!"

"Ach! Why should I speak up? I see your machine—your wonderful flying-machine—I was interested, and followed," replied the man in good English, but with a strong German accent. "I am an English gentleman. Had I known this wood was private property, I would not have been so ill-bred as to have entered it. That being so, I can only apologise and make my bow," replied the stranger, turning towards the door.

"Not quite so fast, my friend!" cried Thorpe, rising and placing himself between the stranger and the door. "You have seen far too much. It would not do to let him go—eh, Horsham?"

"Certainly not!" replied the other, taking his cue from Thorpe's last words, and looking pityingly at the German. "Dead men tell no tales."

As the bloodthirsty assertion fell upon his ears, the German turned deathly white.

NOTE. Owing to the dis-
organisation of the
mail service caused by the War,
the "Gem" Library Free Corre-
spondence Exchange will be dis-
continued for the present.

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

"But you would not murder me?" he gasped, looking wildly round for some avenue of escape.

"It is unfortunate, but I am afraid there is no other course open to us," declared Thornhill deprecatingly.

"It would be rather awkward if he was a German employed at the Embassy, might it not?" asked Horsham.

"I am a German, and a civil clerk at the Embassy. My name is Henrik. Here is my card—you can see for yourselves!" cried the frightened man.

"Thank you, sir!" laughed Thornhill. "I merely wanted to find out who was at your back. My respects to Major Seigner, and tell him that I have trumped his first card, as I will do every other he chooses to play. Now go!"

Without waiting for a second bidding, the man hastened from the room.

"Are you wise to let him escape so easily? The Germans will move heaven and earth to get hold of your machine," declared Horsham. "Of course, if you like, you can have the place guarded by soldiers."

"No, thanks. If our friends, Seigner and Co., would like to pay me a visit, I would not baulk them for the world," laughed Thornhill, as he led the way from the house.

A Plot That Failed!

Within a second-floor room of a dingy house within a stone's-throw of Drury Lane, to which the rank and file were not admitted, a dozen men were assembled, smoking as only Germans can smoke, and drinking lager beer as only Germans can drink.

Despite the pewter-topped mugs at each man's elbow, it was evidently not a festive assembly, for an air of suppressed excitement pervaded the room.

Presently everyone there arose, saying:

"Good-evening, Herr Major!" as Karl Seigner entered the room.

Replying to the salutation with a curt nod, Seigner seated himself in a chair at the head of the long table which ran down the centre of the room, where he occupied himself for some minutes looking over the papers laid thereon ready to his hand.

"Ah, Stromitz," he said at last, addressing a tremendously fat German, whose acquaintance the reader has already made, "what have you found out about the Thornhills and their accursed flying-ship? You saw it, I suppose, hovering over the streets this afternoon?"

"Yes, Herr Major," returned the other, in a thick, hoarse voice, as though he experienced some difficulty in breathing. "Henrik of the Embassy followed it on his motor-bicycle, and found out where it came to rest."

Seigner's eyes glittered ominously.

"Good! If you can lead us there before daybreak, I will report you to headquarters for promotion. Stromitz. How about Hartz? Any news?"

"None whatever, Excellency. He must still be somewhere in the neighbourhood of Colchester. He is not in London; he dare not return to Germany; and no one answering to his description is known in any of the other large towns of England."

Seigner frowned, then, turning to a young fellow a little way further down the table, said:

"Dormid, you shall help Stromitz with this Hartz case. Draw on the treasurer for what money you want, and go to Colchester to-morrow. Do not dare to return here until you have something to report. Hartz must be found. It is the Emperor's orders."

The man addressed rose to his feet, saluted, and resumed his seat.

Each man present then arose in turn, and handed the major various papers, each containing information regarding various British seaports likely to be useful to an invading army.

As each man presented his report, he left the room, until only Stromitz and Seigner were left.

Drawing some papers towards him, Seigner wrote down several names.

"Have these men, armed with revolvers and short bludgeons, ready in an hour. Provide sufficient motor-cars to carry all. Return here as soon as arrangements are made," he ordered, in short, terse tones.

Having dismissed his companion, Seigner lit a cigar, and, his hands clasped behind him, paced up and down the room, lost in thought, until Stromitz returned half an hour later.

"All is arranged, Excellency. We will be summoned when the cars are ready?" he asked respectfully.

Save for a curt nod, Seigner made no reply for some minutes. At last he said:

"The chance of a lifetime has come to us, Stromitz. If we can obtain this flying-ship for our Government, you and I will make sufficient to live like fighting-cocks for the rest of our lives. If we cannot steal it, we must destroy it."

"What good? If we destroy this one, they have the plans, and will make another."

"But we may steal the drawings; and, should this Thornhill happen to die—accidents do sometimes happen—Germany

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alone will possess these airships, and England—England will be crushed!"

The fat man rubbed his hands, as though the prospect was one that gave him pleasure.

"Ach, it is good!" he said. "But these Thornhills, from what I have heard, will take a lot of killing."

"So have others, Stromitz, but we have been one too many for them—eh?" replied Seigner, with an evil, jarring laugh. "Well, what is it?" he added, as a man entered the room.

"The expedition awaits, Excellency."

"Good! All armed?"

"Yes."

"Then come!"

He led the way into the street, where two large motor-cars—each holding half a dozen people—were awaiting them.

An hour's swift drive over the deserted roads brought the conspirators to the wood in which Thorpe Thornhill had shown Captain Horsham his ship.

Silently marshalling his men within the shadow of a deserted barn, to which Henrik had guided them, the major issued his whispered instructions. Then they scattered in all directions, stumbling through the darkness.

Followed cautiously by Stromitz—who, despite his bulk, walked with almost noiseless step—Seigner approached the confines of the wood.

Presently the call of a partridge, a long way to the right, answered by one from the opposite direction, told him that his men were ready.

On they went, stumbling over fallen trees, splashing into tiny pools of water, the brambles catching in their clothes and tearing them almost to rags, the returning boughs slashing their faces, as slowly but surely they narrowed the circle round the airship.

Presently the clearing in which the wall-less building stood was reached; and confident that their scheme must now succeed, they moved towards where a dark, black mass showed the outlines of the airship beneath an immense tarpaulin.

All was quiet—indeed, rather too quiet for Seigner's peace of mind, for the silence which reigned around filled him with vague uneasiness.

But delay was more dangerous than anything; and, with loud cries of "For the Emperor and the Fatherland!" they flung themselves on the black mass before them.

Into it would perhaps have been the better word, for at the first touch the supposed tarpaulin fell to pieces, and the next moment Seigner plunged head over heels into a large, shallow tank, filled to the brim with tar.

In vain he tried to warn his subordinates of their danger. Ere he could open his mouth, they had joined him in his black, sluggish bath, falling over each other, struggling, kicking, and filling the air with frightened howls and cries for help.

Then, to add to their discomfiture, a whistle rang loud and shrill through the night air. The next moment the bright beams of a searchlight immediately above them filled the hut with its white glare; and, as he dragged himself to the edge of the tar tank, Seigner saw the Falcon floating just above the top of the trees, with the laughing faces of Thorpe Thornhill, his brother Dick, Captain Horsham, and three blue-coated mechanics, peering down on him.

"Below there! Is that the long arm of Germany?" asked Thornhill mockingly.

"Ach! You cursed Englander, you laugh now; I laugh presently!" hissed Seigner.

A scornful laugh was the only answer vouchsafed to his threat, and the next moment the electric light was turned off, plunging them into darkness, whilst the whirr of the Falcon's machinery told that she was already winging her flight elsewhere.

Julian Hartz!

Situated in the estuary of the Blackwater is a small island, which had probably been a stretch of marshland until the encroaching sea cut off a strip of land from the foreshore, half a mile long and a quarter wide, which in time became known as Seamen Island.

Upon this island the Thornhills had erected their works, and surely no better place could have been found, for no spy could possibly approach without being seen.

It was here that the Falcon had grown—and here, too, under Dick Thornhill's special care, a second airship, already christened the Night Hawk, was far advanced towards completion.

There was only one foreigner amongst the hands employed on the Thornhill's workshop, and he was their right hand. He had been brought from the Continent by Thorpe Thornhill himself, having been specially chosen as their chief assistant owing to his great knowledge of aeronautical engineering.

"Well, Hartz, another day and the Night Hawk will be ready to join her consort in the air," said Dick Thornhill one evening, as they knocked off work on the airship.

"Yes, Herr Richard, she is finished," returned the other. "And now that our work here is nearly completed, I would like to arrange for my wife and family to come to me from Germany."

"Certainly, Hartz. And, if we can be of any assistance to you—I know I am speaking for my brother as well as myself—command us."

Hartz took the boy's hand and pressed it gratefully.

"I do indeed want your help. As you know, I have refused to sell the secret of my gun to the German Government, and am therefore a marked man. I dare not return to Germany, or on some false charge I would be arrested."

"Nonsense, Hartz! You are secure enough here," interrupted Dick.

"Will you telegraph from Colchester, offering my wife a situation as housekeeper in a rich German's house in Colchester?"

"Willingly, Hartz. I will go at once. Why not come with me? It is a beautiful night. The launch will carry us as far as Wyvenhoe, where we can take the train, and be back before midnight."

Half an hour later the water-gates were thrown open, and the Thornhill's smart little electric launch darted, like a torpedo from the hull of an enormous ship, into the whirling waters of the Blackwater.

The tide was almost at its full, and they sped rapidly on their way until Wyvenhoe was reached, where they caught a train to their destination.

Arrived at Colchester, Dick Thornhill and his companion sprang on to the platform and hastened towards the exit.

As they emerged from the station door, Dick ran full butt against a tremendously fat man, whose exclamation of "Mine Gott!" as the English boy's shoulder collided with his portly stomach betrayed the land of his birth.

"A thousand pardons, sir! It was entirely my fault," apologised Dick.

"Nein, nein! I also was to blame. You see, I so big am I fill the whole doorway!" returned the other, laughing good-humouredly, his twinkling eyes wandering for a moment from Dick to his companion.

Dick laughed and passed on, all unconscious that the fat German had hastened on to the platform, beckoned a smaller compatriot to him, and pointing to the station fly, which was already bowling towards the town, he said in German:

"There's our man! That is Hartz! Don't lose sight of him!"

The other stopped to hear no more; and Stromitz—for it was Major Seigner's lieutenant—overjoyed at his good-fortune, wandered into the refreshment-room.

As the Wyvenhoe train steamed into the station, he saw his confederate, carrying a small gripsack, enter a compartment adjoining that in which the young inventor and friend travelled.

Early the following morning Stromitz was aroused by a knocking at the door of his room in the Three Cups Hotel.

"Who's there?" he demanded.

"Gentleman to see you, sir! Says it's most important!" replied the night-porter from the landing.

Stromitz rolled out of bed, waddled across the room, and, unlocking the door, admitted the emissary he had despatched after Hartz.

"Well?" he demanded interrogatively, as he dragged him into the room and closed the door behind him. "Did you follow them all the way?"

"Yes. I've done a good night's work," replied the other. "We have killed two birds with one stone, Herr Stromitz. We have found Hartz, and we have also found the workshop in which the airship is being built."

Trapped!

A few days later Dick was in his laboratory, manufacturing the new gas, when the door opened, and Julian Hartz entered.

"Hallo, Hartz! Won the big prize in the Hamburg lottery?" inquired Dick laughingly.

"Better, far better! My wife and child have already left Germany! Herr Rauss, a sea-captain, and a good friend of mine wife's, is bringing them over in his schooner! They will be in the Orwell this evening! Have I your permission to absent myself?"

"Certainly, Hartz! I am delighted to think that you will so soon have your family with you once more!" replied Dick Thornhill frankly. "But how is it that you have received an answer to your telegram so soon?"

"My wife has not received it; for she writes me, saying they are already on their way to England," explained Hartz.

Although late in the evening, it was still light when

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Hartz arrived at Parkeston, and saw, rocking on the broad bosom of the lovely Orwell, a schooner of some five hundred tons, flying the flag of the German mercantile marine. Believing he saw a woman's form on deck, he waved his hat frantically above his head.

The next moment all doubts were set at rest, as a couple of men dropped into a small boat lying alongside the schooner, and rowed swiftly towards him.

Had not Hartz been far too wrapped up in his work to note what went on around him every day, he must have seen that the sailors were no merchant seamen, but rowed with the smart, quick stroke peculiar to men-of-war's men.

As the boat's head grated against the shingle, he hastened towards it.

"Are you Herr Hartz?" asked one of the sailors.

"I am he! But my wife and child? Why have you not brought them ashore?"

"It is the captain's orders, Herr Hartz," returned the sailor. "Herr Rauss hopes you will spend the night on board the schooner."

Hartz would willingly have declined, but he could not very well refuse the invitation of the friend who had brought his dear ones from Germany.

Night was rapidly falling; but as he approached the German vessel he scanned the deck with eager eyes, and, though he felt hurt when found that neither Frau Hartz nor his child awaiting to welcome him, no suspicion of wrong entered his mind.

"Where is Frau Hartz? Where is Captain Rauss?" he demanded, looking round him.

"If the herr will step into the saloon he may find those he looks for there," returned the foremost of the two sailors who had rowed him from the shore.

But he scarcely noticed their presence. His gaze was fixed upon the grinning, white-faced man seated before a green-baize table on which were spread several papers.

"Major Seigner!" he gasped.

For a few minutes Julian Hartz stood as one struck speechless. He moistened his parched lips with his tongue; then a look, almost of relief, swept over his face. His wife and child were not there. They were safe, at any rate.

The discovery gave him renewed courage, and, with as much self-possession as he could summon, he turned to Major Seigner, saying:

"Yes, Herr Major, I have fallen into your trap, as any other man would have done in my place! But do not forget I am in England, and under the protection of English law! I will hear what you have to say, then I demand to be placed ashore!"

Major Seigner flushed angrily.

"Thunder and lightning! You impertinent dog! Is it thus you dare to speak to your superior? You will condescend to do this! You will demand that! Pshaw! Do you know that you are on board a German vessel, and, consequently, in German territory? Do you know that I have but to speak the word, and you will never see another sunrise? Thus being in my power, if I give you your liberty, what will you give me in return?"

Hartz paused before replying. For a moment hope shone from his eyes; but the next he shook his head, as he replied in a low voice:

"I fear there is nothing you would ask that an honest man could give."

"This is what you can give," cried the major, speaking in quick, excited tones: "not to me, but to your country! You are employed on the Thornhills' Falcon." Hartz was about to speak, but curbed himself. "That airship must never be handed over to the British Government. You will return to Seamen Island. At a given signal you will let in an armed force under my command. We will then seize this boasted flying-machine which is to revolutionise the fighting strength of the world, and you—you shall be a rich man for life. What do you say? Do you agree?"

Without a moment's hesitation the reply came:

"No! Kill me if you will, but I cannot betray the confidence of those who have befriended me in my trouble, and who have ever behaved more like brothers to me than employers."

"Very dramatic and very heroic!" sneered Seigner. "I fancy we have other arguments which will induce you to change your mind."

He raised his hand and beckoned to a man standing behind Hartz. The next moment the prisoner's throat was seized in a vice-like grasp, and the cold muzzle of a revolver pressed to his forehead.

"Unless you consent to our terms before I have counted three you are a dead man! One!" cried Seigner, his eyes ablaze with murderous hate.

(This Grand New Serial will be continued Next Monday. Order Early.)

RUCTIONS AT HIGHCLIFFE!

A Magnificent, New, Long, Complete Tale dealing with the
Adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars School.

By FRANK RICHARDS.



Nugent stripped off his Eton jacket, and handed it to Vernon-Smith. The Bounder twisted it inside out, and uttered an exclamation. He held the jacket up to the light—and there was a startled exclamation from all the juniors as a sudden gleam struck upon their eyes. "It's the diamond!" said the Bounder quietly. (See Chapter 2.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER. An Unexpected Visitor!

"TROT in!"

Harry Wharton & Co were at tea in No. 1 Study, in the Remove passage, when a tap came at the door.

Wharton and Nugent, to whom the study belonged, were "standing" the tea; and Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull and Hurree Janset Ram Singh were their guests. The Famous Five of the Remove were chatting cheerily on the subject of cricket in general, and the exploits of a certain new chum in particular. That new chum, to whom they alluded by the euphonious name of "Squiff," was apparently an object of considerable interest to the chums of the Greyfriars Remove.

But Squiff and cricket were driven suddenly from their minds, when the door opened in response to Wharton's cheery invitation, and a youth in Etons walked into the study.

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"SPIRITED AWAY!"

The Famous Five jumped up from the tea-table as if moved by the same spring, and stared at the new-comer.

"Ponsonby!" ejaculated Wharton.

The new-comer was an exceedingly well-dressed junior, with a handsome and somewhat supercilious face. It was Cecil Ponsonby of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe School. And the Greyfriars juniors were astounded to see him there.

They were on the worst of terms with the Highcliffe fellows, and Ponsonby especially was their pet aversion. They seldom met outside the school without trouble resulting; and to see the Highcliffe fellow coolly walk into their study in the Remove passage almost took their breath away.

Bob Cherry pushed back his cuffs, as if preparing for the inevitable.

But Ponsonby seemed perfectly unconcerned.

"Surprised to see me?" he asked.

"Yes," said Wharton shortly.

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton
& Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

"And not pleased, apparently?"

"No!"

Ponsonby laughed.

"Always the same nice manners," he remarked. "You fellows are famous for them. But, of course, I haven't come here looking for politeness. This is the last place I should come to for that."

"I suppose you've come looking for trouble," said Bob Cherry. "If you have, there's lots of it ready for you."

"We haven't any politeness to waste on you, Ponsonby," said Harry Wharton, with direct bluntness. "You've been told before that you are a rotter and a cad. I think it's like your cheek to come here."

"The cheekfulness is terrific," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"And if you're looking for trouble, you can pick your man—with or without gloves," added Bob Cherry.

"But I'm not looking for trouble," said Ponsonby easily. "I've walked over to speak to you. Will you excuse me if I sit down—as you've forgotten to ask me?"

And the Highcliffe fellow sank into the armchair, and crossed one leg over the other, with an air of perfect unconcern.

The chums of the Remove stared at him blankly. They did not like Ponsonby. It was not because he had always been their rival and enemy. But he did not "play the game." But they could not help admiring his nerve in walking into the lion's den in this way. And Wharton made a sign to Bob Cherry not to begin hostilities. Something was due to hospitality; and, though Ponsonby was an enemy, and an unscrupulous one, Wharton did not want him to be "handled" within the walls of No. 1. Study.

"What do you want?" asked Harry abruptly.

"Just a few words in a friendly way—"

"There's no friendship between us," broke out Frank Nugent hotly, "and you're lying, Ponsonby. You don't want to be friendly. It's spoof. You want to play us some new dirty trick."

Ponsonby extracted an eyeglass from his waistcoat pocket, screwed it into his eye, and surveyed Frank Nugent calmly, and in an exceedingly irritating manner.

"So nice and polite!" he murmured.

Nugent clenched his fists.

"You won't find me polite—" he began.

"All serene, dear boy, I don't expect to."

"You know what I think of you—"

"Precisely; and you needn't trouble to tell me all over again," said Ponsonby, with a yawn.

"I'll tell you, all the same," said Nugent, his eyes gleaming. "You led my minor into playing cards with you. I horse-whipped you for it. I'd do the same again. And if you don't get out of this study, I'll chuck you out."

Ponsonby made a soothing gesture with his hand.

"Don't get excited, Nugent, dear boy. But now you speak of it, your young brother owes me some money—"

"You cheated him at cards, you mean. I've made Dicky promise never to pay you a penny of it."

"Hardly the thing, to bring up your young brother to be a swindler, is it?" drawled Ponsonby.

Nugent made a spring towards him.

"Hold on, Franky!" Wharton caught his angry study mate by the arm. "Don't lay hands on him. We don't want a row here. Look here, Ponsonby, you'd better get out."

"I'll lay hands on him fast enough if he doesn't get out," shouted Nugent. "What do you want here, you cad? Do you think I'm going to be civil to a rotten cad who taught my minor to gamble, and got him into trouble over it? You won't see Dicky again! I've made him promise to have nothing more to do with you."

Ponsonby smiled.

"I don't desire to have anything more to do with your charming minor," he drawled. "Fags in the Second Form are really not in my line—especially when they don't pay their debts."

"Then what do you want? Another horse-whipping?"

Ponsonby's eyes gleamed for a moment. He had evidently not forgotten the occasion when Frank Nugent had sought him out at Highcliffe, and thrashed him under the eyes of his Form-master. For a moment the mask of supercilious calmness seemed to drop from Cecil Ponsonby's face, and his real feelings showed—hatred, and bitter enmity. But it was only for a moment. Then he was the cool, insolent "nut" again.

"What manners!" he murmured. "How delightful!"

"Oh, come," said Wharton, trying to be good-humoured. "You didn't come here to give us a lecture on manners, Ponsonby. We don't want to handle you, as you've come alone here. But you know you're not wanted, so say what you've come to say, and travel."

"Quite delightful!" murmured Ponsonby.

"Look here, what do you want?"

"Come to business," said Johnny Bull. "I don't see

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what you can have to say to us; but whatever it is, get it off your chest."

"Certainly! You fellows may remember that we used to have a regular cricket fixture. You stopped it—"

"Because you didn't play the game," said Wharton sternly. "After our team had been mobbed on your ground, you couldn't expect us to play with you any more, I suppose."

"That was—ahem—an unfortunate incident—probably due to your delightful manners," drawled Ponsonby. "Why not let bygones be bygones? I've talked it over with Gadsby and Vavasour, and we're willing to play you again. We're willing to give you a match at the wind-up of the season. You never really meet a decent team—and we're willing to let you meet us—for once."

If Ponsonby had put it in a different manner, Wharton might have hesitated. He did not believe in nourishing old injuries and dislikes. But put in that way, there was only one reply possible. Indeed, Wharton could not believe that the Highcliffe fellow was sincere.

If he had really wanted to "bury the hatchet," he would certainly have expressed himself in a more tactful manner. He knew Ponsonby very well; and he could not help thinking that the offer covered some kind of trick—though exactly what it was he could not imagine. He was quite willing to admit that in cunning and slyness he was by no means a match for Cecil Ponsonby.

"Is that what you really came for?" Wharton demanded.

"Certainly."

"Well, our answer is No! We're fed up with you."

"Quite fed up!" said Johnny Bull.

"More than fed up," said Nugent, "and I don't believe you mean it. You're trying to spoof us somehow, and you won't succeed."

"Delightful—delightful!" yawned Ponsonby. "What beautiful manners—exactly what one might expect from you, my dear Nugent. You and your minor are really well matched—a pair of rank outsiders, not to say swindlers—"

That was too much for Nugent. He wrenched his arm away from Wharton's detaining grasp, and simply hurled himself upon Ponsonby.

The Highcliffe fellow sprang to his feet to meet him, and in a second the two juniors were in each other's grasp, and struggling in a wild and whirling combat.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Ponsonby's Plot!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. looked on in amazement.

Nugent and Ponsonby, tightly gripped, and equally furious, were struggling savagely.

And the Greyfriars juniors looked on in wonder. They could not understand it.

Ponsonby was not a fighting-man as a rule. When he had an old score to pay off, he generally found some safer and meaner way of paying it. They had never supposed that Ponsonby was of the stuff that heroes are made of. And yet he had walked alone into the study, and deliberately provoked a quarrel where the odds were all against him. It was past their comprehension.

That he was bitter and rancorous on account of the horse-whipping Nugent had given him, they well knew; but they had not expected him to seek to avenge that terrific thrashing in this way.

The "Co." did not think of interfering. Cad and outsider as Ponsonby was, he was sure of fair play in No. 1 Study.

And Nugent was quite equal to handling him.

But Ponsonby was putting up an unexpectedly good fight. His fists got home several times on Nugent's flushed and angry face as they struggled together. But Nugent, if not the stronger, was the more fit of the two.

They bumped into the study table, and set the crockery dancing, and a couple of chairs were knocked over. Then Ponsonby went whirling to the door, and shot out into the passage, where he alighted with a bump.

Two or three Remove fellows came running along the passage.

"Hallo! What's the row?" exclaimed Bolsover major.

"Ponsonby, bedad!" exclaimed Micky Desmond.

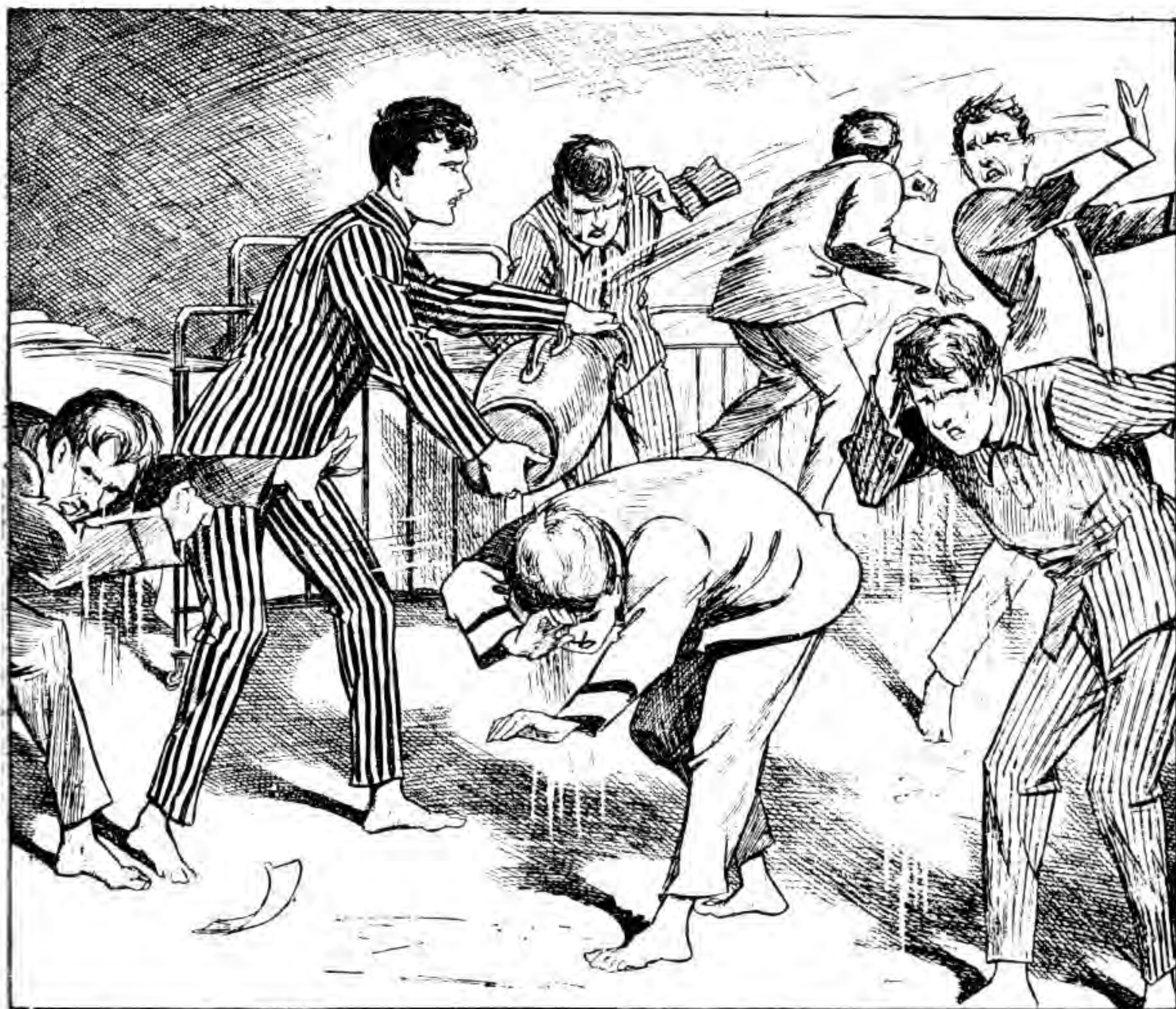
"Kick him out!"

Ponsonby leaped to his feet.

He made a wild rush back into the study, and Nugent, who was hardly expecting that sudden return of his enemy, received both his fists on the chest, and was hurled into the fender.

Then—smack!

Ponsonby's open hand came full across Harry Wharton's face, and the captain of the Remove staggered back, more astonished than hurt. He had not expected an attack, having kept out of the scuffle to allow Ponsonby fair play.



"You look rather wet, Pon!" said Squiff, taking up another jug of water. "All these merry souls got up to see me drenched, did they? Well, one good turn deserves another!" And before the raggers could realise what he was about to do, Squiff swept the jug round in a half-circle, and a drenching stream of water caught them, one after another. (See Chapter 15.)

Bump!

An unexpected drive under the chin sent Bob Cherry reeling.

"Why—my hat—what——" roared Bob.

"Collar him!"

"Faith, and the spalpeen's fighting the whole study!" buckled Micky Desmond, from the passage. "Sure, I never thought he was a giddy hero before!"

The Famous Five almost thought they were dreaming. For Ponsonby to come there and tackle Nugent was astounding, but for the cad of Highcliffe to "pitch into" the whole Co. was simply the limit.

But there was no more "pitching in."

The Co. closed on Ponsonby, and he was whirled off his feet, and, in a struggling mass of arms and legs, he was swept to the doorway.

Bump!

Ponsonby landed in the passage again.

The passage was full of an excited crowd of juniors now. They were as amazed as the Famous Five, and very much interested. Ponsonby was showing up in an altogether new light, and they could not help feeling some admiration for his reckless courage.

But that last bump had been enough for the unexpected hero from Highcliffe. He lay groaning in the passage.

"Do you want any more, you rotter?" shouted Nugent. "If you do, you've only got to come into the gym!"

"What on earth does it all mean?" exclaimed Vernon.

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Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars. "What have you come here for, Ponsonby?"

"Cave!" called out Tom Brown.

Wingate of the Sixth, captain of Greyfriars and head prefect, was coming up the stairs. The din in the Remove passage had brought him to the spot, and he brought a cane with him. He generally brought a cane with him when he visited the Remove quarters.

"What's all this row, you young sweeps?" demanded Wingate gruffly. Then he stared at the sprawling form of Ponsonby. "Hallo, young shaver! What are you doing here?"

Ponsonby staggered up.

"I—I came to speak in a friendly way to those rotters about a cricket-match, and they piled on me!" he gasped.

"Wharton——"

"It's a lie!" said Harry Wharton directly. "He came in and picked a row with us, and we didn't pile on him till he started. We were willing to let Nugent lick him!"

Wingate frowned.

"You don't mean to say that the kid came here alone and went for the lot of you?" he exclaimed.

"But he did!"

"Well, it was a jolly queer thing to do. Anyway, you've no business here, Ponsonby; and, after all the trouble there's been, you shouldn't have come. You'd better clear off!"

"I'm going," said Ponsonby. "I'll see those rotters later, when they're not five to one!"

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"SPIRITED AWAY!"

"Why, you cad," shouted Wharton, "you know jolly well—"

"That's enough!" broke in Wingate. "Clear off, Ponsonby, and don't come here again!"

Ponsonby shrugged his shoulders, and walked away to the stairs. Wingate followed him, to see him out of the school without further "trouble."

The Famous Five returned to their tea-table in very ruffled mood.

Ponsonby's conduct amazed and irritated them.

"The utter rotter!" said Nugent. "I knew he had some dirty trick in his mind. He came here to pick a row, and then to make out that we all piled on him, and wouldn't give him fair play!"

"And Wingate more than half believed it," said Johnny Bull, with a grunt. "By Jove, it's not easy to believe that a fellow like Ponsonby would come here and go for the lot of us as he did! I wouldn't have believed it!"

Wharton wrinkled his brows deeply.

"I can't make it out," he confessed.

"It's plain enough," said Nugent, rather tartly. "He wanted to make it look as if we wouldn't give him fair play!"

"Yes; but—but that isn't enough to make him go through a hiding like that! He's been pretty roughly handled, and we know he always keeps out of a scrap if he can. He wouldn't go through a handling like that simply to make out that we didn't give him fair play!"

"But he must have done it for something," said Johnny Bull.

"Yes, I know he did; and I want to know—what?"

"Oh, hang him!" said Nugent crossly. "Our tea's cold now!"

But Harry Wharton was not thinking of the tea. He was no fool, and he was quite certain that Ponsonby must have had some adequate motive for his amazing conduct. And that motive was to score off the Famous Five in some way—but how? There was something hidden—something that Wharton felt he could not fathom.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry, as Vernon-Smith came into the study, and closed the door behind him. "Have some cold tea?"

"Thanks, no! What did Ponsonby want here?"

"Trouble; and he got it."

The Bounder was looking very grave. In his unregenerate days, when his wild ways had earned him his nickname, Vernon-Smith had been chummy with Ponsonby & Co. of Highcliffe.

He was very well acquainted with Ponsonby's character, and he was uneasy.

"Never mind Ponsonby," said Nugent; "I'm sick of him. Let's make some more tea!"

"Yes, chuck the subject!" growled Johnny Bull.

"You'd better not chuck the subject just yet," said the Bounder quietly. "There's more in this than meets the eye. Ponsonby isn't the chap to rush into a fight with half a dozen fellows for nothing. He is generally pretty careful to keep out of a fight at all, even with one chap at a time!"

"That's what puzzles me," confessed Wharton. "But he did it. He insulted Nugent, and Franky went for him. Then Ponsonby went for me and went for Bob. Then we all chucked him out, of course. I can't understand it myself!"

"It wants understanding," said the Bounder. "What was his excuse for coming?"

"Some lie about wanting to fix up a cricket-match. I'm quite certain that he wasn't sincere from the way he put it."

The Bounder knitted his brows.

"Ponsonby is pretty deep," he said, "and he's had it up against you fellows ever since Nugent gave him that horse-whipping. He had some object in coming here and making this scene—which isn't in his line at all. And if you fellows don't want to be caught napping, you'd better work it out what his object was!"

"Oh, I'm fed up with him!" grunted Nugent.

"Did he leave anything behind him?" asked the Bounder, looking round the study.

"No," said Harry, in surprise. "What should he have left?"

"Do you remember a trick he played on you once before?" said the Bounder quietly. "You ragged him in his study at Highcliffe, and he pretended afterwards that he had missed some money, and tried to make out that you'd taken it!"

Wharton started.

"I'd forgotten," he said. "I remember now you speak of it. He came here to say he'd missed the money, and tried to plant it on us at the same time, so that it could be found—only he was spotted doing it."

"Exactly."

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"Well, he couldn't do that again," said Nugent. "We haven't been to his study."

"But he has been to yours," said the Bounder quietly.

"But—but—"

"He had some motive—some jolly strong motive for going through that mauling," said Vernon-Smith. "I know Ponsonby—know him well. There's something deep in this—jolly deep! He's got a good yarn—that he came here in a friendly way, and you piled on him. Not much good your answering that he attacked the whole crowd of you at once, because it's unlikely on the face of it!"

"Look here—"

"I don't mean that I don't believe you—I mean that others won't," said the Bounder. "He will make out that you piled on him; and if he makes out, too, that he's missed something, that will be supposed to be what you did it for!"

"Great Scott!"

"But—but—but could he be such an awful rascal?" exclaimed Johnny Bull, aghast.

"He was before, and he is now."

"I knew there was something in it," said Harry Wharton, setting his teeth. "I knew he had a motive—a jolly strong motive—and I believe Smithy has hit on it."

"The scoundrel!"

"The rotter!"

"Look about the place," said the Bounder. "If it's as I suspect, you'll have a visit from a master at Highcliffe, claiming stolen property."

"Good heavens!"

"And Ponsonby won't lose any time. Better look out."

The chums of the Remove regarded one another almost helplessly. That such wickedness could have been planned by the cad of Highcliffe was almost incredible, base and unscrupulous as they knew him to be. Yet it was the only explanation they could think of—the only way of explaining his extraordinary conduct in No. 1 Study. But for the Bounder, they would certainly not have suspected it. The Bounder's peculiar experiences had sharpened his wits in many ways.

"I—I say," stammered Bob Cherry, in dismay; "it's really too thick, Smithy. I can't possibly believe that Ponsonby would—would—"

"I—I can hardly think so," said Nugent slowly. "He acted like a rascal towards my young brother, I know; but—but—"

The Bounder gave a hard laugh.

"Just as you like," he said. "I can see what's in your minds. You think it's rather rotten of me to be up to such things; if I hadn't had a good bit to do with rotters, I should never suspect anything of the sort. Perhaps you're right; but I'm only trying to do you a good turn. You'd look pretty sick if a master comes over from Highcliffe with a story of a lost gold watch, and the watch is found in one of your pockets."

"My hat!"

Moved by the same impulse, the chums of the Remove went through their pockets with hurried, searching hands. All of them had come into rough contact with Ponsonby, and it was barely possible that the cad of Highcliffe might have played such a trick on them. Frank Nugent, who had struggled with Ponsonby for several minutes, was the likeliest victim, and it was Nugent whom Ponsonby had deliberately picked a quarrel with—Nugent, whom he hated. Nugent's face was quite pale as he went through his pockets. But only his own belongings were turned out, and it was the same with the other fellows.

Harry Wharton drew a deep breath of relief.

"It's all right," he said. "You're on the wrong track this time, Smithy, old man. I thought for a moment you'd hit it—I own up—but—but it was too utterly rotten. Even Ponsonby wouldn't do a thing like that."

Vernon-Smith smiled cynically.

"Did you notice whether Ponsonby was wearing his diamond pin when he came here?" he asked.

"His pin?"

"Yes; you know the big diamond he wears in his neck-tie."

"I didn't notice it," said Harry. "But he always wears it—I never remember seeing him without it—so I suppose he had it on. Why?"

"Because," said the Bounder grimly, "he hadn't it on when he left."

"Did you notice—?"

"I did."

"He had it on when he came in," said Johnny Bull. "I remember now noticing it gleam. He certainly had it on."

"When he came—but not when he left," said the Bounder, with a laugh. "What does that look like?"

"It—it may have dropped out in the tussle."

"Look for it, then."

The juniors searched the carpet, and the floor round the carpet, the doorway, and the passage outside anxiously. But there was no sign of Ponsonby's dropped pin. They came back into the study, looking troubled and somewhat alarmed.

A junior with a sunburnt face looked into the study with an inquiring expression.

"Anything wrong?" he asked. "Lost anything? Can I help?"

It was the new boy in the Remove. He had just come in from the cricket-ground, and was in flannels, and had his bat under his arm. Harry Wharton & Co. turned worried glances upon Squiff. The new junior had the lengthy name of Sampson Quincy Ifley Field, but from his initials—S. Q. I. F.—Bob Cherry had in a humorous moment composed a shorter name for him, which stuck to him. At Greyfriars the junior from New South Wales was never called Field excepting by his Form-master; to all the fellows he was Squiff. As Bob Cherry remarked, life was short, and there was no time for Sampson Quincy Ifley Field. "Squiff" saved breath.

"Yes," said Wharton. "Come in, Squiff. Shut the door. We don't want this jawed about—not till we're certain, anyway."

"Oh!" said Squiff, backing away. "If it's anything private—"

"Not at all. Trot in."

Squiff came in, and closed the door, as Wharton directed. He was looking surprised. He had just heard the story of Ponsonby's visit from Billy Bunter.

"What on earth's happened?" he asked.

Wharton explained.

Squiff gave a long whistle.

"Well, your Highcliffe friend must be a pretty specimen if he's played a trick like that," he remarked. "Is Smithy sure he hadn't the pin on him when he left?"

"Quite sure!" said the Bounder.

"You didn't see him, Squiff?"

The Australian shook his head.

"No; I've been on the cricket-field. I've never seen the chap at all. I didn't know he'd been here till I just heard it from Bunter. But I say, if he's that kind of a rotter, I agree with Smithy that you'd better be jolly careful. Quite sure he had his precious pin on when he came?"

"I saw it," said Johnny Bull.

"It's here somewhere, then," said Harry Wharton; "and it wasn't dropped in the scrap, because we've searched every inch of the place."

"Nugent's got it!" said the Bounder coolly.

Nugent started.

"Smithy! You—"

"You've got it, Nugent, because Pon has planted it on you," said the Bounder. "I'm as certain of that as I am that Ponsonby came here with the intention of paying you out for that horsewhipping you gave him. I don't know what you did it for, but I dare say he deserved it; but I do say that he's not the kind of chap to take it lying down. He can't lick you, and that wouldn't satisfy him if he could. If I were a betting chap—here the Bounder grinned—"I'd lay ten to one that that pin is about you somewhere."

"But I've been through my pockets," said Nugent, bewildered. "I—I can't believe it, Smithy. I can't believe it even of Ponsonby."

"Let's see! Take your jacket off."

Nugent stripped off his Eton jacket in silence. The Bounder twisted it inside out, and uttered an exclamation. He held the jacket up to the light, and there was a startled exclamation from all the juniors as a sudden gleam of brilliancy struck upon their eyes.

"It's the diamond!" said the Bounder quietly.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Bounder Takes the Lead!

"THE—the diamond!"

"My hat!"

"Nugent, old man—"

"The hound!"

"Well, this takes the cake," said Squiff.

Nugent's face was deadly pale.

It was the diamond pin, there was no doubt about that. It was hooked in the inside of the jacket. Ponsonby had probably had it in his hand ready when he closed with Nugent. To thrust his arm inside the open jacket, and leave the pin sticking in the lining, had been quite easy. No one had seen the action, for no one had dreamed of looking for anything of the kind to happen; and it had been done with lightning quickness.

The Bounder smiled in a hard, cynical way. He had been right—he had judged the Highcliffe fellow correctly. His knowledge of the baser side of human nature had been proved again.

Nugent panted.

"You—you fellows, you don't think—"

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"SPIRITED AWAY!"

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ONE
PENNY.

"Don't be an ass!" said Harry Wharton. "We know how the diamond came there."

"Smithy!" Nugent's voice was husky and strained. "You—you have done me a good turn. I sha'n't forget that. That—that villain planted this on me, intending to accuse me of stealing it."

The Bounder nodded.

"Exactly!" he said. "And in an hour or so Mr. Mobbs will be over here from Highcliffe, inquiring after Ponsonby's lost pin."

"By gum!" said Squiff. "And if you hadn't found it, of course you fellows would have denied all knowledge of it; and then they would have demanded a search, and it would have been found on Nugent, hidden in the lining of his jacket. And—and then it would have looked pretty black, I must say."

Nugent clenched his hands convulsively.

"I—I'll smash him! The cad—the villain! I—I——" Nugent made a stride towards the study door.

"Hold on!" said the Bounder. "Where are you going?"

"I'm going to the Head!" said Nugent fiercely. "I'm going to take him this pin, and tell him that Ponsonby planted it on me. I'm going to have it all clear before the villain begins his accusation."

"Hold on——"

"There's no time to lose!" exclaimed Nugent impatiently.

"Have your own way, if you like," said the Bounder. "I think I could suggest something better, that's all."

Nugent paused.

"After what you've done for me, I'll do anything you say," he said. "But don't let's lose time. What's your idea, then?"

"Easy does it," said the Bounder. "Ponsonby can hardly be back at Highcliffe yet, so there's no hurry for a few minutes. If you take the pin to the Head, with the tale how it was found, it will always be in Ponsonby's power to say that you stole it, and lost your nerve afterwards, and gave it back."

"Oh!"

"Blessed if I thought of that!" said Wharton uneasily. "But——"

"We all know how it was found in Nugent's jacket," said Bob Cherry. "There's the whole crowd of us to prove that."

"You couldn't prove that Ponsonby put it there."

"Well, no; but——"

"Let me take it to the Head," said Vernon-Smith. "We don't want a lot of unpleasant talk about it. We can't get Ponsonby punished as he deserves, so there's no need to have a scandal on the subject. Even if it were reported to his headmaster, Dr. Voysey wouldn't take our word against Ponsonby's; and we can't say that we saw him play the trick. He would believe that Nugent had pinched the diamond, and lost his nerve afterwards."

"But——"

"We'll jolly well punish Ponsonby ourselves," said Wharton, between his teeth.

"Agreed! But about this pin, let me take it to the Head, and simply say that Ponsonby left it in the study here. The Head can send it back to Highcliffe, or keep it till Ponsonby sends for it. I expect Mobbs will come over, and the Head will have the pin all ready to hand over to him, and that will knock him as flat as a flounder. Ponsonby can't very well say it was stuck in Nugent's jacket; he can only say that it was taken off him while he was in this study. Well, this study finds it, and hands it over to the Head, and that knocks him into a cocked hat so far as an accusation is concerned. But the less said about the rest of the matter the better. The Head doesn't know Ponsonby as we do, and he would be jolly slow to believe that he would be villain enough to plant it on Nugent on purpose. It's bad policy to make accusations you can't prove."

There was a short silence.

The impulse of the Co. had been to proclaim Ponsonby's villainy, but they realised that the Bounder was right.

Ponsonby's action could not be proved, and an accusation without proof was useless, and worse than useless, to make.

All they could prove was that the diamond pin had been found sticking on the inside of Frank Nugent's jacket—but they could not prove that Ponsonby had placed it there.

To a disinterested and unprejudiced judge of the matter, it would seem quite as likely that Nugent had taken the pin, as that Ponsonby had "planted" it on him—likelier, indeed, for the diamond was worth fifteen pounds at least, and Ponsonby had risked losing it to carry out his plot.

"Smithy's right," said Wharton, after a pause. "The less said about it the better. Let Smithy take it to the Head, and we'll keep our mouths shut."

Nugent handed the pin to the Bounder.

"Take it!" he said.

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& Co. BY FRANK RICHARDS.

"Right! I think you'll see it's the best way, when you think over it," said Vernon-Smith.

And he left the study with the pin in his hand.

The Bouncer made his way directly to the Head's study. He knocked at the door, and the Head's deep voice bade him enter. Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was with the Head, and both the masters glanced in surprise at the scintillating diamond in the junior's hand.

"If you please, sir," said Vernon-Smith, "I've brought this to you to take charge of!" He laid the diamond pin on the Head's desk. "It belongs to Ponsonby of Higheliffe."

"Indeed!" said Dr. Locke, in surprise. "Then how did it come into your possession, Vernon-Smith?"

"Ponsonby has been here, sir; he came into Wharton's study, and there was a row," said the Bouncer. "They had a scuffle—"

"Indeed!" said the Head, raising his eyebrows. "I think I have spoken before, Vernon-Smith, on the subject of these quarrels with the Higheliffe boys—"

"Yes, sir; but Wharton couldn't help the fellow coming over here, and making a row in his study," said Vernon-Smith respectfully. "Ponsonby left this diamond pin behind him, sir, and I found it. As it is very valuable, I thought I had better hand it over to you at once."

"Quite right, Vernon-Smith. It shall be sent back to Ponsonby immediately," said Dr. Locke. "You are very right to be careful with an article of value, as this appears to be. Thank you, Vernon-Smith."

And the Bouncer left the Head's study.

He was smiling when he came back to the Remove passage, and looked into No. 1. The juniors there were looking grinn enough. The incident troubled their minds greatly.

"It's all serene," said the Bouncer, with a nod. "I've handed it to the Head, and told him I found it here—that's quite correct. My idea is that Mobby will come over, bursting with indignation after Ponsonby's pitched him his yarn—and he will be knocked into a cocked hat when the Head hands him the pin. I wish I could be in the study to see Mobby's face!"

And the juniors grinned at the thought.

They watched from the window of No. 1 Study, to see the emissary from Higheliffe when he arrived. They had no doubt that it would be Mr. Mobbs, the master of the Fourth Form at Higheliffe. Mr. Mobbs had more than once come over to Greyfriars with complaints, and he liked making himself as disagreeable as possible. Mr. Mobbs was a "tuft-hunter," and his chief occupation was making himself agreeable to Ponsonby and his friends, and closing his eyes to their many rascalities. Ponsonby had rich connections, and Mr. Mobbs hoped great things from them. And as he had had many rubs with the Famous Five, he was certain to undertake making a charge against them with peculiar zest.

The chums of the Remove were not disappointed. It was scarcely half an hour later when the thin, meagre form of Mr. Mobbs was seen crossing the Close from the gates. The thin, black-coated figure disappeared into the School House. Vernon-Smith turned from the study window with a grin.

"Now Mobby's going to get the surprise of his life," he murmured.

And the juniors chuckled.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Mr. Mobbs!

DR. LOCKE rose politely as Mr. Mobbs was shown into his study by Trotter, the page. The Head of Greyfriars did not like Mr. Mobbs, but he was always courteous. Mr. Quelch, too, bowed to the Higheliffe master.

Mr. Mobbs jerked his head in return.

"I have come here upon a somewhat unpleasant errand, Dr. Locke," he said abruptly.

"Indeed!"

"Yes, sir; nothing less than a most serious accusation against certain boys in this school—an accusation of theft!"

Dr. Locke flushed.

"You may make such an accusation if you please, Mr. Mobbs," he said tartly. "but I warn you that I regard it as utterly ridiculous, in advance; and that I shall require the clearest proof before I proceed in the matter at all."

Mr. Mobbs sneered.

"If you do not proceed in the matter, sir, there are others who will," he said. "Failing yourself, the matter will be placed in the hands of the police."

"Nonsense!" said the Head.

The old gentleman was seldom so plain-spoken; but Mr. Mobbs had a very irritating effect upon him.

"Am I to understand, sir, that you decline to listen to me?" exclaimed Mr. Mobbs.

"Certainly not. If you have a charge to make, make it."

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"Very well. This afternoon a young gentleman of my Form at Higheliffe—Master Ponsonby—came here—"

"I have already been informed of that circumstance."

"He came upon a friendly errand; he wished to make an end of the ceaseless quarrels between the boys here and the boys in Higheliffe, and he proposed to Wharton that all differences should be forgotten, and they should resume their former cricket fixtures."

"Indeed! I have not been informed of that," said the Head drily.

"Ponsonby has explained that to me," said Mr. Mobbs.

"On the contrary, I have been informed that he came here and made a quarrel with some of the boys in the Remove," said the Head.

"That is not the case."

"Pardon me! As the matter rests upon the assertions of the persons concerned, I shall certainly not take Ponsonby's word in the matter against Greyfriars boys. You cannot expect me to do so."

Mr. Mobbs breathed hard through his nose.

"Ponsonby's explanation is as I have said," he replied.

"He further states that, instead of receiving his friendly offer in the spirit in which he made it, four or five juniors attacked him at once, and he was thrown out of the study with violence."

"I think the owners of the study in question would probably give a different version, Mr. Mobbs. Who are the boys concerned?"

"Nugent, Wharton, Cherry, Bull, and an Indian boy," said Mr. Mobbs. "That they will give a different version I have no doubt; but I shall not believe it."

"That is where we differ, then, for I should certainly take their word," said Dr. Locke drily. "At all events, as Ponsonby seems to have thrust himself upon them uninvited, I do not see that he can justly complain of an uncivil reception, considering the trouble that has already existed between them. However, it was a more serious matter than a school-boy scuffle you were referring to."

"Yes, sir—theft!"

"Theft of what—and by whom?"

"Ponsonby expressed to me his surprise—his pained surprise—at the spirit in which his friendly overtures were received," said Mr. Mobbs. "But until he had returned to Higheliffe he did not realise there might have been a deeper and baser motive for the violence with which he was treated. But after his return, he missed an article of great value—and he realised that it must have been taken from him in the scuffle in Wharton's study."

Dr. Locke started.

At the first sight of Mr. Mobbs he had supposed that the Higheliffe master had come to inform him that Ponsonby's diamond pin had been lost in the scuffle, and to reclaim it. Mr. Mobbs' further remarks had driven the pin from his mind. Now it was recalled, and he understood the accusation the Higheliffe master intended to make. He smiled involuntarily. The pin, which Mr. Mobbs intended to accuse the juniors of stealing, was reposing in the Head's desk, within reach of his hand, where he had placed it for safety till he should have time to send it to Higheliffe by registered post.

The Head's smile puzzled Mr. Mobbs. He continued, with increased bitterness:

"That article of value, sir, was a pin—a diamond pin—a present to Ponsonby on his birthday from his uncle, a very well-known titled gentleman. That diamond pin, sir, has been taken from Ponsonby by some boy here, which explains the reason why they attacked him in so ruffianly and unfair a manner. I have come here, sir, to demand the return of that article, and the punishment of the thief."

Dr. Locke frowned.

"Ponsonby and you yourself, Mr. Mobbs, seem to have no hesitation in bringing a disgraceful accusation against boys who, I believe, are perfectly honourable and upright. I can only say, sir, that this reflects no credit upon Ponsonby or upon yourself."

Mr. Mobbs bit his thin lips.

"That is all very well, sir; but if the boys deny knowledge of the pin—as I have not the slightest doubt they will—I demand a search—"

"Not quite so fast, please. Did it not occur to Ponsonby or to you that the pin might have been dropped in the scuffle?"

Mr. Mobbs shrugged his shoulders.

"That is quite possible, of course," he said. "In that case the pin would be found, I presume, and returned to Ponsonby. If it were not found, a search would discover it lying somewhere about the study. I demand that a search be made, without warning being given to the boys concerned. They must not be allowed an opportunity, sir, of throwing the stolen pin upon the floor, to give it an appearance of having fallen there by accident."

"And you suspect that they would do so, Mr. Mobbs?" asked the Head, with a scornful curl of the lip.

"I think it is very probable, Dr. Locke, in case they should lose their nerve upon finding immediate inquiry made for the pin. But it is more probable—much more probable—that they have already concealed their plunder—yes, sir, I repeat, their plunder! I demand a search of their study, of their persons, and of their belongings. Ponsonby informs me that the pin was secure—it was not at all likely to fall out of its own accord, even in a scuffle. However, if it is found in the study—without warning being given before the search is made—I am willing to admit that, in that case, it was lost there by accident."

"What you are willing to admit, or unwilling to admit, does not concern me in the least," said the Head jeily. "Your accusation, sir, is groundless. I will say more than that—it is utterly disgraceful, and reflects the greatest discredit upon Ponsonby and upon yourself. It may surprise you, Mr. Mobbs—it should not, but I have no doubt it will—to learn that the pin has already been found, and handed to me for safe keeping, to be returned to its owner."

Mr. Mobbs jumped.

"Found!" he ejaculated.

Dr. Locke took the pin from his desk and handed it to Mr. Mobbs. The Form-master of Higheliffe took it mechanically, staring at it.

"Is that Ponsonby's pin?" asked Dr. Locke coldly.

"Ye-es!" stammered Mr. Mobbs. "That—that is certainly Ponsonby's pin. I am very well acquainted with it."

"That pin was found in Wharton's study after Ponsonby's departure, and brought to me by a Remove boy," said the Head. "It has been in my desk more than half an hour. It was my intention to send it to Dr. Voysey by registered post. You have saved me the trouble. Good-afternoon, Mr. Mobbs!"

Mr. Mobbs' jaw dropped.

In his mean little mind he had made no doubt whatever that Ponsonby's accusation was well-founded; for, of course, he had no suspicion of the trick the Higheliffe junior had played.

He did not believe that the pin had been dropped by accident in the scuffle, because he preferred to believe that it had been stolen by the juniors he disliked.

But even Mr. Mobbs could not believe that No. 1 Study had stolen the pin, and immediately brought it to the Head to be returned to the owner.

"I—I— It appears that—that Ponsonby was mistaken!" Mr. Mobbs stammered.

"Yes, sir!" said Mr. Quelch sternly, speaking for the first time. "Yes, sir! And you owe an apology to the boys against whom you have brought a base accusation!"

"I—I am willing to admit that I was—was hasty!" said Mr. Mobbs. "This—this is certainly Ponsonby's diamond pin. I—I will return it to him. I, of course, under the circumstances, I—I withdraw the charge against the juniors in question."

"I should imagine so," said Dr. Locke. "I should think also that you would say you are sorry for having made it."

"I—I certainly regret that—that a mistake has arisen," stammered Mr. Mobbs.

And he almost wriggled out of the study.

The Head touched the bell, and sent Trotter for Harry Wharton. Wharton passed Mr. Mobbs in the passage as he came to the Head's study, and Mr. Mobbs gave him a decidedly evil look. Wharton smiled; it was evident that Mr. Mobbs' visit had not prospered.

Dr. Locke was very grave when the captain of the Remove came in.

"You are aware that Mr. Mobbs has been here from Higheliffe, Wharton?"

"Yes, sir."

"He came in connection with the diamond pin which Ponsonby left in your study. I have returned it to him. But I feel I must mention what Mr. Mobbs had to say, painful and even degrading as it was. It was suspected that the diamond pin was stolen from Ponsonby during the scuffle in your study."

"Indeed, sir!"

"Yes, and Mr. Mobbs came here to make an accusation. You observe, Wharton, how serious the matter would have been if the pin had not been found and handed to me in time. I trust this will be a warning—more effective than any punishment—against the continual recurrence of these quarrels with Higheliffe."

"I hope, sir, that you would not have believed such an accusation against us," said Harry quietly. "Ponsonby is not the kind of fellow whose word can be taken. And I think Mr. Quelch would answer for us, so far as our honesty is concerned."

"Most certainly!" said Mr. Quelch. "Nevertheless—"

"Nevertheless, Wharton, pray remember that it would be more judicious to avoid these—these unseemly conflicts—"

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"SPIRITED AWAY!"

EVERY
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

Wharton flushed a little.

"But we could hardly avoid this one, sir, when Ponsonby came into my study, where we were having tea, to pick a row with us."

"His statement is that he came to make a friendly offer about a cricket match—"

"He came to insult us, sir, and to pick trouble with us; and I didn't understand at first what he did it for, but now—"

Wharton paused abruptly.

The Head looked at him very curiously, and Mr. Quelch started a little.

"Well, now, Wharton?" said the Head.

"N-nothing, sir! I—I understand what he did it for now, that's all," faltered Harry. "But—but I'd rather not say what—what I was thinking. I don't want to say anything I can't prove."

"Very well," said the Head very quietly. "You may go, Wharton."

Wharton left the study. The two masters exchanged a significant glance.

"The boy has some suspicion in his mind," the Head remarked.

"And I cannot blame him," said Mr. Quelch. "The same thought has occurred to me. It seems impossible that a lad of Ponsonby's age could be guilty of such wickedness; but the thought in the boy's mind evidently was that Ponsonby had left his pin behind on purpose, with the intention of making this unpleasant accusation afterwards."

"It seems too shocking to be correct," said the Head.

"But if there should be any further trouble I shall make it a point to place no faith whatever in any statement this boy Ponsonby may make. He seems to me to be a most abandoned youth. I am truly glad that he does not belong to this school. However, he is not likely to repeat his visit, and I trust there will be no more trouble."

But that there should be more trouble—trouble for Ponsonby this time—was the fixed intention of the Famous Five.

Wharton found his chums waiting for him eagerly when he returned to No. 1 Study.

"Well?" asked Bob Cherry.

Wharton drew a deep breath.

"Smithy was right, all along the line," he said. "Mobbs accused us; and the Head seems to have floored him by handing him the pin. I saw the beast as he was going, and he looked quite green. But for Smithy, chaps, we should be in a fearful fix about this time—Nugent would, at any rate."

Nugent clenched his hands almost convulsively.

"That villain has got to be made to pay for this!" he muttered.

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

"I'd give something to see Pon's face when Mobbs gets back!" grinned the Bounder. "Pon knows where he left the pin, but he can't say so. He knows he didn't drop it in the tussle, but he'll have to make out that he did; he can't very well say that he stuck it inside Nugent's jacket on purpose."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My word," said Squiff, "that fellow seems to be a pretty complete villain. We ought to give him the time of his life for this!"

"And we're going to!" growled Johnny Bull.

And the chums of the Remove held a council of war upon the subject on the spot. But for the present, at least, they could think of nothing that seemed at all adequate to the offence. Like the celebrated Mikado, they wanted to make the punishment fit the crime; but though they thought it over in every way it was not quite clear how Cecil Ponsonby was to be brought to book. But that the young rascal should be brought to book, and in the most thorough manner, they were determined.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Road-hogs!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Here we are again!"

Bob Cherry uttered that exclamation.

It was the following afternoon—Wednesday—which was always a half-holiday at Greyfriars.

Harry Wharton & Co. were cycling along the lane in a cheery group. Squiff had a new bike, and he wanted to try it, so after cricket practice was over the Famous Five had gone out for a spin with the Australian.

The six juniors were pedalling along the leafy, shady lane at a moderate pace, when there was the hoot of a motor-horn behind them.

Bob Cherry looked back.

A large car was coming along at whizzing speed, and in

the car were seated four juniors—Ponsonby, Gadsby, Monson, and Vavasour of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe. It was evidently not a hired car, either; but a splendid automobile, probably belonging to one of Ponsonby's rich relations.

The lane was not wide, but the car did not slacken at the sight of the group of cyclists ahead. In fact, Ponsonby made a sign to the chauffeur, evidently to keep on at a rush, and the big automobile rushed on, the horn hooting out a staccato warning.

"Clear off!" exclaimed Wharton.

The cyclists had just about time to clear off the road.

Squiff had to run his bike into the grass beside the lane, and Nugent jumped down, and the rest of the riders strung out along the road, and the car went humming by with a cloud of dust and a stench of petrol.

Squiff had bumped over on the grass, and was sprawling beside his machine. The cyclists, angry and irritated, shook their fists after the car, which had burst on them so suddenly, and Ponsonby jammed in his eyeglass and grinned back at them.

The car was gone in a moment.

Squiff jumped up in a fury.

"The rotters!" he howled. "I've damaged my bike! It was that or being run down! My pedal's twisted. The rotten road-hogs!"

"Ponsonby's little way," said Bob Cherry. "They'll have an accident if they keep on like that, in a narrow road like this. Hallo, hallo, hallo! Hark!"

The car had whizzed round a turn ahead in the road.

From beyond the bend came a crashing noise, and a startled voice shouting.

"There's the accident!" said Johnny Bell.

"My hat!"

"Come on!" exclaimed Squiff, forgetting all about his damaged bike. "Somebody may be hurt!"

The cyclists dashed on at top speed, Squiff leaving his bike in the grass and following fast on foot.

Harry Wharton & Co. were on the scene in a minute or less.

As they swept round the bend they beheld a startling scene.

A smashed bicycle lay beside the road, and in the dust lay a lad who had evidently been riding it.

The big car was vanishing in the distance in a cloud of dust.

Wharton jumped off his machine. His eyes were blazing with anger. The car had run the unfortunate cyclist down, and gone on without stopping—the motorists evidently hoping to get away and thus escape responsibility for the accident—with an utterly heartless indifference to the damage they had done.

It was a case of "road-hogging" in its very worst form.

The lad in the dust had raised himself on his elbow, and was looking round him with a dazed expression.

Wharton ran to him at once.

"Hurt?" he exclaimed.

"I—I—I—" the lad gasped. "I—I was knocked over! I—I think my arm's hurt! Have they gone?"

"Yes; they're gone. But we know who they were," said Bob Cherry. "The rotters! They will smart for this!"

Wharton assisted the wrecked cyclist to his feet. The cycle had evidently been just caught by the whizzing car, and hurled to the side of the road. It had been within an ace of a fatal accident. Indeed, how a fatality had been escaped was almost a miracle.

The young fellow was deadly pale, and his face was set with pain. The bicycle was a wreck. He looked ruefully at the smashed machine.

"I sha'n't be able to ride that to Highcliffe now," he remarked.

"Highcliffe?" said Wharton. "You're going to Highcliffe?"

"Yes. I'm a new boy for Highcliffe School. As I had brought my bike with me, I was riding from the station. But—"

"Those fellows who knocked you over belong to Highcliffe," said Wharton.

"By Jove! Do they?"

"Yes; and you can make them pay for the bike."

The boy shook his head.

"Oh, that's all right! If they belong to my school, I don't want to get them into a row. Never mind the bike; I can afford it." He looked curiously at the juniors. "Are you fellows Highcliffe chaps?"

"No. We belong to Greyfriars."

"Thank you for coming to my help! My name's Clare," said the other. "Oh, my hat! How my arm hurts!"

"Let me look at it," said Harry. "I'm a Boy Scout, you know, and I know something about first aid."

"Thanks!"

Clare stripped off his jacket, and rolled back his sleeve.

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Wharton examined his arm carefully. There were no bones broken, but it was black with bruises. There were bruises on Clare's head, too, where he had fallen in the road.

"It's not serious," said Harry. "You've been lucky. It must hurt, though."

"Ow! It does!"

The lad put his uninjured arm up, and felt over his head. His face was white, and contracted with pain.

"I've had a knock!" he muttered dazedly. "Oh, crumbs! I—I say, how am I to get on to Highcliffe? I'm expected there this afternoon. I suppose I shall have to walk now, and I'm not sure of the way; I've never seen the place. Confound those fellows! I—I—I say, I feel jolly queer!"

He swayed heavily, and Wharton caught him just in time. The lad collapsed into his arms. He had fainted.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "This is a go!"

Wharton supported the unconscious lad.

"The rotters!" muttered Squiff. "The miserable cads! They've gone on! They might have given him a lift in the car after knocking him down!"

"What the dickens are we going to do?" said Nugent, puzzled. "That kid ought to see a doctor at once!"

"We must look after him," said Harry. "Poor kid, he's had a pretty bad upset! He seems to be a sport, too. He doesn't want to get those rotters into trouble for what they've done."

"We must take him somewhere—"

"Into the village," said Harry. "Lend me a hand with him, Bob, and we'll carry him. Better take him to Dr. Pillbury's."

"Right-ho!"

Fortunately, the juniors were not far from the village. Wharton and Bob Cherry raised the unconscious lad between them, and carried him down the lane, and up the garden path of Dr. Pillbury's house.

The doctor was at home, fortunately, and he took charge of the lad at once. While the medical gentleman examined his injuries the juniors waited in the hall, anxious to know how serious the matter was.

It was some time before the doctor came out to them. His face was very grave.

"The boy cannot be moved at present," he said. "I have told my housekeeper to make up a bed for him, and he must remain here for a night, at least. Do you lads know who he is?"

"His name's Clare, and he belongs to Highcliffe School—at least, he was going there," said Wharton. "He was knocked down by a car in the road."

"And the car did not stop?" asked the doctor, frowning.

"No."

Wharton did not add that he knew who were the occupants of the car. His indignation against the reckless road-hogs was great, but he did not want to be the means of getting Ponsonby & Co. into serious trouble. If the injured lad did not choose to complain of what they had done, it was not for the Greyfriars juniors to accuse them. Ponsonby deserved to be punished, but Harry Wharton & Co. had a natural disinclination to give information against the fellows they disliked.

"He's not badly hurt, is he?" asked Squiff.

"It is not serious, but he has had a very great shock, and he has not yet recovered consciousness," said the doctor. "Word must be sent to Highcliffe—"

"One of us will cycle over at once, sir," said Harry.

"Very good—very good! For the present the boy must remain in my care, but to-morrow he will be able to proceed to his school. If you take a message to Highcliffe, so that he will not be expected there to-day, there need be no alarm at his not arriving."

"Certainly."

And the juniors quitted the doctor's house, and Dr. Pillbury went back to his patient.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Squiff's Scheme.

"I'VE got it!"

Squiff made that remark suddenly, after about ten minutes of silence.

Harry Wharton & Co. were riding slowly away from the doctor's house. Squiff had twisted his damaged pedal into shape again, and they were pedalling towards Highcliffe, with the intention of taking the news of Clare's accident there.

The juniors were in a very thoughtful mood, but Squiff had been buried in deeper thought, evidently turning something over in his mind.

The chums of the Remove looked at him inquiringly as he spoke suddenly.

Squiff's eyes were sparkling, and there was a grin on his rugged, sunburnt face.

"I've got it!" he repeated.

"Got what?" asked Bob Cherry.

"The scheme!"

"What scheme?"

Squiff chuckled joyously.

"The scheme of the season, my sons—a topping, ripping, screaming wheeze! We've been jawing it over for a dog's age, but we haven't hit on a scheme for making those rotters sit up! Well, I've hit it!"

The juniors looked interested now. They had already discovered that the Australian junior was a fellow with ideas. Squiff had made his mark in the Remove in his first week at Greyfriars. His first exploit had been to "spoo" the whole Form. And he had licked Bolsover major, the bully of the Remove, in a fair fight; and he had played a wonderful game of cricket that had opened the eyes of his Form-fellows. There was "something in" Squiff, there was no doubt about that.

"Jump down," said Squiff, sliding off his machine.

"We've got to take that message to Higheliffe," said Harry.

"Never mind that for a bit; that can wait."

"Oh, all right!"

The juniors dismounted, and Squiff, somewhat to their surprise, wheeled his bike away from the road into a little lane before he sat down on a grassy bank. The other fellows followed him.

"What have we come here for?" asked Johnny Bull.

"To get out of sight."

"Out of sight! Why?"

"Well, some of the Higheliffe fellows might have come along and seen us."

They stared at Squiff.

"And why shouldn't they see us?" demanded Bob.

"Because that would spoil the whole scheme," said Squiff coolly. "They haven't seen me yet, you see, and it all depends on that."

Bob Cherry sank down in the grass with a grunt.

"Blessed if I can see what you're driving at," he said.

"Naturally; but you'll see when I explain, my son. I tell you I've thought it out—right out!" said the Australian, with a chuckle. "It's the jape of the season, and I'm the chap that's going to do it. Look here, it's agreed that Ponsonby & Co. have got to be brought to book for that dirty trick yesterday."

"Yes, rather."

"And they ought to be punished, too, for knocking down a cyclist, and leaving him on the road!"

"Yes; but we can't say anything about that," said Wharton quickly. "It would look as if we'd jumped at the chance of getting even with them in an underhand way. Besides, it would be something like sneaking."

"I'm not proposing to say anything about it, only to punish them."

"Oh, that's all right, then!"

"This kid, Clare, is a new boy for Higheliffe. He's expected there this afternoon. But as it happens—owing to the excellent Ponsonby—he won't go there till to-morrow."

"Well?"

"But he's expected."

"He won't be expected when we've been there, and explained that he's met with an accident," said Wharton, puzzled. "What on earth are you getting at, Squiff?"

"We're not going to explain anything of the sort."

"Must! We told Dr. Pillbury—"

"We told Dr. Pillbury that one of us would cycle over," said Squiff. "We'll keep our word, of course. I'll cycle over."

"But the message—"

"And we'll arrange that they won't expect that chap to-day, so that there will be no alarm. That's all we promised the doctor."

"Quite so! But—"

"And there won't be any alarm, if Clare turns up there this afternoon," said Squiff.

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Clare can't turn up there!" said Nugent in amazement. "Didn't you hear the doctor say that he had to stay in his house till to-morrow?"

"Of course. Otherwise, the jape wouldn't be any good. All the same, a Clare—not that Clare, but a Clare—is going to turn up at Higheliffe this afternoon."

"What the dickens—"

"You heard the kid say that he'd never been near the place—wasn't even sure of the way there," said Squiff.

"Yes, I remember he said so. But—"

"Therefore, the chances are a thousand to one that nobody at Higheliffe knows him by sight."

"Most likely. But—"

"And nobody at Higheliffe knows me by sight!" grinned Squiff.

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ONE
PENNY.

"You! How should they?"

"Exactly. How should they? They shouldn't, and they don't. I'm a new chap at Greyfriars, and I've never come into contact yet with any of the Higheliffe fellows. The nearest to that was this afternoon, when those fellows passed us in the car; but they came from behind, and I had my back to them, so they won't have seen my chivvy. Clare is a stranger at Higheliffe. I'm a stranger at Higheliffe! Don't you see, now?"

"Blessed if I do!"

"You can't mean—" began Bob Cherry, with a startled look.

Squiff nodded coolly.

"You've hit it! I'm going to Higheliffe!"

"To Higheliffe!"

"As Clare!"

"Wha-a-at!"

"As a new fellow!"

"M-m-my hat!"

"And for the rest of to-day, and to-night, and until the real Clare turns up in the morning, I shall be quite safe there; nobody will have a single suspish."

The juniors stared blankly at Squiff. Words failed them, as they heard the cool Australian unfold that astounding scheme.

"We can't get at Ponsonby & Co.," resumed Squiff, "but inside Higheliffe, I can get at them easily enough. And with an afternoon, and evening, and a night at Higheliffe, I give you my word that I'll give Ponsonby & Co. the time of their lives."

"Great Christopher Columbus!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"You can't do it! You're potty!"

"I can do it!"

"But—but—but—"

"Where's the trouble?" demanded Squiff. "Don't I keep on telling you that nobody at Higheliffe has ever seen me? Nobody there has seen Clare, either. Well, then, when I cycle into Higheliffe this afternoon, who's to suspect that I'm not Clare, the fellow they're expecting with that name? I don't carry the name of Sampson Quincy Ifley Field painted on my forehead, do I?"

"Ha, ha! No!"

"And I clear out before the real Clare gets there," continued Squiff. "But while I'm there I'll make Ponsonby & Co. wish they'd never been born. You fellows have seen me scrapping, for instance; and I don't suppose they've got a fighting-man like Bolsover major there."

"Not likely."

"And I've got lots of ideas—lots, as well as scrapping," said Squiff, grinning. "I tell you it will be the time of their lives."

"But—but it's bound to come out!" gasped Nugent; "and, later on, Ponsonby will find out that you're a Greyfriars chap, and then he'll sneak—"

"No, he won't!"

"I tell you he will. He's a born sneak. He's got us into trouble lots of times by sneaking."

"He won't sneak this time, my son, simply because we've got him on toast. Those fellows seem to be pretty free and easy at Higheliffe, but if what Ponsonby's done this afternoon was known there they'd get into trouble. Running down a cyclist in a car, and leaving him injured on the road, is a pretty serious matter. It means prison for a grown-up man, and it would mean the sack for Ponsonby if his head-master knew. They couldn't overlook a thing like that. Well, I tell you Ponsonby won't sneak when he knows what little game I've played, because if he did I could give him away about his beastly trick this afternoon, and he'll understand that it's wiser to hold his tongue."

"By Jove," said Harry, "I didn't think of that! We can certainly shut up Ponsonby's mouth if we like. He knows we know he was in the car that knocked Clare over. It's quite right. He wouldn't dare to sneak, considering what we could do if we liked."

"So that's all right," said Squiff.

"But there's one thing you've forgotten," said Johnny Bull.

"And what's that, my infant?"

"You've got to turn up at Greyfriars for calling-over, you've got to go to bed at half-past nine in the Remove dorm, and you've got to be in the Form-room when the bell goes for classes in the morning. And I don't quite see how you're going to do all that if you're at Higheliffe, unless you can be in two places at once."

"That knocks it on the head," remarked Bob, and the Nabob of Blunipur observed that the knockfulness on the head was terrific.

Squiff laughed.

"My innocent infants, I thought of that first of all," he replied.

"Oh! But you can't get leave away from school for a night!"

"That's exactly what I can do. You see, I didn't come all the way from Australia by myself," explained Squiff. "My uncle's in London. And it's understood that I'm to visit him there before he goes back to New South Wales. Uncle Jim is a good sort, and he has the peculiar taste to be very fond of yours truly."

"No accounting for tastes," grinned Bob.

"Exactly. Well, if I send a wire to Uncle Jim, telling him that it will suit me best to pay him my visit to-morrow, he'll wire to the Head about it. I'll let him know that I want to drop in somewhere en route—I sha'n't mention Highcliffe—and that I want, therefore, to leave Greyfriars to-day for my little run. Uncle Jim will send his wire to the Head—that's already arranged, you see. I leave Greyfriars this afternoon for my excursion, but I don't arrive at Uncle Jim's hotel till to-morrow. As a matter of fact, I stay the night at Highcliffe, and when I leave there in the morning I shall take the train to London to see Uncle Jim. It's already been arranged with the Head that I'm to have two or three days off before Uncle Jim leaves. I shall devote the first of those days to looking after Ponsonby, that's all. If it hadn't been for that, the wheeze wouldn't work; but I thought of that first of all."

Harry Wharton nodded thoughtfully.

"It could be worked," he said.

"And it's going to be," said Squiff.

"But it's risky—"

"Blow the risk!"

"If it comes out—" began Bob Cherry.

"It won't come out."

"But if it does—"

"Well, if it does it means a licking. But I'm not soft. I can stand a licking," said Squiff. "Bless your little hearts, we grow tough in New South Wales! It's worth a licking to give Ponsonby & Co. the time I mean to give them. Just fancy it! Planted right in their school in the midst of them—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Squiff rose.

"One of you can buzz down to the post-office with this wire to my uncle," he said, scribbling on a leaf of his pocket-book. "Uncle Jim's answer will reach the Head before calling-over, so that will be all right. Now, we've promised Dr. Pillbury that one of us will cycle over to Highcliffe and prevent any alarm being felt about Clare. That's exactly what I'm going to do now. See?"

"But—but it's too risky, Squiffy"

"Oh, rats!"

"If it did come off it would be the biggest jape we've ever worked," said Bob Cherry. "But—but I can't help having my doubts."

"Oh, you're a regular Doubting Thomas!" said Squiff. "I tell you it will work; and even if I'm bowled out, they can't eat me! Suppose Dr. Voysey gives me one licking, and Dr. Locke gives me another—well, that won't hurt me, will it?"

"I suppose not; but—"

"My dear chap, you're all 'buts'!" said Squiff. "Buzz off with this telegram, and I'll buzz off to Highcliffe. As Clare was cycling from the station, it will look all right if I cycle in—same thing! I suppose he's given instructions at the station for his box to be sent on, so I sha'n't be in want of pyjamas for to-night. He won't mind lending me his clobber, I suppose, after we've picked him up like Good Samaritans this afternoon. Now, 'nuff said. Buzz is the word!"

And the reckless youth from New South Wales ended the discussion by jumping on his machine and pedalling away swiftly towards Highcliffe School by way of Courtfield.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another.

"Well, for sheer, unadulterated nerve and cheek, that young merchant takes the whole biscuit!" commented Bob Cherry.

"It's a tremendous jape, though—if it comes off—"

"Well, if anybody could bring it off, it's Squiff!" said Bob.

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"Yea, rather."

And the Famous Five, feeling a little anxious about Sampson Quincy Idle Field, but greatly excited over the extraordinary scheme at the same time, rode away to the post-office to despatch Squiff's telegram. Then they pedalled back to Greyfriars—without Squiff. By the time they reached Greyfriars Squiff of the Remove was at Highcliffe in his new role, and that hare-brained escapade had begun.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The New Boy at Highcliffe!

"PLEASE, is this Highcliffe?"

Two or three members of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe were lounging in the gateway of the school, looking down the road, when the cyclist came up and stopped. Merton and Tunstall and Drury, chums of Ponsonby of the Fourth, were looking for the return of their comrade in the Ponsonby automobile. They glanced carelessly at the newly-arrived stranger with the supercilious expression that was a characteristic of Ponsonby & Co. of Highcliffe.

The new-comer was an athletic, sunburnt-looking lad. He was dressed in Etons, with trouser-clips, and wore a straw hat without any school badge upon it. He spoke to the Highcliffe juniors very civilly.

"Yaas," drawled Merton. "This is Highcliffe. What do you want?"

"I'm a new boy," explained the stranger.

The Highcliffe juniors looked at him with some interest then.

"Oh, it's that kid Clare! Mobby mentioned that he was coming into the school to-day," said Drury carelessly. "You're Clare, I suppose? Where did you get your face frizzled like that?"

"Please, I didn't know my face was frizzled," said the other meekly.

"Well, it is—looks like an overdone bun," said Drury. "Here, don't be in a hurry to go in! Haven't done with you yet."

The new boy stopped in the shadow of the gateway, holding his bicycle, and the three Highcliffe juniors gathered round him. There was no sign of Ponsonby & Co. on the road yet, and the Highcliffians intended to improve the shining hour by chipping the new "kid," and perhaps ragging him. He had such a meek manner with him that it seemed a perfectly safe form of amusement.

"No—what do you want?" asked the new junior.

"What do you mean by coming to the school on a bike?" demanded Merton.

The new boy looked dismayed.

"Is that against the rules?" he asked.

"I should jolly well say it was! Where's your box?"

"Can't a fellow leave his box at the station to be sent on?"

"Certainly not! Now, the best thing you can do is to ride straight back to the station and get your box," said Merton solemnly. "Get back as quick as you can. Mind you don't let Mobby see you without your box."

"Please, who's Mobby?"

"Mobby is our Form-master—the master of the Fourth. Are you going into the Fourth?"

"Please, I don't know."

"Well, I'm doing you a good turn," said Merton. "Buzz off as sharp as you can. Suppose old Voysey should see you—"

"Please, who's old Voysey?"

"Our headmaster, fathead! He would flog you if he saw you here without your box—with a bike, too! Flog you till you simply squirmed!"

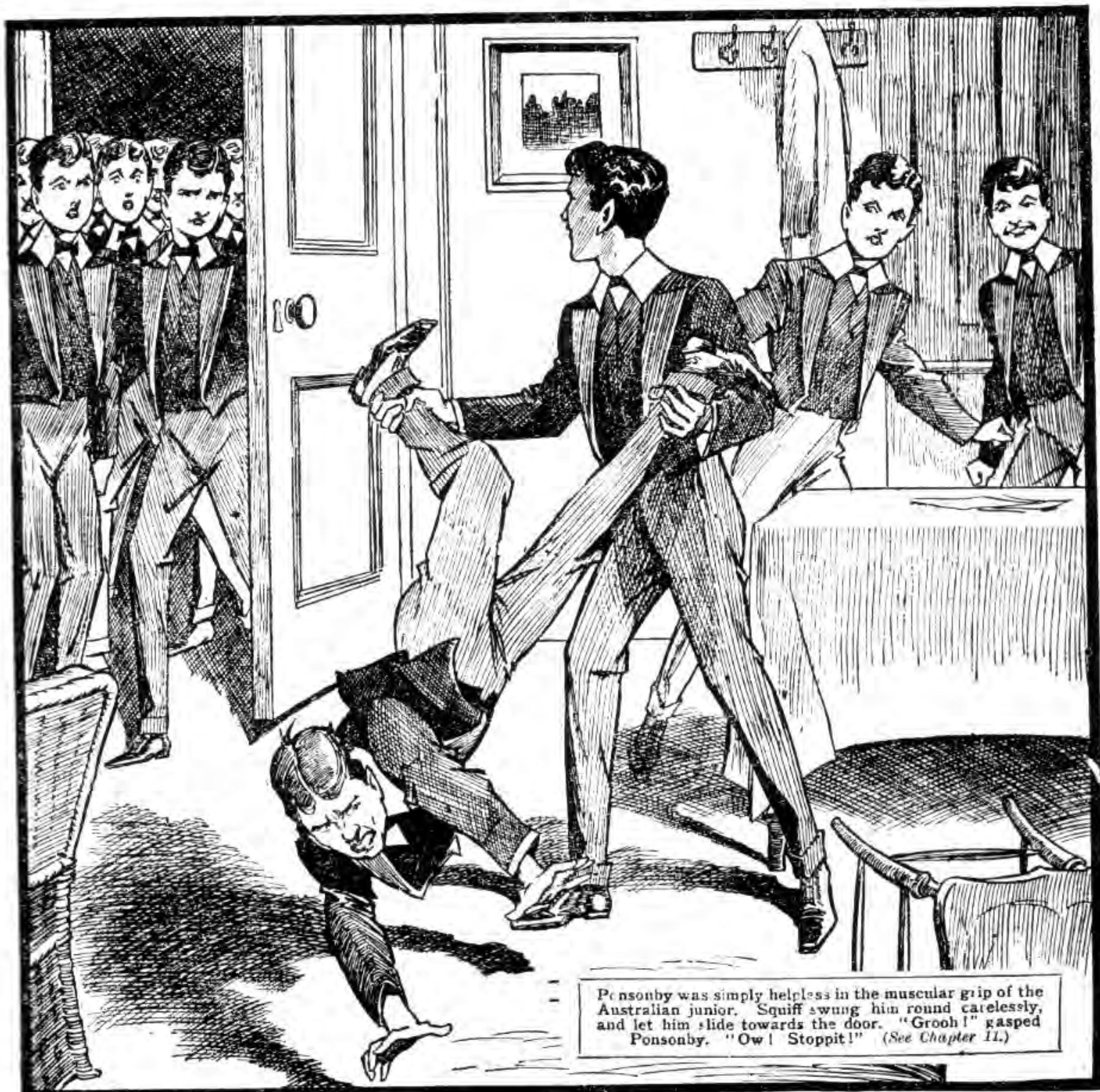
"Old Voysey is a regular athlete with the birch!" said Tunstall solemnly. "Buzz off as quick as you can, young 'un, and thank your lucky stars that we met you and gave you the tip in time."

"Thank you so much!" said the new boy, wheeling his bicycle further into the gateway.

TYPES OF THE BRITISH ARMY.



A PIPER IN ONE OF OUR MAGNIFICENT HIGHLAND REGIMENTS.



Pensonby was simply helpless in the muscular grip of the Australian junior. Squiff swung him round carelessly, and let him slide towards the door. "Grooh!" gasped Pensonby. "Ow! Stoppit!" (See Chapter 11.)

"Well, ain't you going?" demanded Drury.

The new boy shook his head.

"No, I'm not going, thank you!"

"Look here, you'd better go. You'll get licked—"

"Please, I'll chance that."

The three Highcliffians looked at him sharply. It was their idea of a joke to send an unsuspecting new "kid" lagging on a bicycle for a couple of miles on a hot afternoon. But somehow or other, the new boy, in spite of his meek and mild manners, did not seem to be falling into the trap.

Drury made a sign to his companions, and they lined up in front of the bicycle, and the new junior came to a halt.

"Please let me pass," he said meekly.

Drury raised his hand commandingly.

"Now, we've told you to go back to the station for your box," he said. "We're trying to do you a good turn. Don't you believe us, you young ass?"

"Please, no, I don't."

"What!"

"Please, I think you are telling lies."

"Wha-a-at!"

The new boy made that statement with the same meek and mild manner, but there was a twinkle in his eyes. It dawned upon the heroes of Highcliffe that this youthful

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stranger was not nearly so meek and mild as he affected to be.

"You—you cheeky young villain!" said Drury. "Do you want me to mop up the ground with you, Frizzle Face? Here, mind what you're doing! Where are you wheeling that bike to, you silly young ass?"

"Please, I'm wheeling it into you," said the new boy demurely.

And he did! The front wheel of the bike jammed against Drury's trousers, and he hopped out of the way with a yell, with dust streaked all over his elegant and well-pressed "bags."

"My hat! I—I'll smash you!" ejaculated Drury. "Collar him, you chaps, and we'll show him whether a new kid is going to cheek us!"

And the three Highcliffians closed in on the new boy.

Then there came a sudden and remarkable change in the manner of the boy who had seemed so meek and so mild.

He allowed the bike to spin away and curl up on the ground, and his hands came up like lightning, and he met the three Highcliffians, as they ran at him, with right and left.

Drury caught a right-hander on the chin, and spun away and crashed down in the gateway. Tunstall caught a left-

NEXT
MONDAY—

"SPIRITED AWAY!"

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton
& Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

hander with his nose, and sat down with such suddenness that he jarred every bone in his body.

Merton was the only one who succeeded in getting hold of the new boy, and the next moment he wished ~~for~~ that he hadn't. For the new boy's arms closed round him like a band of iron, and he was whirled off his feet and swung into the air, turned completely over, and placed upon his head on the ground.

For a second Merton stood there, upside down, wondering what had happened to him, and then he bumped over and sprawled.

The new boy gazed down with a calm and smiling face at the three sprawling and gasping Fourth-Formers.

They sat up and looked at him.

"Want any more?" asked the sunburnt lad, with a smile.

"Grooh!"

"My hat!"

"Ow! Ow! Yow!"

"There's some more where that came from if you're not fed up yet," remarked the new boy cheerfully. "We're like that in New South—ahem!—I mean where I come from. Don't be backward in coming forward. Just say if you want some more."

"Oh! Ow! Ow!" groaned Merton.

"Clear off, you little beast!" gasped Tunstall. "Ow! Ow! I don't want to have anything to do with you! Yow—ow—ow!"

"Oh, my chin!" groaned Drury, caressing it tenderly. "Ow! I believe my jaw's broken! Oh, dear! You—you young hooligan! Go away!"

The new boy laughed, and picked up his bicycle, and wheeled it on towards the house. The three unfortunate ragers looked at one another, and picked themselves up dolefully.

"Oh! Ow! That new beast is a cough-drop, and no mistake!" murmured Tunstall.

"Cheeky little rotter! We'll smash him!"

"I feel as if he'd smashed me!"

"Pon will deal with him!" grunted Drury. "Wait till Pon comes back! He'll take some of the cheek out of him!"

And the three Highcliffians dolorously resumed their watch for Ponsonby.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

In New Quarters!

SQUIFF—for, of course it was Squiff—walked his bicycle calmly up to the School House. The "new boy" was fairly in Highcliffe now. He was just as he had left Greyfriars, excepting that he had left his school cap in Courtfield, and purchased a new straw hat without any distinctive mark upon it. And with the exception of the meek-and-mild manner it had pleased him to assume as less likely to attract attention in a new boy, he was the same old Squiff the Greyfriars Remove knew so well.

A thin, meagre-looking man, with a long, sharp nose, stood in the doorway of the School House looking at him.

Squiff recognised Mr. Mobbs, whom he had seen from the window of Harry Wharton's study at Greyfriars the previous day, though Mr. Mobbs had not seen him.

There was a very severe expression upon the Form-master's countenance, and Squiff guessed at once that he had seen the tussle at the gateway.

Squiff raised his straw hat very politely to the master.

"Who are you?" demanded Mr. Mobbs abruptly.

"Please, sir, I'm the new boy."

"You are Clare, I suppose? I am Mr. Mobbs, your Form-master. I understand that you are coming into the Fourth Form."

"Yes, sir," said Squiff, who was glad to receive that piece of information. He had not had the faintest idea whether Clare was going into the Fourth or the Shell or the Third.

"And you have signalled your arrival here by a quarrel," pursued Mr. Mobbs.

"Please, sir—"

"Kindly understand, Clare, that hooliganism of that kind is not allowed here. We do not approve of horseplay or fist-cuffs. As you are a new boy, I will not punish you on this occasion; but beware of repeating your conduct."

"Yes, sir!" said Squiff meekly. He had heard from his friends at Greyfriars a good deal about Mr. Mobbs, and he knew that Ponsonby & Co. were the especial favourites of that gentleman. He guessed that the three juniors he had already had trouble with belonged to Ponsonby's set. As Mr. Mobbs

had seen what had happened, he was perfectly well aware that Squiff had not started the trouble; but Mr. Mobbs was evidently unlike that celebrated schoolmaster who was described as a "beast, but a just beast." Mr. Mobbs was an unjust beast.

"Boggs!" called out Mr. Mobbs. "Take Master Clare's bicycle to the shed. Clare, you will follow me to my study."

"Yes, sir."

Boggs, the page, wheeled the machine away. Squiff followed Mr. Mobbs into the house, and to his study. An old gentleman with white whiskers, with gold-rimmed glasses perched on the high bridge of his nose, came rustling down the passage in a voluminous gown, and paused as he saw Squiff.

Dr. Voysey, the Head of Highcliffe, blinked at Squiff over his glasses.

"Ah, yes, exactly!" he said. "Clare—ahem!—yes—ahem! How do you do, Clare? Ahem—ahem!"

And with those highly intelligent remarks Dr. Voysey rustled on.

Squiff followed Mr. Mobbs into his study.

It was easy to see that Mr. Mobbs had taken a dislike to the new junior, from which Squiff guessed that the genuine Clare was not blessed with rich relations or high connections like Ponsonby & Co. As Mr. Mobbs had not known Squiff for ten minutes, and Squiff had certainly done nothing to offend him, there seemed little reason why he should dislike the new boy.

But that was characteristic of Mr. Mobbs. Squiff had laid violent hands upon the young gentlemen whom Mr. Mobbs adored for their wealthy connections, and that was quite enough to make Mr. Mobbs dislike him. Mr. Mobbs was ready and willing, indeed eager, to lick the dust before anyone who was even remotely connected with a titled personage, and Squiff, so far from doing likewise, had punched the nose of the nephew of a lord, and stood upon his head the son of an immensely wealthy baronet. No wonder Mr. Mobbs looked upon the new boy with an evil eye.

For the next twenty minutes Squiff was kept very busy by Mr. Mobbs, and he had a suspicion that that gentleman was trying to catch him out, as it were, and make out a case for putting him lower down in the school than the Fourth Form. From Mr. Mobbs's remarks, Squiff learned that Clare was coming from a preparatory school, and was prepared to enter the Fourth Form, but if he had not been up to the mark Mr. Mobbs could have had him assigned to a fag Form. But Squiff was quite "all there"; he worked hard as well as played hard, and he gave no excuse to Mr. Mobbs for putting that indignity upon him. Indeed, Mr. Mobbs made the discovery that Squiff's scholastic attainments were far in advance of the average in the Fourth Form at Highcliffe. It was good form at Highcliffe to regard lessons as a "bore," and to neglect every kind of work as much as possible. The school was, in fact, suffering from "dry rot," due to the fact that the aged headmaster allowed the reins of authority to slip into subordinate and incapable hands.

Mr. Mobbs gave Squiff up at last.

"You will enter the Fourth Form," he said ungraciously. "Let me see, I must assign you to a study. Let me see, Master Ponsonby will not care to have a new boy in his study, and Master Gadsby would certainly object. I cannot put you in the same study with the young gentlemen you have so wantonly assaulted on your first day here; they would very naturally object. Ahem! There is Smithson's study."

Mr. Mobbs touched a bell, and Boggs appeared.

"Find Master Smithson, and send him to me," said Mr. Mobbs.

"Yessir!"

In a few minutes Master Smithson appeared. He was an angular youth, considerably older and bigger than Squiff, with a heavy face, and a dull, heavy manner. There was a smear of ink on his nose, and smears of ink on his fingers and cuffs. He blinked at the Form-master as he came in. Mr. Mobbs's manner showed that Smithson, of the Fourth, was not a member of Ponsonby's aristocratic set, and that there was nothing in his connections to make Mr. Mobbs willing to conciliate him. Mr. Mobbs, indeed, compensated himself for his servility to Ponsonby & Co. by "taking it out" of the less fortunate members of his Form.

He received Smithson with a frowning brow.

"How dare you come to my study in that state, Smithson?" he snapped.

"Please, sir, you sent for me, sir!" said Smithson.

"You have ink on your nose!" thundered Mr. Mobbs.

The unfortunate Smithson immediately drew his sleeve across his nose, changing the smear into a streak across his face.

"You are a dirty, untidy boy, Smithson!"

"Yes, sir," said Smithson miserably. "I—I've been doing the detention task, sir, and—and I couldn't work it out, sir,

ANSWERS

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and—and I was worried, sir, and—and—" His miserable voice trailed off.

"You are an utterly stupid boy, as well as dirty and slovenly, Smithson."

"Yes, sir."

"You will take fifty extra lines!"

"Oh!"

"This is a new boy, Clare. He will share your study with you. Take him there, and show him where to put his things. Where is your box, by the way, Clare?"

"At the station, sir."

"Very well. Go with Smithson. One word more. Instead of quarrelling with boys who are infinitely your superiors in every way, Clare, I recommend you to take example by them, and endeavour to become like them."

"You are very kind, Mr. Nobbs!"

"My name is Mobbs!"

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir!" said Squiff meekly.

Mr. Mobbs looked at him very sharply, and then with a gesture dismissed him from the study. Squiff followed Smithson out into the passage. When the door was closed Smithson's manner changed, and he shook both fists at the door, with an expression of ferocity in his face that was quite startling.

"Rotter!" he muttered. "Beast! Toad! Tuft-hunter! Cad! Yah!"

"Hallo!" said Squiff. "Is all that meant for Mobby?"

Smithson stared at him in alarm. He had forgotten the new boy for a moment in his excited demonstration at Mr. Mobbs's study door.

"Here, you ain't a sneak, I suppose?" he muttered.

Squiff laughed.

"No jolly fear! I don't like Mobbs any more than you do!"

Smithson looked relieved.

"He's a rotten beast!" he said, in a whisper. "He sucks up to everybody who's got any money or connections, and he's a perfect beast to the fellows who haven't. My father's a solicitor, and I don't care who knows it."

"Mine's a farmer," said Squiff.

Smithson made a grimace.

"Then you won't be one of them!" he remarked.

"One of whom?"

"The Smart Set."

"Who the deuce are the Smart Set?"

"Ponsonby and his friends," said Smithson. They were walking along the passage now, and the inky junior was speaking in a low, confidential voice. "They're awful swells, you know—related to half the titled people in the country. Ponsonby's father is a lord. Merton's is a baronet. Vavasour is frightfully rich, and he's related to a duke. Mobby sucks up to them like anything—worships the ground they tread on, and lets them do exactly as they like. They're all rotters. Never speak to me!"

"Then they must be rotters!" grinned Squiff.

"They won't speak to you, either, so don't you snigger!" said Smithson. "They don't like having me in their Form at all, because my pater's only a solicitor. Same with the other fellows who ain't their class. You ain't their class either!"

"No?" said Squiff, not at all perturbed by that statement.

"No, rather. That's why Mobby has shoved you into my study, Clare. Benson's with me there—"

"And ain't Benson much class?" asked Squiff, much amused.

"Benson? Oh, Benson's a good sort; but he's only the son of a half-pay captain, and wears jolly old clothes," said Smithson. "Benson's my chum. I don't mind his clothes. Here we are; this is my study!"

Squiff followed Smithson into his study. It was a barely-furnished room, with a ragged square of carpet, and a table and a few other shabby articles of furniture. A small window looked out on the blank wall of the gymnasium. It was not anything like Squiff's own study at Greyfriars, which he shared with Johnny Bull and Fisher T. Fish, and he felt glad that he was not really booked to stay at Highcliffe.

"All the studies like this?" he asked.

Smithson sniffed.

"No jolly fear! Most of them are ripping rooms, but they don't give a good room to me. I ain't rich—my uncle ain't a lord!" said Smithson, with heavy sarcasm. "My people pay as much for me as theirs pay for them, but that don't make any difference to Mobby. I was here a whole term before Ponsonby came, and I ought to have the choice of studies; but Mobby don't see it—not Mobby! Beastly, tuft-hunting cad!"

"Well, a chap can make himself comfy here, I dare say," said Squiff. "Hallo! What are you up to?"

Smithson had sat down at the study table, and was bending over a paper covered with scrawling writing, and several open books.

"I've got to get this done by tea-time!" he grunted. "A

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rotten construe, and no chance of getting hold of a crib! Mobby sees to that! Ponsonby uses a crib, and Mobby knows it; but he pretends he don't! Rotten favouritism!"

"Well, you won't learn much Latin if you stick to cribs," said Squiff comfortingly. "You're better off than Ponsonby."

"How do you make that out?"

"Well, you come here to learn, don't you?"

"I s'pose so," said Smithson thoughtfully, quite as if it was a new idea to him.

"Well, then, if Mobby makes you work, you'll learn more than Ponsonby will ever learn by using cribs!"

"Oh, rot!" said Smithson. "I don't want to mug up this filthy Latin, any more than Ponsonby does. What good is it? I shall forget it all when I've left school, same as everybody does. What I want is an easy time, and Mobby takes jolly good care that I sha'n't get it, blow him! And I can't do this; I ain't one of your bright chaps that can construe as easy as winking. It's tough—jolly tough!"

"Perhaps I could help you," said Squiff good-naturedly.

"My hat! Are you a swot?"

"Well, I do my work," said Squiff, laughing. "If that's being a swot, I'm a swot. I don't believe in coming to school simply to play games!"

"Then you won't get on here," said Smithson. "They look down on swots. It's not considered the thing here to work. Just enough to scratch through—that's the idea. But if you can help me with this beastly thing, I'd be jolly glad, all the same!"

"Let's tackle it together."

Squiff sat down at the study table, and piled into the task. The construe that was so dreadfully "tough" for the unfortunate Smithson did not present any great difficulties to the keen-witted, clear-headed Australian junior. Smithson looked at him in wonder as he cheerfully and swiftly elucidated apparently trackless difficulties.

"Well, you're a good sort," said Smithson, when the task was done—"I will say that; though I reckon you must be a swot, and swots ain't liked here. I'm glad I've got that beastly thing done, anyway. Thanks!"

"Oh, don't mench!" said Squiff.

"I'll take it in to Mobby now, before he has an excuse for being down on me for being late," said Smithson, quite brightly. "Close on tea-time. We'll have tea in the study. I think we shall get on together, Clare—unless you start sucking up to Ponsonby and his set, as most of them do!"

"I sha'n't do that!" said Squiff, with a chuckle at the idea.

Certainly it was not with that intention that he had come to Highcliffe.

"Good for you, then!"

Smithson, looking much brighter, quitted the study. Squiff looked round him with a smile.

He had done a good-natured action in helping the unfortunate Smithson for once to escape the tyranny of Mr. Mobbs, and he was glad of it. That alone was a justification for the part he was playing at Highcliffe School.

"Well," was Squiff's conclusion. "I'm glad I came here; but I'm jolly glad that I don't belong to Highcliffe—jolly glad!"

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Knows Too Much!

"FIELD!"

Mr. Quelch, who was taking call-over in Big Hall, rapped out the name twice, as there came no answer the first time.

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged uneasy glances.

Long ago they had despatched that telegram to Squiff's kind Uncle Jim, and, according to Squiff's programme, Uncle Jim's reply should have been received by the Head before calling-over.

If Squiff's absence was not thus accounted for by his uncle in London, there was certain to be an inquiry into it, and the scheme for invading Highcliffe School in the name and guise of a new boy would assuredly lead to disaster.

"I say, you fellows," whispered Billy Bunter, blinking up at the anxious faces of the Co., "where is Squiffy?"

"Find out!" growled Bob Cherry.

"What was he doing at Highcliffe this afternoon?" pursued the Owl of the Remove.

The Famous Five gave Bunter ferocious looks. Billy Bunter always knew everything that was going on in the school, and a good deal of what was going on outside it, and apparently he knew more of Squiff's great jape than the juniors had supposed. It was amazing, the way Billy Bunter became possessed of information on all sorts of subjects.

"Field!"

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Mr. Quelch, frowning as he failed to hear the expected "Adsum," was about to mark Squiff down as absent, when Wingate of the Sixth came in and spoke to him, and then took his place among the Sixth. Mr. Quelch's brow cleared.

"Very well!" he said.

And calling-over proceeded.

The Co. felt relieved. Wingate had evidently brought a message from the Head on the subject of Squiff. The telegram had arrived, after all. But a good many of the Remove were curious to know where the Australian junior was, and when the boys streamed out of Big Hall after calling-over, the Famous Five were asked many questions. All the fellows knew that they had been out cycling with Squiff in the afternoon.

"Where is that bounder?" Peter Todd inquired. "He'll get lines for missing call-over!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"He's got leave," explained Wharton—"leave to visit his uncle in London before the old chap goes back to New South Wales."

"Gone to London, has he?" asked Bunter.

"Oh, rats!"

"Because I don't see how he can have gone to London when I saw him on his bike near Highcliffe this afternoon," said Bunter. "And his bike hasn't come back, anyway. Do you mean to say he's taken his bike to London with him?"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"Was it, Squiff's bike you fellows were taking into the cycle-shop?" continued Bunter. "I saw you taking a smashed bike into the cycle-shop in Friardale as I was coming back."

"You seem to have seen a jolly lot!" growled Bob Cherry. "One of these days you'll get a dot in the eye which will prevent you from seeing so much!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Bow-wow!" growled Bob; and he walked away.

Billy Bunter blinked suspiciously after the chums of the Remove. He felt that there was something "on"—something that he was left out of. The merest hint of a secret was sufficient to excite Bunter's curiosity to boiling-point. He prided himself upon knowing all that was going on; and as he was not particular what means he adopted, he generally contrived to keep well posted.

Wharton had no intention of keeping the jape a secret from the fellows who could be trusted, but William George Bunter was not one of them. And at tea-time a good many fellows crowded into No. 1 Study, Wharton having let it become known that he had something to impart.

Peter Todd and Tom Brown, Bulstrode and Mark Linley, Hazeldene and Bolsover major, and Vernon-Smith, and two or three others were there, and to that select circle the secret of Squiff's disappearance was imparted in strict confidence. The juniors simply gasped when they heard it.

"Well, of all the nerve!" said the Bounder. "What a really stunning wheeze!"

"Quite up to my mark," observed Peter Todd. "Squiff is a giddy genius. It will have to be kept jolly dark, though; the Head won't take it as a joke!"

"Faith, and it won't be a joke for Squiffy if he's bowled out intirely!" said Micky Desmond, with a whistle. "Mind Bunter doesn't get on the thrail, that's all. He would gas it all over the school, and then—"

"And Squiff is at Highcliffe now?" asked Mark Linley, with a deep breath.

"Yes, rather."

"My hat! I wish we could be there to see him!" said the Lancashire lad, laughing. "It was a stunning wheeze; but it needs a lot of nerve! I fancy Ponsonby & Co. will have a high old time this evening."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He, he, he!" came like an echo outside the crowded study.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, what's that?" Bob Cherry made a bound to the door, and dragged it open, and Billy Bunter tumbled into the study.

"Bunter!"

"You fat rotter!"

"Oh, my hat! Bunter knows!" exclaimed Wharton. "Jump on him! Bump him! Squash him!"

"Hold on!" roared Bunter, rolling over in the floor in terror among the many feet, all of which jerked towards him and thudded on his fat person. "Leave off! Yow-ow! I'm not going to say a word! Yow-ow! I didn't hear anything—honour bright! I don't know what you fellows have been talking about. Gerrrough!"

"Bump him! He was at the keyhole!"

"I wasn't!" yelled Bunter. "I simply happened to stoop down to tie up my shoe-buttons—I mean to button up my boot-lace—yow-ow—"

"Squash him!"

"And I haven't heard a word—I don't know anything

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about Squiff—don't even know that you were talking about him!" wailed Bunter.

Bump.

"Yaroooh! I won't say a word. I won't tell anybody Squiff is at Highcliffe. Yow-ow—"

Bump.

"Look here, you fellows—yaroooh—leggo, or I'll go straight to Mr. Quelch or Loder, and tell him the whole bizney!" shrieked Bunter.

"Shut the door," said Harry. "Somebody will hear the beast."

Frank Nugent closed the door, Billy Bunter dragged himself to his feet, and stood shaking like a jelly in the midst of a circle of angry juniors.

"I—I say, you fellows, I—I'll keep it dark!" he stuttered. "I—I only wanted to be in the know, you know."

"You fat rotter!" howled Bob Cherry. "If you say a single word, we'll squash you!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—I say, I'll have tea with you chaps, just to show that there's no ill-feeling," said Bunter. And he cheerfully helped himself to the nearest good things on the table.

"But there is some ill-feeling, you—you oyster!" growled Bob Cherry. "And there'll be some feeling ill, too, if you don't keep it dark."

"Of course I'm going to keep it dark," said Bunter, with a great deal of dignity. "I hope you fellows don't think I'm a sneak. You treat me well, and I'll treat you well—that's my motto."

"Oh, that's your motto, is it?" said Peter Todd, with a deadly glare, that was quite lost on the short-sighted Owl of the Remove. "And what do you call treating you well, Bunter?"

"Well," said Bunter, with his mouth full of cake, and recovering his courage as he realised the power that was in his hands from the possession of the secret. "Of course, I don't want to give old Squiff away. I like Squiff."

"I'm going to keep it dark—only I might happen to mention it, and Loder or Walker or Wingate might happen to hear me. I shall have to be jolly careful. Ahem! Pass the jam-tarts! Look here, I'm going to have some of those jam tarts, Peter Todd! Hand them over! This ain't your study."

"And they're not your tarts, you toad."

"If Wharton is going to be mean about a few tarts, I'm afraid I may consider it my duty to—to reconsider my decision," said Bunter. "Upon the whole, I hardly approve of this idea of japing the masters of Highcliffe. It's not really what you would call respectful."

"But you'll approve of it so long as you're supplied with tarts?" asked Wharton.

"Ahem! That's rather a rotten way of putting it! But so long as you treat me well, I'll treat you well! That's fair play."

"Just so! You want plenty of tarts, and then you will hold your fat tongue?"

"Exactly—I—I mean, as an honourable chap; I—I'll —"

"Well, you shall have the tarts," said Wharton. "There's two ways of taking jam tarts—internally and externally. You are going to take them externally."

"Good egg! Collar him!"

"I—I say, you fellows—yow-ow—grooogh! Oh, you beast—groooogg!"

Two or three pairs of hands grasped the Owl of the Remove, and two or three more pairs grasped the jam tarts. It was really a waste of good tarts, as Bob Cherry remarked afterwards, for soot or tar or ink would have done as well. But just then the enraged juniors were only thinking of Bunter.

The fat junior's idea of making a good thing out of the secret, which he would have kept as a matter of course if he had had a rag of decency, exasperated them. Bunter wanted tarts, and he had them! Tarts were jammed over his face, and his hair, and his neck and collar. His skin and his hair and his spectacles and his clothes were simply plastered with jam. If Bunter had dived into a jam vat, he could hardly have become more jammy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Give him some more!"

"That's the lot!" grinned Bob Cherry. "He's had two dozen! Now let him have the ink."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groooooogh! Hold on—I mean, leggo! Chuck it! Grooogh! I was only j-j-joking! I ain't going to say a word! Yaroooh! Groooh!"

"Only joking?" grinned Nugent. "You shouldn't make those little jokes here, Bunt. We haven't a sense of humour! Give him the ink!"

"Yow-ow-ow—chuck it!" roared Bunter.

"Well, I'm chucking it," said Johnny Bull. "What more do you want?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, crumbs! Stop it! I mean stop it! Yow-ow!"
 "What about rolling him in the ashes?" suggested Nugent.
 "Ow! Leave off! Yow-ow! I won't say a word! I don't want any tarts!" wailed Bunter. "I say, you fellows— Oh, oh, oh, oh, ow!"

"Are you going to keep the secret?" demanded Wharton.
 "Oh dear! Yes."
 "Honour bright?"
 "Yow-ow! Yes! Grooh!"
 "Without being bribed?"
 "Oh, ow-yow! Certainly! Anything you like. Yaroooh!"
 "Then you can clear," said Harry. "Mind, if you say a single word to anybody—if you whisper a giddy syllable, what you've had is nothing to what you'll get! We'll duck you in Gosling's tar-pot next time! Mind, I mean that! Now, kick him out!"

And the inky and jammy Owl of the Remove was forthwith bundled out of the study, and his appearance in the passage was greeted with a howl of laughter from the Removites who caught sight of him. Billy Bunter rolled away, groaning, to a bath-room; but to all inquiries as to why he had been made so jammy, Bunter replied only with snorts. For once a secret was safe in his keeping.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Ponsonby Catches a Tartar!

SMITHTON was grinning as he came back into the study, where he found Squiff sitting on the table waiting for him.

"It's all serene, Clare," said Smithson. "Mobby was quite surprised. He never expected me to do that rotten construe. He was all ready to jump on me. Simply flabbergasted the beast. Hadn't a word to say! Much obliged, old chap."

"Oh, don't mench," said Squiff.

"Now we'll have tea," said Smithson. "I say, I've just heard something about you. You've been scrapping already."

"Nothing to speak of," said Squiff.

"You've had a row with Drury and Merton and Tunstall, I hear."

"I didn't know their names; but there were three chaps who thought a new kid was easy to jump on—and found he wasn't."

"That means that you'll have the whole gang on your neck," said Smithson. "It's rather rotten—they'll rag the study, and I shall come in for it too. Still, after the good turn you've done me, I'll stand it."

"They'll rag the study, will they?" said Squiff quietly.

"You bet! Ponsonby runs things with a high hand here, I can tell you—he doesn't allow any cheek from the outsiders—they call everybody an outsider who isn't in their set," explained Smithson. "I'm an outsider. You're another. See?"

"I see."

"Ponsonby hasn't come in yet, though—they won't be here till after tea. Pen's gone out in his uncle's car with Monson and Vavasour and Gadsby. Let's get tea before the trouble begins. I'm sorry you're going to be licked; but I'm afraid they'll make an example of you."

"Perhaps I may be able to look after myself," suggested Squiff.

Smithson shook his head.

"If you could stand up to one of them, that wouldn't help you," he said. "They don't play the game, you see. They'll pile on you half-a-dozen to one. And if you cut up too rusty, they'd bring down Monson major on you. Monson major is in the Fifth—he's an awfully big chap, and a rotten all through, as alcohol. We want a new headmaster them in their study, and that kind of thing. He would knock you in the middle of next week. My advice to you is to take it quietly."

"Take what quietly?"

"The ragging you're going to get. They'll lick you with a slipper, and perhaps ink your face, or something of that sort, and if you take it quietly, and are civil afterwards, they may let you alone."

Squiff laughed.

"I didn't come here to take things quietly," he remarked. "I fancy that Ponsonby & Co. will find they've woke up the wrong passenger if they worry me."

"Better not play the giddy goat," said Smithson. "I'm warning you for your own good. I tell you that set have everything in their hands here. Mobby backs them up through thick and thin, and if you should happen to black Pen's eye, you'd have Mobby down on you like a hundred of bricks."

"Nice man he must be!" remarked Squiff.

"An utter rotter! But we're under his thumb, you see, as he's our Form-master," said Smithson dismally. "This school's going to rot, you know. Old Dr. Voysey thinks about nothing but some precious Greek classics he's editing, or something, and everything's left to the undermasters, and they're a rotten set. It's supposed to give you a sort of stamp to be a Higheliffe chap. Perhaps it does; but the school's simply

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"SPIRITED AWAY!"

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ONE
PENNY.

rotten all through, as a school. We want a new headmaster with some go in him to take things in hand. Why, old Mobby knows that Ponsonby smokes in his study, and keeps a bottle of whisky there, and plays bridge of an evening, and he pretends not to know it. Wonderful gift old Mobby has for keeping his eyes shut when he doesn't want to see anything. Here comes Benny with the grub!"

A shock-headed youngster came into the study with a bundle in his hand, which he slammed down on the table. He looked curiously at Squiff.

"This is the new chap, Clare," said Smithson. "He's digging in this study."

"That's all very well," said Benson. "He's going to bring a lot of trouble on this study, too. Drury and Merton and Tunstall are talking about ragging the place, when Ponsonby comes in."

"Sorry!" said Squiff. "Look here! You two fellows stand by me, and when they come we'll give them a warm reception, and rag Ponsonby's study afterwards—what?"

Benson stared.

"Off your rocker?" he asked. "I'm not backing up against Pon—no, thanks. Don't you be so jolly cheeky. You're only a new kid, and you don't know the ropes. Catch me ragging Pon's study, and having Mobby down on me afterwards. Pon would think nothing of telling him about it."

"Must be a rotten sneak!" said Squiff.

"Oh, rats! You cheese it!" said Benson gruffly.

It was evident that Benson was a humble admirer of the great Ponsonby, though the reward of his admiration was more kicks than halfpence, so to speak.

Squiff shrugged his shoulders.

"Don't you fellows begin to rag," said Smithson, who was kneeling before the grate and lighting the fire. "Clare's got enough trouble ahead of him, Benny, without you starting. Let's have tea. Hand over those eggs."

Benson grunted, and preparations for tea went forward. It was evident that Benson deeply resented Squiff's having brought the study under the disapprobation of Ponsonby & Co. Smithson poached the eggs, and Benson made the tea. Squiff put the poker in the fire when the cooking was finished. If there was going to be trouble, with half a dozen to one, Squiff meant to be ready for it.

The three juniors sat down to tea, Squiff chatting pleasantly, and Smithson answering him, Benson preserving an uneasy and resentful silence.

There was the hoot of a motor-horn outside, and Benson ran to the window. Nothing could be seen from the window excepting the wall of the gym and a strip of sky. But Benson could hear the voices from the quadrangle.

"Pen's come in," he said.

"Now look out for squalls!" murmured Smithson.

"I'll have another cup of tea," said Squiff.

"Here you are! You seem pretty cool."

"I don't see anything to get excited about," said Squiff, laughing. "I haven't been licked yet, you know."

"You jolly soon will be, and serve you right for your cheek!" growled Benson. "You don't know who Ponsonby is. His people are awfully rich. His uncle is a lord, and he sends over his car sometimes on a half-holiday for Ponsonby to take his friends for a run. Ponsonby is cock of the walk in the Fourth, I can tell you."

"Go hon!"

About ten minutes later there was a sound of many footsteps in the passage. The door of the study was flung open, without the preliminary of a knock, and a crowd of juniors appeared in the doorway. First and foremost was the great Ponsonby. Squiff had never seen him before, but he guessed whom he was. The three juniors he had scrapped with at the gate were behind him, and half-a-dozen others.

"There's the new kid, Pon," said Merton.

Ponsonby screwed an eyeglass into his eye, and surveyed Squiff as if he were examining some strange animal at the Zoo.

Squiff did not seem to mind. He finished his cup of tea with perfect nonchalance, and refilled it unconcernedly.

"Hallo!" said Ponsonby.

Squiff looked up.

"Same to you," he said cheerfully—"hallo!"

"So you're the new kid?"

"You've hit it first time," assented Squiff.

"Glare—or Clare—or something—what?"

"Or something," agreed Squiff.

"I hear you've been putting on side, and playing the giddy goat generally, and making yourself obnoxious to my friends," said Ponsonby severely.

"We hear all sorts of things, don't we?" said Squiff.

Ponsonby frowned darkly. The cool manner of the new boy was decidedly irritating to him. Ponsonby had so long

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been monarch of all he surveyed in the Fourth Form at Highcliffe that the slightest sign of opposition irritated him at once. He was not the kind of fellow who could brook a rival near the throne. His idea was that this cheeky new kid wanted putting in his place, thoroughly and once for all. And his place, according to Ponsonby, was that of a humble follower and toady of the great Ponsonby.

"I suppose you don't happen to know whom you're speaking to?" said Ponsonby crushingly.

Squiff nodded.

"Yes. Johnson—or Ponson—or something—what?"

There was a slight giggle from the passage as Squiff mimicked the great Ponsonby's own remark. Ponsonby glared round him, and the giggle died away.

"I can see that what I've heard of you is right enough," said Ponsonby. "Well, you've got to learn to behave yourself, my dear boy. They're letting all sorts of blackguards into the school, it seems"—here Ponsonby glanced disdainfully at Smithson and Benson—"but when we get a rank outsider here we soon knock him into shape, and teach him manners. You don't seem to know quite where you are; but we'll enlighten you. Get up!"

"Eh?"

"Get up from that table!"

"Thanks; I'm quite comfy here."

"Get up, you ass!" whispered Smithson hurriedly.

Squiff did not move.

"I've told you," said Ponsonby, breathing hard, "to get up! Are you going to do as I tell you, or are you not?"

"Not!" said Squiff calmly.

Ponsonby said no more. He made a stride towards Squiff, and grasped him by the shoulder to jerk him out of his chair. He made a tremendous wrench, and Squiff ought to have come flying out of the chair. But he didn't. He sat tight, and Ponsonby looked a little foolish as his terrific wrench failed to move the new boy. It dawned upon him that Squiff possessed considerable muscular powers.

Squiff looked up with a smile.

"Try again," he suggested.

Again there was a giggle from the passage. It was barely possible that Ponsonby's followers did not wholly object to seeing the great man taken down a peg or two.

Ponsonby set his teeth, and put both hands on Squiff's shoulders, and dragged him backwards from the table. Squiff jerked up his full tea-cup, and the fluid shot out of the cup over his shoulder, and landed full in Ponsonby's red and excited face.

Splash!

"Grooh!"

Ponsonby released the Australian, and staggered back, his face streaming with tea. Squiff jumped to his feet, laughing.

"Grooh! Oh—oh! My hat! Huh!" Ponsonby gouged the tea from his eyes. "Oh! Ow! I'll slaughter you for that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a laugh from the passage this time. Ponsonby turned a wet and furious face upon the crowd of juniors there.

"What are you cackling at?" he roared.

"Ahem! N-n-nothing," stammered Gadsby.

"You silly chumps—"

"Ahem!"

"As for you, you rotten worm, I'll simply smash you!" roared Ponsonby, and he rushed at Squiff like a wild bull.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

No Rag!

SQUIFF received Ponsonby's rush with a smiling face. His hands went up, and his strong arms closed round Ponsonby, and the Highcliffe junior was swept right off his feet, and found himself whirling in the air.

"My hat!" ejaculated Smithson.

"Put him down, you fool!" shouted Benson.

"By Jove!"

"Go for him, Pon!"

"Smash the cad!"

It was rather difficult for Ponsonby to "go for" the new boy, under the circumstances. It was still more difficult to smash him. Ponsonby was simply helpless in the muscular grip of the Australian junior. Squiff swung him round, helplessly, and let him slide towards the floor, fixing his grip upon Ponsonby's ankles. Ponsonby's head knocked on the study carpet, and his hands thrashed the floor wildly, as Squiff held him upside down with an iron grip on his ankles.

Squiff looked down at him smilingly.

"Grooh!" gasped Ponsonby. "Leggo! Ow! Stoppit! Oh, my word!"

"Bitten off a little more than you can chew—what?" asked Squiff.

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"Grooh! Lend me a hand, you fools! Collar him! Pile on him! Rag him! Smash him!" shrieked Ponsonby.

"Collar the cad!" exclaimed Gadsby.

"Rag him—absolutely!" chirruped Vavasour.

There was a rush into the study. The leader of the select set in the Fourth was evidently unable to tackle that new kid "on his own." But his followers were quite ready to pile on Squiff at his bidding, not being troubled by any special scruples about fair play.

But Squiff was ready. As the juniors rushed in, he let go Ponsonby's ankles, and the captain of the Fourth was flung towards the oncoming crowd.

His boots thrashed upon them, and one of them caught Gadsby under the chin, the other crashing upon Vavasour's chest. Gadsby and Vavasour howled. Ponsonby rolled on the floor, and the rushing juniors stumbled and tumbled over him in wild confusion.

Merton and Drury reached Squiff, clutching at him, and Squiff hit out, and both of them were added to the struggling heap.

"Oh crumbs!"

"Gerroff!"

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"Yah! Oh, get off my neck! Ow!"

"My word!"

"Oh, gad!"

Ponsonby struggled from under the tumbling juniors, and sat up dazedly. Other fellows sat up round him. Others had retreated into the passage. Squiff stood with his hands ready, but they were not needed for a moment.

"Well, my sainted aunt!" murmured Smithson. "You are a coughdrop, Clare—you are, and no mistake! But I wouldn't be in your shoes for something!"

Ponsonby staggered to his feet.

"Collar that rotten cad!" he howled. "Collar him, I tell you! Follow me!"

The dusty and dishevelled juniors advanced again, but not with a rush. They came on more cautiously. They had already learned that the new boy at Highcliffe was a tough customer, and a terribly hard hitter. There was a sudden yell from Benson as he grasped Squiff from behind.

"Come on, you fellows! I've got him!"

Ponsonby & Co. made a rush then.

Squiff gritted his teeth.

The wretched toady Benson had crept behind him, and suddenly thrown his arms about his neck, and was holding him in a bearlike hug. Benson's only idea was to gain favour with Ponsonby & Co., and avert their wrath from himself. The raggers were upon Squiff in a moment.

But Squiff was a dangerous customer to corner.

His elbow was driven behind him with a great force, and it caught the rascally Benson in the region vulgarly known as the bread-basket, and Benson gave a howl and released his hold, and reeled away.

Then Squiff hit out right and left.

Ponsonby and Gadsby rolled on the carpet; another and another of the raggers went down. But they were too many for the new junior.

Hands seized him on all sides, and he was dragged down.

"Pile on him!" shrieked Vavasour.

Squiff made a tremendous effort, and hurled off the juniors who were holding him, and leaped to his feet.

Merton made a jump at him, to reel back from an uppercut that felt like the kick of a mule.

Squiff made a jump to the grate and grasped the poker, which he had thoughtfully placed ready in the fire, and whirled it out.

With a gasp, the raggers retreated from the glowing, red-hot end of the poker.

"Come on!" said Squiff.

"Here, keep off—"

"Put that poker down!"

"Yah! Oh!"

"You won't come on?" smiled Squiff. "Then I will, my infants! Get out of this study! Sharp's the word! Out-side!"

"You rotter—"

"You—you—you—"

"I'm afraid you'll get scorched, if you don't hop it, Ponsonby," said Squiff, lunging with the poker. "There—"

"Yow-ow!"

"I told you so!"

Ponsonby & Co. crowded wildly out of the doorway. There was no arguing with a red-hot poker. They surged into the passage, panting.

"Oh, you rotter!" gasped Ponsonby. "You shall smart for this!"

Squiff grinned.

"Come along, one at a time, or two at a time, if you like, and I'll handle you," he said cheerfully. "But I can't tackle

eight or nine at once. Have you cads never heard of such a thing as fair play?"

"I'll call my major," muttered Monson savagely.

"Good egg!"

Ponsonby & Co. crowded away down the passage. There was evidently no more ragging to be done in that study.

Squiff smiled, and dropped the poker into the grate. Smithson and Benson were staring at him blankly. Benson made a jump for the door as Squiff turned round, after dropping the poker. He knew what he deserved, and he ran.

"Oh, my hat!" said Smithson, gasping. "You take the cake, you do really. But you'll be simply slaughtered for that! Wait till Monson major gets hold of you!"

"Oh, rats!"

"They'll wreck this study," said Smithson dismally. "You're a silly ass to back up against them like that! You're only brought a lot of trouble on us. You'll learn better when you've been here some time. You'll have to go through it. Might as well make up your mind to it at once."

"Why don't you and Benson buck up, instead of knuckling under to those cads?" demanded Squiff contemptuously. "They're all funks, every man jack of them. They haven't the pluck of a bunny rabbit in the whole crowd."

Smithson shook his head.

"No jolly fear! And you'll know better in time, I can tell you that! The best thing you can do is to go and ask Ponsonby's pardon at once."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, you won't be laughing to-night in the dorm, or when Monson major goes for you!" said Smithson.

But the prospect did not seem to terrify the new boy.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Something Like a Scrap!

MONSON MAJOR grunted. He was the centre of an excited crowd in the common-room at Highcliffe. He was a big, burly fellow, a good deal of a bully, and the terror of the fags. Ponsonby & Co. were explaining to the Fifth-Former what an utter beast the new kid was, and how necessary it was for Monson major to take him in hand. Monson major grunted contemptuously as he listened. He did not think it would take him long to bring a mere fag in the Fourth Form to reason.

"By gad, here he comes!" exclaimed Ponsonby suddenly.

The whole crowd looked towards the doorway.

The new boy walked in cheerfully.

Squiff did not seem aware of the deadly glares that were bestowed upon him. He did not seem to notice the frowns of Monson major.

He sauntered cheerfully into the common-room, with his hands in his pockets, careless of the excitement caused by his entrance.

"So that's the new kid, is it?" said Monson major.

"That's the cad!" said Monson of the Fourth.

"That's the rotter!"

"Leave him to me!" said the Fifth-Former loftily.

He strode towards Squiff. The juniors followed at his heels, in eager anticipation.

Monson major had a light walking-cane in his hand. He made it whistle through the air as he stopped before Squiff.

"Take off your jacket," he said.

Squiff looked at him coolly, measuring the big Fifth-Former with his eye.

"My jacket?" he repeated.

"Yes; and at once!"

"What for?"

"You're going to be licked."

"Oh, I'm going to be licked, am I?" said Squiff cheerfully.

"What for?"

"Don't talk to me! Take off your jacket!"

"Thanks; I'd rather be licked with my jacket on, if I'm going to be licked at all," said Squiff. "But haven't you made a little mistake?"

Monson major stared at him, not comprehending.

"A mistake?" he repeated. "How do you mean?"

"Well, you say I'm going to be licked. My idea is that I'm not. You may be right, of course. But I think you're mistaken," explained Squiff, with really refreshing coolness.

"That's a sample of his cheek," said Ponsonby.

Monson major did not speak. He strode at the new junior with the cane in the air. Squiff backed away, keeping a wary eye on him.

"You can keep that cane to yourself," said Squiff. "If you want a scrap, I'm your man. But if you use a stick, I shall use the nearest chair, and you may get the worst of it, I warn you!"

And Squiff caught up a chair by the back, with so determined an air that Monson major paused in surprise and rage.

"Put that chair down!" he yelled.

"I'll put it down when you've put that stick down," said Squiff.

"Go for him, Monson!" chorused the juniors.

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ONE
PENNY.

"Look here, you cheeky young sweep," said Monson major, "I don't fight with fags. I'm going to lick you, that's all!"

"Thanks; I'm not taking any! If you come a step nearer to me with that stick, you'll get this chair on the napper!" said Squiff. "Put down the stick, and use your hands, and I'm your man!"

"Why, you—you—you young idiot!" almost stuttered the Fifth-Former. "If I started on you I should make sawdust of you!"

"Well, I'm ready to be made into sawdust," said Squiff.

"I only ask for a fair show. Put your stick down, and let those funks keep out of it, and I'll tackle you. But if I don't get fair play, somebody will be hurt."

Ponsonby & Co. had made a motion of rushing upon the new boy, strong in numbers. But they did not like the look of the chair, which Squiff held aloft as easily as if it had been a cricket-bat. They fell back, staring and glaring at Squiff, who was a new boy of a kind quite new in their experience.

Monson major burst into a harsh laugh, and threw down the cane. Squiff promptly set the chair upon the floor.

"I'll simply smash you!" said Monson major, pushing back his cuffs.

"Go ahead! I'm waiting to be smashed!"

The big Fifth-Former rushed to the attack. He was head and shoulders taller than the Australian, and he was a powerful fellow. Certainly he was not in so fit a condition—his way of life did not conduce to physical fitness. Smoking and slacking and lounging did not improve his condition. And Squiff was in great form, perfectly fit, perfectly master of himself, quick and ready and clear-eyed, and endowed with unlimited pluck. They were not so unevenly matched as it appeared to the onlookers.

Ponsonby & Co. looked on grinning, expecting to see the obnoxious new boy swept off his feet, and hammered without mercy. But it did not happen.

Squiff side-stepped like lightning as Monson major rushed on him, and avoided the rush, and before the bully of the Fifth knew what was happening, Squiff's right came crashing on the side of his head. His left followed it up, bumping into Monson major's ribs like a steam-hammer; and the Fifth-Former staggered helplessly away from him, and sat down with a violent concussion on the floor.

"Oh, gad!" gasped Ponsonby.

"Floored, absolutely!" stuttered Vavasour.

Monson major was up in a flash, however.

With a face red with rage, he simply hurled himself upon the new junior.

Squiff was not big enough to stand the impetus of that heavy rush, and he gave ground quickly. Monson major followed him up with heavy drives, all of which, however, were well guarded by the new junior. It was a terrific attack, and Squiff needed all his coolness and skill and pluck to face it. But he did face it, and after a minute of wild exertion, Monson major began to pant. His wind was short, and it had found him out. He had followed Squiff half-way round the big room. He made a final effort, and hurled himself on the new junior, and grasped him, careless of two heavy blows that crashed upon his furious face.

"Now I've got you!" he panted.

Certainly he had "got" Squiff; but the next moment it looked as if Squiff had "got" him! The junior was whirled off his feet in Monson major's powerful arms—but he came down on his feet again, at the same time driving his fist into the Fifth-Former's ribs with a drive that made Monson gasp. Then his left came up like lightning—a set of knuckles that seemed made of iron crashed on Monson major's chin, and the senior felt as if his whole head had been knocked skyward.

He gave a gasp of anguish, and released Squiff, clapping his chin; but it was a reckless proceeding. Squiff did not lose a second. His right came straight for Monson major's unguarded face, and crashed upon his nose, and the Fifth-Former's nasal organ spouted a stream of red. He staggered back helplessly, and another terrific drive sent him on his back on the floor.

He landed there with a heavy bump.

"Oh, my hat!"

"By gad!"

"Get up, Monson!"

But Monson major did not get up. He lay groaning on the floor. Monson minor went to his brother's assistance. With his aid, the defeated bully staggered to his feet, still groaning.

"Finish him, Monson, old man!" said Gadsby.

"I'm—I'm not going to have anything more to do with the young brute!" groaned the Fifth-Former. "He—he must be a beastly prize-fighter, or something! Ow!"

Monson major sank breathless and groaning into a chair. He was evidently "done." There was a rustle of a gown in the passage, and Mr. Mobbs stepped into the common-room.

He had a cane in his hand. The Fourth Form-master had been there some time, as a matter of fact, but he had not chosen to interfere when Monson major was licking the new boy. But at the unexpected termination of the conflict, the master of the Fourth showed himself.

"Clare," he rapped out, "what is this? Fighting again?"

"Yes, sir!" said Squiff meekly.

"Monson major, I am surprised—"

"I—I was administering punishment, sir," gasped Monson major. "The—the young cad resisted—and—and—"

"Quite so!" assented Mr. Mobbs, with a malevolent look at Squiff. "I have already discovered that this boy is of a troublesome and quarrelsome disposition, and you were quite right to call him to order. I shall now take the matter into my own hands. Clare, hold out your hand!"

Squiff looked steadily at Mr. Mobbs.

"What for, sir?" he asked quietly.

"Don't bandy words with me!" said Mr. Mobbs harshly. "I am going to punish you for your ruffianly conduct. Hold out your hand immediately, or I will take you to Dr. Voysey, and you will be publicly flogged."

Squiff gritted his teeth. There was no help for it—and he held out his hand. Mr. Mobbs gave him six savage cuts, which made Squiff, tough as he was, wriggle considerably.

Ponsonby & Co. looked on with great enjoyment. The new boy had proved more than a match for them, and even for their champion, Monson major of the Fifth—but he had to yield to authority in the person of his Form-master. And Mr. Mobbs was willing to go any length to please his favourite pupils.

"There!" said Mr. Mobbs, breathing hard. "I trust that will be a lesson to you, Clare. Mind, any further ruffianism on your part will be punished in the same way. I will not have the common-room turned into a bear-garden. Take warning!"

Squiff did not reply; but he mentally promised Mr. Mobbs some very careful attentions before he quitted Highcliffe.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

One Good Turn Deserves Another!

THERE were many eyes upon Squiff as he sauntered round the quadrangle of Highcliffe, with an easy and self-possessed air.

Squiff was taking a survey of the school, in the manner of a new boy, and he did not seem to observe that he was the centre of attraction.

A few fellows spoke to him civilly enough, and he could easily guess that those fellows did not belong to the "set" of Ponsonby & Co.

But most of the Fourth let him severely alone.

He was looking in at the gym when Ponsonby & Co. came along, and they grinned at him as they went into the building. But they did not speak. Squiff glanced at them, and strolled back to the house.

Smithson met him at the door of the study. Smithson was looking in a shocking state. His hair was tousled, his face was inky, and he was covered with dust.

"They've been here," he said dolorously, as Squiff came in.

Squiff could see that they had been there, as he looked round the study. The cads of the Fourth had taken advantage of his absence to rag the study. The room was a wreck—everything had been turned upside down or inside out. The table was upset, the crockery in fragments on the floor, the carpet torn up, the ashes from the grate scattered over the room. The ragers had done their work thoroughly.

"So they've been here," said Squiff.

"Yes," groaned Smithson; "they've wrecked the study, and they've jolly nearly wrecked me. They said I had been backing you up. I hadn't, had I?"

"Better for you if you had," growled Squiff. "Why didn't you lay into them with a cricket-bat, if they were half-a-dozen to one?"

Smithson shook his head. He had not the unbounded nerve and vitality of the Australian junior, and Ponsonby & Co. were a little too much for him.

"Pretty state we're in!" he said. "It will take hours to get this room to rights again. And if Mobby should see it like this, it means a licking. Mobby wouldn't listen to a word against Pon. He'd say I was a slovenly beast, and lick me."

"Where is Pon's study?" asked Squiff.

"Last one down the passage. But what—"

"Come on," said Squiff.

"What's the game? You're not thinking—" stammered Smithson.

"What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the giddy gander, my son. Come along with me: I'm going to show you how to handle those cads," said Squiff. "You keep an eye on

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me, and you'll know how to handle them later—when I'm not here. See? Just come along!"

"But—I say—"

Squiff took Smithson's arm, and marched him along the passage willy-nilly. He kicked open the door of the last study.

It was a very handsome apartment. There was a large window looking on the quad, and the room was handsomely furnished. Ponsonby, Gadsby, and Vavasour shared that study, and they had plenty of money, and they "did" themselves very well.

"Looks nobby, don't it?" said Smithson. "That carpet is Persian—they say it cost ten quid!"

"Pretty pattern," agreed Squiff. "But perhaps a little ink will improve it—and some ashes. What do you think?"

"Oh, my only aunt!"

Squiff took the inkpot from the table, and calmly emptied it in streaks across the carpet. Then he turned out the ashpan from the grate, scattering the ashes, and trampling them into the carpet. In the study cupboard was quite a handsome set of crockery—but they did not look very handsome when Squiff had hurled them on the floor and stamped on them.

Smithson watched him open-mouthed. Ponsonby & Co. had kept him so thoroughly "down" that he had never dreamed of ragging their study in return for the ragging of his own. The new boy was evidently made of sterner stuff.

"I—I say!" stuttered Smithson.

Squiff overturned the table, and kicked the handsome table-cover into the grate. He found several jars of jam and preserves in the cupboard, and he smashed them open one after another, and smothered the contents over the walls, the looking-glass, and the furniture.

In a very short time Ponsonby's study presented an appearance still more utterly wrecked and ruined than Smithson's.

"Looks like bizney—what?" said Squiff.

Smithson gasped.

"They—they'll slaughter you!"

Squiff laughed. He jerked down some soot from the chimney, mixed it with some ginger-beer from the cupboard, and with the fluid thus produced, daubed in large letters on the wall:

"ONE GOOD TURN DESERVES ANOTHER!
TRY AGAIN!"

"There, I think that will do," said Squiff. "Come on!"

They returned to their own study. Smithson was in a state of unconcealed alarm and uneasiness, trembling to think what would happen when Ponsonby discovered the wreck of his sybaritic apartment.

"Don't clear up this mess," said Squiff, as he sat on the table. "Leave it for Mobby to see, in case Pon calls him in to complain. Mobby can't punish us without punishing Ponsonby too, if he sees this."

"You don't know Mobby," said Smithson. "Wait till Pon finds out what you've done. He'll simply yelp for Mobby; and Mobby won't listen to a word from us."

"What a nice man!" murmured Squiff. "I'll make Mobby sorry for himself before I've done. Look here, Smithson! Those cads bullyrag you now. They wouldn't if you stood up to them. Hit out whenever you get a word you don't like, and they'll soon let you alone. If two or three of them go for you at once, pick up the nearest thing and lay into them. They'll soon learn to leave you quiet then."

"I—I ain't your sort," confessed Smithson. "I—I'd like to—but—but—"

"You only want some nerve," said Squiff encouragingly. "They're all funks. Only rotten funks would pile on a fellow in a crowd. You could take the upper hand of that lot as easy as falling off a form, if you made up your mind to it."

Smithson's eyes brightened with a gleam of determination. "Blessed if I don't try it," he said. "After all, Mobby can't be more down on me than he is now, so I can risk that. I'll try it."

"That's the music, old chap!"

"Here they come!" murmured Smithson. "They want to see how you've taken it."

Ponsonby & Co. looked, grinning, into the study.

"Hallo!" said Ponsonby. "Rather in disorder here—what?"

Squiff nodded.

"Just a little bit," he agreed. "Never mind; we can stand it. But you seem to have ragged my study-mate, as well as the study. That's not allowed."

"Perhaps Smithson won't allow it," sneered Ponsonby.

Smithson jumped up unexpectedly.

"No, I won't!" he exclaimed. "Put up your hands, Ponsonby, you cad!"

"Eh, what?"

Smithson advanced upon Ponsonby with his hands up.

The captain of the Fourth stared at him disdainfully, not even deigning to take the monocle from his eye.

"Learning the new kid's manners—what?" he asked. "You'd better—Ow, ow! My hat!"

Smithson hit out, and the lordly Ponsonby sat down suddenly on the floor.

"Get up!" roared the warlike Smithson. "Come on! I'll lick you! Yah! Get up, you funk! Get up, you cad! You're not licked yet. Yah!"

"Collar that silly fool!" gasped Ponsonby. "He hasn't been ragged enough yet, it seems. Collar him!"

The juniors crowded into the study; but they crowded out again as Squiff picked up a cricket-bat and flourished it in the air.

"Go for him, Smithy," said Squiff. "Lick him! If you don't lick him, I'll lick you, I give you my word!"

But Smithson did not need urging.

The example of the cool Australian seemed to have had a magical effect upon him. The hitherto bullied and submissive Smithson was breathing war and vengeance. He pranced Ponsonby as he picked himself up, brandishing his clenched fists.

"Come on, you rotter! Come on, you cad! Come on, you funk! Take that! Yah!"

"That" was a heavy drive on Ponsonby's noble nose, which brought a stream of red from it. Ponsonby yelled, and dodged round the table.

"Keep off, you fool! I'm not going to fight you! Hands off!"

Smithson was upon Ponsonby now. The evident "funk" of the captain of the Fourth encouraged him. Smithson was going for him hammer and tongs, right and left. Ponsonby, cornered and desperate, put up the best fight he could. Smithson was not to be denied. He hit Ponsonby right and left, and hammered him and thumped him, till the captain of the Fourth simply howled for mercy.

"That will do, Smithy," said Squiff. "He's had enough. Don't slaughter him quite. You can get out, Ponsonby. Besides, you're wanted in your study. I think it wants tidying up. Scoot!"

And Ponsonby, groaning and gasping, scooted.

Muttering threats, the raggers crowded away down the passage, and Smithson panted and grinned triumphantly.

"Licked him!" he chuckled. "Licked Pon—by George! Let any of 'em come ragging in this study again, that's all! I'll lick 'em all, one after another; and if they pile on me, I'll go for 'em with a poker or a bat. I'll show 'em!"

Squiff chuckled. His study-mate was in deadly earnest, and Squiff realised that when he departed after his brief sojourn at Highcliffe, he would leave a thorn in the side of Ponsonby & Co., in the shape of the emancipated Smithson. And that was all to the good.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Sacked!

PONSONBY limped into his study.

He was feeling inclined to sink down into one of his comfortable armchairs, and groan; but the sight of his apartment took away all desire of repose.

The room was a wreck.

"Who's done this?" yelled Ponsonby.

"By gad!" ejaculated Gadsby. "They—they've wrecked our study. The new kid, of course; that utter beast—"

"Oh, the cheeky rotter!"

"Tell Mobbs!" howled Vavasour.

"Oh, I say!" exclaimed Drury. "We wrecked his study, you know. After all, he's only done the same thing. Better not call Mobbs into it."

But Ponsonby & Co. did not listen to Drury, who seemed to have some little sense of "playing the game" which was quite absent in the rest of the select set at Highcliffe.

Vavasour rushed away for Mr. Mobbs; and returned in a



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"SPIRITED AWAY!"

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ONE PENNY.

few minutes with the master of the Fourth rustling at his heels.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Mobbs, in righteous indignation. "Can I believe my eyes? Who has done this? What Goth—what vandal—has been here?"

"It's the new kid, sir; that cad Clare."

"Where is he?" thundered Mr. Mobbs.

"In his study, sir."

Mr. Mobbs rustled away down the passage, his gown fluttering behind him. He burst like an avalanche into Squiff's study.

"Clare!" he thundered.

"Hullo!"

"You—you have dared to rag Master Ponsonby's study—"

"Look what he's done to mine, sir," said Squiff cheerfully. "One good turn deserves another, sir—don't you think so?"

"Don't argue with me!" shouted Mr. Mobbs. "You—you young hooligan! Hold out your hands! I have already had occasion to cane you. But what you have received, sir, shall be as nothing to what I shall inflict upon you now."

The Form-master seemed almost foaming with rage. He brandished his cane, as if hardly restraining himself from laying it about Squiff's shoulders instead of his hands.

Squiff looked him squarely in the face. He was tough, and he did not mind a licking. But he was not disposed to receive such a licking as the angry Form-master evidently intended to bestow upon him now. It was already growing late in the evening, and Squiff reflected that if he was reported to the Head for a flogging, the flogging could not take place till the morning; and in the morning he would be gone. It was no longer necessary to stand the petty tyranny of Mr. Mobbs.

"Do you hear me?" thundered Mr. Mobbs.

"My dear sir, I could hear you half a mile away," said Squiff cheerfully. "I'm not deaf; and you're as loud as a megaphone."

"Wha-a-at! What!"

"I've only done to Ponsonby what he's done to me, sir. A master ought to be just. If you're going to lick me, lick Ponsonby, too. Then I'll stand it."

"Then—then—then you will stand it! Are you mad, boy?" shouted the astounded Mr. Mobbs. "Do you understand that I am your Form-master, and that you are under my orders! Hold out your hands at once or I shall thrash you!"

Squiff grinned. The thin, meagre, utterly unfit and unhealthy master was not likely to be able to thrash the sturdy junior without the latter's consent. If Squiff had been a Highcliffe boy there would, of course, have been no choice about the matter. But he wasn't, and that little circumstance made all the difference in the world. Squiff was quite prepared to be expelled from a school he didn't belong to.

"Pile in, then," said Squiff.

"What! Do I hear aright?" gasped Mr. Mobbs, really doubting his ears. "What did you say, you insolent boy?"

"I said pile in!"

Mr. Mobbs did pile in. He rushed at Squiff, caught him by the collar, and began to lash him across the shoulders with the cane.

But he had time only for one lash.

Then Squiff grasped the cane, jerked it away, and brought it down upon Mr. Mobbs with a terrific slash.

"Yarrah!"

Mr. Mobbs leaped clear of the floor as he felt the lash of the cane. There was a yell of surprise from the juniors in the passage and in the doorway. The new boy had surprised them, certainly; but they had never dreamed that he would think of resisting a Form-master, and laying into him with his own cane! That was something altogether new and unheard-of in their experience.

"By gad!" murmured Ponsonby. "He'll be sacked for this!"

"Absolutely!" grinned Vavasour.

But Squiff was not done yet!

Mr. Mobbs made a spring at him to regain the cane, and Squiff caught the skinny little man by the shoulders, and swung him down across the table with a powerful wrench, and then the cane rose and fell like lightning.

Thwack, thwack, thwack, thwack, thwack!

The wild yells of Mr. Mobbs answered the thwacking of the cane.

And a yell of laughter from the juniors mingled with Mr. Mobbs' yells of pain. It was a sight the juniors had never seen before; but the young rascals were not at all sorry to see it. Mr. Mobbs, squirming in the grasp of the Australian junior, was a funny sight, and they laughed loudly as they looked on. Even Ponsonby laughed, though not otherwise feeling in much of a mood for merriment.

And the select set in the Fourth had all the more reason to be pleased, because such an action as assaulting a Form-

master meant the "sack" without mercy for the delinquent. They would soon be relieved of the presence of the new boy, whose coming to Highcliffe had threatened the downfall of Ponsonby & Co. from their high estate.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow! Seize him! He is mad! Help me, boys! I command you to help me! Ow! Ow!"

Two or three of the juniors ran into the study as Mr. Mobbs shrieked for help, but some vigorous lashes of the cane drove them howling out again.

Thwack, thwack, thwack, thwack! the cane sang again upon the skinking and quivering form of Mr. Mobbs.

The master of the Fourth wrenched himself loose at last. He bounded towards the door, where he turned to glare ferociously at Squiff.

"You—you young rascal! You ruffian! You villain! You shall be sent away from the school for this! You shall be expelled! I shall go to the Head immediately and acquaint him with this! I—I—I—"

Words failed Mr. Mobbs, and he swept from the study.

Squiff broke the cane into two, and tossed the pieces in the grate.

"Oh, I say!" gasped Smithson. "You'll be sacked, Clare—you'll be sacked! You—you've caned a Form-master—oh, my hat!"

"Sacked—eh?" said Squiff.

"Yes, rather."

"Absolutely!" chuckled Vavasour.

"Well, it's all in the day's work," said Squiff cheerfully.

"You can get out, Ponsonby. You've had your licking. Some of you are going to clear up the muck in this study. You two will do!" Squiff grasped Vavasour and Gadsby, and sent them whirling into the study. Then he picked up the poker. "You other fellows come in, and you'll get hurt. You two set to work clearing up the damage you've done."

"I won't!" yelled Gadsby.

"And I won't—absolutely!" screamed Vavasour.

"You will, or you'll get licked!" Squiff slammed the door in the faces of the amazed Ponsonby & Co., and locked it. "Now set to work, you pair of rotters."

Vavasour and Gadsby exchanged helpless glances. Locked in the study with the terrible new boy, they did not dare to resist. They set to work putting the study to rights, and the grinning Smithson helped them on with a cuff or two every now and then. It was half an hour before Squiff unlocked the door and allowed the two tired and dusty and furious juniors to depart.

"My word," said Smithson, "you've been like a blessed eagle in a dovecot here, old chap. But you'll be sacked—sacked as sure as a gun!"

Squiff smiled cheerfully. That sentence, which would have fallen very heavily upon him if he had been a Highcliffe fellow, was not likely to do him much damage.

A few minutes later a figure in gown and gold-rimmed spectacles loomed up in the doorway. It was Dr. Voysey. Evidently Mr. Mobbs had told his tale of woe. The old gentleman blinked in his sleepy way at Squiff.

"Ahem! Mr. Mobbs informs me that you have—hum!—assaulted him—hum!" he said. "Hem! You cannot remain at Highcliffe, Clare, after—hem!—assaulting a Form-master! I must—hem!—request you to leave by the earliest train in the morning—hem!"

"Certainly, sir!" said Squiff cheerily.

Dr. Voysey rustled away.

"You've got it," said Smithson.

Squiff laughed.

"Can you keep a secret, Smithy?" he asked, closing the door.

"Yes—what?"

"I was going to-morrow morning, anyway. My name's not Clare, and I'm not a Highcliffe chap at all. Clare is at the doctor's house in the village, and he will be here to-morrow. I'm a Greyfriars chap, and I came here to jape Ponsonby & Co., and I rather think I've done it—what?"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Smithson, almost falling down in his astonishment. "Oh, my only sainted aunt! Is—is that straight?"

"Straight as a die, my son! Keep it dark."

"Oh, rather!" chuckled Smithson. "But what a stunning jape! Then—then it's all the same to you whether you're sacked or not?"

"Just the same!"

And Smithson laughed loud and long.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Quite a Success!

SQUIFF went to bed in the Fourth Form dormitory with an air of cool unconcern that puzzled the rest of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe. They did not understand so much coolness in a fellow who was under sentence of expulsion. Clare's box had arrived from the station, but

Squiff had no key to it, so Smithson lent him the things he required for the night. The prefect who saw lights out for the Fourth stared very curiously at Squiff. For a new boy to be expelled on the same day that he arrived in the school was something new, and made the supposed Clare an object of general interest. Squiff went cheerfully to bed, but not to sleep. He had observed a good deal of whispering among Ponsonby & Co., and he knew that the night was not to pass uneventfully, and the Australian junior remained very wide awake.

It was about half-past ten when Squiff's alert ears noted the sound of fellows getting out of bed. Then he heard the scraping sound of a jug removed from a basin on a washstand. He smiled softly; and, without a sound, he slipped from his bed to the floor.

There he lay quiet—and waited!

A dark shadow approached his bed, and there was a sudden gurgling and splashing of water. The contents of a large water-jug swamped down upon the bed, and two or three splashes reached Squiff where he crouched upon the floor.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a howl of laughter from the raggers. They expected to see a drenched figure leap up startled from the bed. Instead of which, Squiff rose calmly to his feet beside the bed, and struck a match.

Ponsonby, the jug still in his hand, glared at him across the bed.

"M-m-my hat! You—you were not in bed!"

"My dear chap, catch a weasel asleep!" said Squiff cheerfully. "You've made my bed jolly wet. I sha'n't be able to sleep in it now."

"Then you can sleep on the floor! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not exactly."

Squiff made a bound across the bed and seized Ponsonby. The jug fell with a crash to the floor and smashed. Squiff whirled Ponsonby off his feet, and plumped him into the dripping bed. As Ponsonby rolled there gasping in the dark, Squiff caught the water-jug from the nearest washstand, and inverted it over him.

Swamp!

"Grooch!" roared Ponsonby. "Oh—oh—oooooch!"

There was a glimmer of light. Gadsby had ignited a candle-end. In the glimmer, Ponsonby sat up on the bed drenched with water, and shivering and gasping.

"By gad," ejaculated Vavasour, "you're wet, Pon, old chap—very wet!"

"I—I—I—grooch! Huh!"

"You look rather wet, Pon," agreed Squiff, taking another jug of water. "All these merry souls got up to see me drenched, did they? Well, one good turn deserves another, as I've remarked before."

And before the raggers could realise what he was about to do, he swept the jug round in a half-circle, and a drenching stream of water caught them one after another, soaking through their thin pyjamas to the skin.

There was a wild howl from the raggers.

"Ow! Grooch!"

Ponsonby, drenched and dripping, crawled off Squiff's bed towards his own; but Squiff grasped him by the shoulder and swung him back.

"That's mine!" he remarked coolly, taking possession of Ponsonby's bed. "I can't sleep in a wet bed, my sons! I'm afraid of catching cold. You can have it, Pon—with my compliments."

"Do you think I'm going to sleep in all that water?" roared Ponsonby furiously.

"I jolly well know I'm not!" chuckled Squiff. "You put the water there, and you can make the best of it! This bed is mine for to-night! And if I'm disturbed again, my infants, I've got a cricket-bat here, and some of you will get hurt."

And Squiff coolly turned in in Ponsonby's bed, with the cricket-bat by his side, ready for use in case of need.

The raggers glared at him. Ponsonby was stuttering with rage. He yelled to his comrades to pile in; but piling in on Squiff was not at all to their taste. As Gadsby remarked, they were fed up.

One by one the raggers went back to bed, and the furious Ponsonby found himself without support; and alone he would as soon have tackled a tiger in the jungle as that obnoxious new "kid." The captain of the Fourth, breathing fury, turned in with Gadsby, as it was quite impossible to sleep in the drenched bed, and still more impossible to turn Squiff out of the dry one.

Squiff was not disturbed again that night! Ponsonby & Co. realised that they had taken on too big an order, and they were glad to leave him in peace. They consoled themselves with the reflection that he was to be sacked in the morning.

But in the morning the new boy at Highcliffe was not there to be "sacked."

(Continued on page iii of cover.)

RUCTIONS AT HIGHCLIFFE.*(Continued from page 24.)*

He had risen at the clang of the rising-bell and dressed himself and left the dormitory before the other fellows were half-dressed.

An early fog in the quad had seen him wheeling his bicycle towards the school gates, which were just opened, and then he had vanished.

There was much astonishment at Highcliffe.

The new boy was gone; and the first impression was that he had cycled off to avoid being sent away. And he had left his box behind him!

But the astonishment deepened when, later in the morning, a pale-faced lad, with his arm in a sling, drove up to Highcliffe in a cab and presented himself as Clare, the new boy.

Mr. Mobbs received him with gaping astonishment, and took him in to the Head. Dr. Voysey, equally astonished, questioned him, and found that he undoubtedly was Clare. He explained that he had been knocked over by a motor-car the previous afternoon, and had been taken care of at Dr. Pillbury's house, and had understood that a message had been sent to Highcliffe concerning the accident.

It was evident enough that some practical joker had known of the accident, and had come to Highcliffe in Clare's name for a stupendous "lark."

But who he was and what he was was a mystery.

Mr. Mobbs thought of Harry Wharton & Co. at once. But he knew that Squiff was not a member of the Famous Five; he had never seen the boy before who had presented himself at Highcliffe as Clare. He was utterly puzzled.

Ponsonby & Co. were puzzled, too. And they were feeling decidedly uneasy, for they had recognised Clare as the cyclist they had knocked over and abandoned on the road the previous day. They were soon relieved by the discovery that Clare had no intention of giving them away; and if they had felt inclined to rag the new boy, in their usual pleasant manner, they were restrained by the fear of what he could tell if he chose. Clare found Ponsonby & Co., therefore, with their very best manners on, so to speak, and his experience of them was very different from that of the boy who had come to Highcliffe in his name the previous day.

About the same time that Clare arrived at Highcliffe a cyclist stopped by the wall of Greyfriars School and gave a loud whistle. And Harry Wharton & Co., who were in the Close, were soon lining the wall and looking over.

Squiff grinned up at them. He had timed his visit for the recess after third lesson, when he knew that the chums of the Remove would be out of the Form-room.

"Hallo, hallo, hullo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "So you're here, you boulder! How did it go?"

Squiff chuckled.

"Topping!" he said.

"Had a high old time?"

"Yes. I'll tell you all about it when I come back," said Squiff. "I mustn't be seen about here, as I'm supposed to be in London. I shouldn't wonder if Mobbs has suspicions in this quarter, and comes over about it! Ta-ta!"

And Squiff remounted his bicycle and rode away cheerily towards the railway-station.

Harry Wharton laughed as the juniors returned into the Close.

"Squiff's the right sort!" he said. "It's topping! I only hope there won't be trouble to follow for old Squiff."

But there was no trouble for Squiff.

After the Australian junior returned from London the Removites heard the story of his adventures, and chuckled loud and long. And Smithson came over to see Squiff a few days later, and from him the Co. heard further details. The mystery of the new boy remained a mystery at Highcliffe till Ponsonby & Co. happened to meet the Famous Five and Squiff one afternoon, and then they understood.

Ponsonby's first thought was to get Mr. Mobbs to carry a complaint to the Head of Greyfriars; but a hint concerning a possible revelation of the facts of the automobile incident convinced Ponsonby that a still tongue would show a wiser head, and, instead of sneaking as usual, he made it a point to persuade Mr. Mobbs to let the matter drop.

But things did not go on just the same at Highcliffe after Squiff's sensational visit there. For Smithson had not forgotten what he had learned from the Australian junior, and he followed his new line of conduct with grim determination, and the great Ponsonby had to swallow the fact that he was no longer monarch of all he surveyed in the Fourth Form.

Which was a good result of Squiff's scheme, and gave Ponsonby & Co. good reason to remember—not lovingly—the New Boy at Highcliffe.

THE END.

(Another long, complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co. next Monday, entitled: "Spirited Away!" by Frank Richards. Order early!)

Our Grand New Ferrers Lord Serial Story.**THE UNCONQUERABLE.****A Magnificent Story of Thrilling Adventure.****By SIDNEY DREW.****READ THIS FIRST.**

Ferrers Lord and his old companions, Rupert Thurston, Ching-Lung, the Chinese prince, Gan-Waga, the Esquimo, with Hal Honour, Prout, Maddock & Co., are once more on board the submarine, the Lord of the Deep. This time they are in chase of Lord's wonderful machine, named the Unconquerable, which is a marvellous combination of submarine and airship. The Unconquerable has been stolen by the millionaire's enemies, but a temporary fouling of the propellers enable Prout and Barry O'Rooney to get aboard. They overpower three of the four men aboard; then there remains a mad Zulu to be dealt with. Martin Arkland and Job Sanday, two of Barry's prisoners, are terribly frightened of him, and beg the Irishman to shoot the native. After a visit to the galley, they set out to chase the madman, and see him go down a ladder. After the madman had turned on the oxygen taps, Barry is compelled to shoot him. Meanwhile, Jeff Sanday has got the insurance money for the ship he ran on the Windmill Rocks, and is having a drink to celebrate the occasion, when he is tapped on the shoulder. He turns to find it is an old friend of his, Mike Kennedy, who is really Prince Ching-Lung's most trusted servant. They part, after Kennedy has learned the truth concerning the stealing of the submarine, and Kennedy goes to Ferrers Hall, where he asks for Chan-song-Pu.

(Now go on with the story.)

The Collision!

Kennedy did not require a guide. Chan-song-Pu, a corpulent Chinaman in the prime of life, was dozing in an arm-chair. He opened his slanting eyes.

"Ol' ri', ol' ri', ol' ri'!" said Chan-song-Pu. "Go wayee. No likee ghosts, too topside badee dleamee!"

"My friend, you're not dreaming at all," said Kennedy, in Chinese. "I've come, and I've brought orders. We've got to be aboard by eleven."

"Ol' ri', ol' ri'!" murmured Chan-song-Pu, and dozed off again unconcernedly.

The orders Kennedy had received over the telephone-wire were to take charge of the steam-yacht *Fatality*, lying in the Pool of the Thames, and to bring Chan-song-Pu with him. Here was something definite at last. Ching-Lung's yacht was very fast, and quite ready for sea. The clocks from a multitude of steeples were chiming eleven when Kennedy and the Chinaman stepped aboard with the pilot. A large vessel lying ahead of them was getting under way.

"Rum go, that," said the pilot, pointing at her. "I only brought her up this morning, and she's off again without unloading a bale or barrel. Going to unload at Hull instead for some reason. Found another cargo there, I suppose. I'll turn in for the hour, if you don't mind, captain."

The *Fatality* slipped away seawards as fast as the regulations would admit on the crowded river. It was dark, but clear, and the breeze blew with the tide. The pilot stood beside the steersman, giving his orders gruffly as he smoked his pipe, for he was in full command till they reached the Nore.

"Starboard!" he cried. "Here's a Dutch eel-factory goin' to tack clean across our bows! Starboard, you fool! Hi! Back her! Full speed astern!"

Sails and spars seemed to jump out of the darkness. The yacht's tiller-chain snapped, and the steersman was flung headlong over the bridge. A rending crash followed. The yacht went floundering backwards at an angle, and swung broadside on. It was minutes before her searchlight was flashing upon the water and her boat was out. Five life-buoys, each with a flare, danced on the current.

(Continued on page iv. of cover.)

Kennedy plunged down his arms shoulder deep, and seized a human body. The craft they had collided with had sunk. Here and there they pulled, watching and calling. Kennedy took the lantern and looked down at the man he had rescued. He uttered a sharp cry.

The man was Big Jeff Sanday, and he was gagged and bound. The next instant a police-boat raced up.

Fearless, Yet Afraid—Black Harry Again—Job Sanday Gets Free!

The sight of the swaying oblong object set Barry O'Rooney's hair on end with horror. Forgetting the light, he tumbled down the ladder. Imp, who had no such qualms, barked and snarled at the gruesome thing for a minute or so, and then bounded after the Irishman.

All unconscious of the presence of such a ghastly follower, Prout cut delicate rashers of bacon, and cracked eggs into the frying-pan. Barry did not enter the galley, for he knew that the sight of his scared face would alarm his friend. He went to the fresh-water tank and bathed his forehead. His teeth were actually chattering.

Then, like a hero, Barry braced himself up for the ordeal, and went up again. He left a couple of glow-lamps burning, and descended the ladder, with one hand covering his eyes. He did not want to catch another glimpse of Daft Black Harry in his winding-sheet. Another sluice made him feel better.

"How are you getting on, Tommy ashore?" he asked, trying to steady his voice.

The pan was sputtering merrily over the fire of patent fuel. Prout looked over his shoulder, and remained with a rasher clinging to the fork.

"By honey, how are you gettin' on, you mean?" he exclaimed. "You're as white as an egg-shell. Our funerals ain't ordered yet, are they?"

"Whist! Ut's that poor naygur Oi've got on my narves!" said Barry hastily. "Phwat are we to do wid those two scallywags, Tom?"

Prout went on with his frying, and gazed into the pan for inspiration.

"Keepin' 'em locked up in separate cabins won't do them no harm, except they'll be lonely," he answered, after a pause; "but it won't do us no good, will it?" He put four plates in the oven to get hot. "By honey, this is the only time I ever wished I was a lawyer to give advice. We're two and two, and we're in the same boat, all of us, and it's the wust boat I ever got in. We'll jaw it over wi' Arkland. Maybe the four of us put together can madage something. A few nice chipped 'taters ought to go well with this. By honey, I must be gettin' well, Barry, for it smells good!"

Barry shuddered at the very thought of food. That nodding, swaying horror had taken away all his appetite. It haunted him.

"Oi must shake this off," he thought, as he paced up and down. "Ut was only a thrick of the toide that brought him back. Come, Imp—come, bhoy! Ut's toime to show the loight. Faith, Oi'd face a charge of Cossack cavalry sooner, but ut's got to be. Barry, Barry, be a man!"

The bright ray went streaming out. Barry set his teeth hard, and nerved himself to look. A gasp of relief burst from him. The thing had gone!

"Many brave hearts lie asleep in the deep,
So beware, beware!"

It was only fancy, but Barry seemed to hear the rich, deep voice of the dead man rolling through the ship in warning. The steady tick-tack of the chronometer sounded unnaturally loud. Dark shapes flitted round the conning-tower, and goblin faces, with dull, goggle-eyes, peered in. They were only fish, but Barry was not unthankful when he heard Prout's lusty hail, for his brief vigil that had seemed so long was over.

Prout and Barry bore no malice, for adversity makes strange friends. Arkland appeared to be very ill, and would eat nothing. Job Sanday, on the contrary, in spite of his broken head, took a double share, and washed it down with half a bottle of spirits.

"That's the last whisky you'll have to-night, or to-day, or whatever it is, Job," said Prout, "so you can go and wash up the pots."

"Not me; I'm goin' to sleep," said Sanday. "You can be your own durn scullerymaid. There'll be enough clean crockery to last us out without washin'. Our skeletons'll wash when this coffin rusts through and lets the water in. Don't talk to me!"

"Faith," said Barry, with a dangerous glitter in his eye, "Oi'd never rob a man of his slape, so come to bed, Job—come to bed!"

His revolver was out. The man swung up, blustering and swearing, but Barry pointed to the door.

"Don't forget," added the Irishman grimly, "that we're

top dog! The fewer the mouths to ate, the longer we can live. This way, Job, av ye don't moind."

"Would you shoot me?" snarled Sanday.

"White men have turned cannibals afore to-day, for starvation knows no law. Here's your room, Job."

Sanday went in without another word. It was Thurston's cabin. Barry took the electric lamps out of their sockets, turned the key on his prisoner, and, leaving Job in pitch darkness, walked away. Again Barry was clenching his teeth and digging his nails into the palms of his hands.

"Tom," he said, "Oi'm goin' out. We've got to do everything we can. The bell and rattle might fetch them."

"By honey, you don't leave this ship alone!" cried the steersman. "Suppose you had an accident—suppose—"

"We both can't go, ould bhoy, and ye know ut. Arrah, ut's not a single thing we must lave unthried, so go Oi must, lad!"

One was compelled to remain to dress and undress his comrade and to let him in and out of the diving-chamber. The pump, at least, was in working order, for they had already made use of it. Barry told Imp to watch Arkland. The Irishman locked the door of the saloon, although such a precaution seemed unnecessary. Very reluctantly Prout helped Barry O'Rooney into his heavy garments.

"Roight!" said Barry. "On wid the nozzle!"

Where was Daft Black Harry? Barry stared out into the glassy darkness. Looking up, he saw the dimly-lighted conning-tower, and wondered, shiveringly, whether the dead man was near. Then he took the queer rattle between his knees, and spun the handle round and round. It struck him that the hull of the Unconquerable might deaden the sound, so he climbed to the deck, not without many uneasy qualms. Then he used the bell. The creatures of the deep gathered round him.

Clang, clang, clang, clang, clang! boomed the raucous notes through the vast dark wilderness of water.

At last Barry lowered himself, and entered the diving-chamber. Quite a dozen silver whiting of good size swam in beside him. Here was food. Only one escaped through the closing door. Barry signalled for the chamber to be emptied. There was no response. He tried the bell again.

"Oi expect he's gone afther somethin'," he thought. "Maybe up to the conning-tower to have a look at me."

For the third time he rang the bell, but his signal still remained unanswered. Perhaps the battery had become exhausted. Surely nothing had gone wrong with the pump! The thought of such a catastrophe made his heart bump against his ribs. He waited a little longer, and tugged open the massive outer door. Presently he was peering into the conning-tower. Prout was not there.

"Bedad," muttered Barry O'Rooney, "av Oi have to go up, and ut's blowin' a gale, there'll be a sudden ind to the ancient family of the O'Rooneys. Oi moight float in calm weather wid a chance of bein' picked up, but in a gale—A-a-ah!"

He threw his arm across the nozzle of his helmet, and crouched down. Something went drifting past him, almost grazing his back.

It was Daft Black Harry again.

In the meantime Prout had limped back to the galley for an egg, some salad-oil, and a little paraffin. The steersman's leg was very stiff. On his return he sat down on a locker, and manufactured a simple embrocation. A little turpentine would have improved it, but he could not find any. He rubbed his bruised leg for five minutes, and then remained whistling dolefully and watching the bell.

"By honey, I always said it!" he mused. "If I was the chief I'd torpedo the brute! No ship can ever be an automatic machine. I always said it."

Prout was quite convinced in his own mind that they would be rescued. Such stalwarts as Ferrers Lord, Hal Honour, and Ching-Lung could accomplish anything. They were the unconquerable trio. If the chief had ever acted foolishly in his life, he thought it was when he had called the miserable aero-submarine by such a bombastic name.

Tr-r-r-r-ring! Tr-r-r-r-ring! clattered the hammer against the bell.

"By honey, that's sweet music!" said the steersman.

He turned to grasp the lever, but stopped dead in consternation. Job Sanday, dressed only in shirt and trousers, and with his hairy chest bare, confronted him. He had his hands behind his back, and there was a wicked leer on his face.

"I've broke out!" he snarled. "You dog, I've broke out! I'm drunk—fightin' drunk, but not drunk enough. I want more to burn the cursed pain out of my 'ead. You've locked the door of the saloon, you bald-pated cur, and that door's too tough to break. Where's the key? I want drink. See this?"

He flashed one of Thurston's razors in the air, and began to atrop it on the palm of his hand.

(Another Grand, Thrilling Instalment Next Week.)

