

"THROUGH FIRE AND FLAME!"

A Magnificent Long Complete Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars. By Frank Richards.



HARRY WHARTON RESCUES THE LANCASHIRE LAD !

(A Great Scene in the Magnificent Long Complete School Tale in this Issue.)

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THROUGH FIRE AND FLAME.

A New, Long, Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
at Greyfriars School.

By FRANK RICHARDS.



Billy Bunter blinked round at the heap of shavings behind him, and jumped in alarm. "M-my hat! They're alright! Stamp 'em out, you fellows!" There was a rush of flame from the heap of shavings. Skinner & Co. promptly retreated to the doorway. That flare looked a little too dangerous to stamp out. They preferred to give it a wide berth. (See Chapter 3.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Misunderstood!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were very busy in No. 1 Study when Peter Todd looked in. The five chums of the Remove were seated round the study table, with sheaves of imput paper before them, pens in their hands, and smudges of ink on their fingers, and a

very large one on Bob Cherry's nose. Bob had been rubbing his nose thoughtfully to assist the efforts of his brain, and he had transferred quite a considerable amount of ink to it. It was a half-holiday, and the Famous Five were nobly devoting it to the production of a new number of that great magazine, "The Greyfriars Herald." And that number was going to be a success.

"I want you chaps!" announced Todd, as he looked in. There was a general grunt from the editorial office. The five editors and sub-editors—it was not quite settled which were editors and which were sub-editors, but there were plenty of both—were too busy to bestow any attention on Peter Todd. It was their first War Number, and it required concentration of thought.

"Getting deaf?" Peter further remarked.

Harry Wharton pointed to the door with his pen.

"Buzz off!"

"But I want you," explained Peter.

"No admittance except on business. Strangers and dogs not allowed in the editorial office! Clear off!"

"Hold on a minute!" said Bob Cherry. "As you're here, can you tell me a rhyme for demoniac?"

"Fathead!"

"That doesn't rhyme," said Bob. "Besides, that isn't a word that could be introduced into a tragic poem. Try again."

"What on earth——"

"It's a poem on the Prussians," explained Bob, "about their beastly goings-on in Belgium. Demoniac is a good word—a jolly good word—if a chap could find a rhyme."

"Sal ammoniac," suggested Peter.

"You silly ass!"

"Run away!" exclaimed Nugent. "I'm doing the war story. How can I do a war story with a silly ass babbling at the door?"

"And I am doing an esteemed poem in blanky verse," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "You are interrupting the poetry, my esteemed Toddy."

"How does this go?" asked Squiff, the fifth member of the famous Co. "Listen:

"The Kaiser came down like a wolf on the fold,
And his Uhlans were slaughtering the young and the old;

But they met Tommy Atkins, and got quite a check,
And now they are getting it right in the neck!"

"Hooray!" said Peter. "Don't read any more. That verse is enough to show how ripping it is. But, I say, I looked in to tell you fellows I wanted you. You can put that rot aside for a bit."

"This what?" demanded five indignant voices together.

"Ahem! That valuable literary work. Look here, I want you," said Peter. "There's a meeting going on in the box-room."

"Blow the meeting!"

"Bunter is in funds again. It must be really true about his pater having got hold of some money—somebody's money."

"Blow Bunter!"

"Is it a feed?" asked Bob Cherry, remembering that it was getting near tea-time.

"No; it's a smoking-bee," said Peter Todd.

"Well, you thumping ass, do you think we want to come to a smoking-bee?" demanded Wharton indignantly.

"I want you to come with me. Bunter's standing the cigarettes, and he's got Skinner and Snoop and Stott, and one or two more. I want you fellows to come with me."

The Famous Five glared at Peter Todd. The news that the egregious Bunter was standing a smoking-bee in the box-room disgusted them; but that Peter Todd, of all people, should come and ask them to the party—that was a little too much. With one accord they left their editorial labours and rose to their feet. With one accord they rushed towards Peter Todd.

"Come on!" said Todd. "They're all there, and—Hallo! Wharrer you at? Leggo! You thumping asses, what the thunder—Ow?"

Peter Todd was yanked into the study, and he descended on the floor with a concussion that made the table jump. His roar could have been heard at the end of the passage.

"Ow! Yow! Wharrer—Ow! Leggo! My hat, Ull——"

"Bump him!" said Wharton. "We'll teach the silly ass to come and ask us to a smoking-party!"

"I didn't—I wasn't—Yoooooop!"

Bump!

"Give him another!"

"The anotherfulness is terrific!" chirruped Hurree

Singh. "Bump the esteemed bounder until he is black and blueful!"

"I tell you, I meant—— I was going to say—— Yowwwwwww!"

Bump!

"Hold him while I get the ink!" panted Bob Cherry.

"Stoppit!" shrieked Peter Todd. "You silly idiots! Don't I keep on saying—— Yaroooh!"

Bump!

"Buck up with that ink!"

"I tell you I wasn't—I didn't—I never—— Oh, crumbs! Let a chap speak, you silly asses!" roared Peter. "I wanted you to come with me to—— Yah! Oh!"

Bump!

"That'll show you that we don't come to little parties of that sort!" grinned Squiff. "I'm surprised at you, Todd! So you're taking up the ways of the smart set, are you? Give him another for his own good! It's only fair to bump a chap off the road to ruin!"

"You fathead!" shrieked Peter. "I tell you I wasn't—I didn't—I meant—I wanted you to come with me to rag 'em!"

"Oh!"

Four pairs of hands released Peter Todd as he made that explanation, and Bob Cherry withheld the ink just in time. Another second, and Peter Todd would have received all the ink which the editorial labours of the Famous Five had spared.

Peter sat up on the study carpet, gasping. He looked at the grinning chums of the Remove as if he would eat them.

"You frabious idiots!"

"Well, why didn't you explain?" asked Wharton.

"You told us you wanted us to come to a smoking-bee."

"You thumping ass! Ow!"

"If you'd explained——"

"Yow! You wouldn't let me get a word out!" gasped Peter, staggering to his feet. "I've a jolly good mind to pile in and wipe up the whole study! Yow-ow!"

"Well, it was your own fault," said Bob. "You should speak a little plainer. However, as it was a mistake, you needn't have the ink."

"And you can consider that bumping withdrawn," grinned Nugent.

"You silly ass! Yow!"

Peter Todd looked inclined to begin warlike operations on the whole study. The misunderstanding had been very unfortunate—for Peter. But he restrained his feelings.

"Well, are you coming, you silly chumps?" he snapped.

"Oh, we'll come!" said Wharton. "It's interrupting the editorial work, but I suppose it's up to us to make an example of those silly asses! They'll be getting the sack some day for playing the giddy ox. Come on, you chaps!"

"Right-ho!"

And Peter Todd, still growling over his injuries, led the way to the box-room where the smart youths of the Remove were celebrating.

THE SECOND CHAPTER:

Very Smart!

"THIS is something like!"

Billy Bunter made that remark.

The fat junior was seated upon an empty trunk in the upper box-room. There were half a dozen fellows with him. The nuts of the Remove were having what they called a good time. They were all seated on empty boxes, smoking cigarettes—and the cigarettes came from a large packet that belonged to William George Bunter.

One or two of them, it is true, were beginning to feel, and to look, a little queer, but not for worlds would the smart youths have admitted that they weren't enjoying themselves. And they all agreed that it was very handsome of Bunter to stand the smokes.

Billy Bunter had long been known in the Remove—the Lower Fourth Form at Greyfriars—as an impecunious person, who by long practice had developed a really wonderful skill in raising loans. He had always been in a perpetual state of expecting a postal order, and his

chief business seemed to be to get fellows to cash that postal-order in advance. Bunter in funds was quite a new Bunter. Of course, the fellows had refused to believe it at first. They had heard too much about Bunter's rich relations. But, as the proverb declares, money talks. Bunter was in possession of cash, and, as nobody missed any, it was evidently his own. Billy Bunter declared that his father had made immense sums on the Stock Exchange. Certainly there appeared to be an unusual amount of loose cash in the Bunter family. And Harold Skinner had confided to his friends that Bunter was worth chumming up with—at least, until his pater was found out.

It was a new experience for Billy Bunter to be a person of importance, and to have a following. He enjoyed it. He patronised Skinner & Co. in a lofty and lordly way. But Skinner & Co. did not mind, so long as the funds lasted.

"Something like!" agreed Skinner. "Pass the fags, old chap."

"Help yourself," said Bunter, extending the box. "I say, you fellows, this is the real thing, you know. Nothing like being sporting—what?"

"Hear, hear!" said the little party.

"That beast Todd is down on it," went on Bunter. "The rotter took some of my fags away and shoved 'em in the fire!"

"Awful cad!" said Stott.

"But I'm jolly well going to do as I like—what? When a fellow's got plenty of money, why shouldn't he have a good time?" said Bunter. "That's what I want to know. And I've got lots of tin. My pater's been making a pile."

"The rise in the price of beer, I suppose," remarked Skinner. "Jolly good thing to be keeping a public-house in these days."

"Why, you rotter, Skinner, you know my pater's on the Stock Exchange!" roared Bunter.

"Hallo, here come some more of 'em!" remarked Snoop, as the box-room door opened. "Why—what—I didn't know you'd asked those chaps, Bunt."

The smokers looked in surprise at Peter Todd as he came in, followed by the Famous Five. Bunter blinked at them through his big glasses a little uneasily. He had not ventured to ask Harry Wharton & Co. to his little party; he knew only too well how such an invitation would be received.

"I—I say, you fellows, you can come in," he stammered.

"Thanks, we will," said Bob Cherry. "Nice little party—what?"

"Yes; you can join us if you like. Plenty of fags," said Bunter. "Squat down somewhere and make yourselves at home."

"Oh, we'll make ourselves at home!" said Squiff. "Don't have any doubts about that. Having a good time?"

"Ripping!" said Skinner defiantly.

"You'd look ripping if a prefect happened to drop in on you, you silly chumps!" said Harry Wharton.

"I suppose you're not going to sneak!" sneered Snoop.

"Not at all. We're going to constitute ourselves into prefects, for this occasion only," explained Wharton.

"Look here—"

"First of all we're going to chuck these cigarettes away," said Wharton, seizing the box. "We're going to stamp on 'em—like that!"

"Let my cigarettes alone!" yelled Bunter.

"Mind your own business!" yelled Skinner furiously.

"Bless your little hearts, we're making this our business!" said Peter Todd, as he ground the cigarettes under his boots. "Got any more?"

"You—you beast!" howled Bunter.

"Any more cigarettes?" roared Peter.

"Go and eat coke!"

Snoop made a strategic movement towards the door. He guessed that there was something more to follow. He was right, but there was no escape for him. Peter Todd shouldered him back, and he rolled on the floor. Then Peter produced a large slipper from under his jacket.

"One at a time," he said, dragging a trunk before the door to bar the exit. "Chuck 'em across this trunk one at a time!"

"Hear, hear!"

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"Rush 'em!" yelled Skinner desperately. He made a rush for the door, and the rest of the little party followed him. For a few moments there was a wild and whirling combat in the box-room. But the Smart Set of the Remove were no match for such redoubtable fighting men as the Famous Five and Peter Todd. They were knocked right and left, and in a couple of minutes they were strewn on the floor, among the empty boxes, nursing their noses and their eyes, and groaning dismally.

"Come on!" said Peter Todd invitingly. "You're not finished yet surely? The bold blades ain't going to be knocked out in one round!"

"Ow! Ow! Ow! Ow!" mumbled the bold blades disconsolately.

"Well, if you're finished this is where the slippering starts. Bunter first."

"Leggo!" howled Bunter. "Oh, you beasts! Look here— Yow-ow! I tell you— Oh!" Billy Bunter was plumped down across the trunk, face downstairs, and his fat person was nicely placed for the slippering. Peter Todd commenced operations with the slipper. The yells of the unfortunate blade rang through the box-room.

"Only twenty!" said Wharton. "That will do for a start."

"Yow-ow-ow-ow! I—I say, you fellows, I won't smoke any more! I—I don't like it, really, you know! Oh, crumbs! Beasts! Yow-ow!"

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Now kick him out!"

Bunter was kicked out, and he rolled away, yelling.

"Skinner next!"

"Look here," yelled Skinner ferociously, "if you think I'm going to stand that— Leggo! Why, you cheeky rotters, who are you? I tell you— Yah! Oh!"

Skinner was plumped down across the trunk, and the slipper started again. Twenty muscular whacks elicited twenty wild yells from Skinner. Then he was bundled out after Bunter.

"Your turn, Stott!"

Stott made a wild rush for the door. Half a dozen hands seized him, and he came down with a bump across the trunk. Then whack, whack, whack!

The execution proceeded apace. When the last of the Smart Set had been kicked out, whooping, Peter Todd was a little out of breath, and his right arm was beginning to ache.

"I don't think there'll be any more little parties here in a hurry!" gasped Peter. "Ha, ha! Not likely!"

"Those young asses ought to feel grateful to us; we may be saving them from the sack, you know!"

"A stitch in time is a weed that grows apace, as your English proverb says," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Famous Five returned to their editorial labours in No. 1 Study, feeling that they had deserved well of their country in general, and of the Blades of the Remove in particular. But as Bob Cherry remarked, it was no good expecting any gratitude.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Going Strong!

"O H, crumbs!"

"Oh, dear!"

"The beasts!"

"Cheeky rotters! Ow!"

Bunter & Co. had foregathered in the wood-shed. They were feeling hurt. Their indignation was at boiling-point. If a master or a prefect had found them smoking in the box-room they would have expected to be caned as a matter of course. But for fellows in their own Form to take it upon themselves to cure them of their bad habits, that, as Skinner said, was the limit. And to show that they didn't care twopence for Harry Wharton & Co., the much-injured blades had gathered in the wood-shed, provided with another box of cigarettes from Bunter's supply. Billy Bunter was really going strong with his new riches.

"The rotters!" said Bunter, wincing as he sat down on the bench in the wood-shed. Sitting down was a little painful at present. "The cheeky cads! What's it got to do with them, anyway?"

"Meddling beasts!" groaned Skinner. "I'd have given that cad Wharton a licking, only—only—Ahem!"

"Have another smoke," said Bunter, scratching a vesta, and lighting a fresh cigarette. "We're jolly well going to do as we like. They won't find us here—I mean, I defy them to interfere with us!"

The Owl of the Remove puffed at the cigarette, and threw the lighted match away. He was too short-sighted to note that he had thrown it into a heap of shavings, which began to smoulder. The smart juniors all "lighted up," not that they felt in the least inclined to smoke, but they felt that it was a proof of independence, and a sign that they didn't care a button for the Famous Five.

The wood-shed was soon hazy with smoke. Skinner began to sniff.

"I say, that smells like something burning," he remarked. "It's those shavings. Some ass has dropped a match into them!"

Billy Bunter blinked round at the heap of shavings behind him, and jumped off the bench in alarm.

"M-my hat! They're alight! Stamp 'em out, you fellows!"

There was a sudden rush of flame from the heap of shavings. Skinner & Co. promptly retreated to the doorway. That flare looked a little too dangerous to stamp out. They preferred to give it a wide berth.

"Hook it!" muttered Snoop uneasily. "It'll be seen, and we shall get into a frightful row!"

"The shed'll catch!" stammered Stott.

"I—I say, you fellows, let me pass!" gasped Bunter. "Lemme pass, you beasts! Lemme—"

Billy Bunter rolled out into the open air. The smoke was thick in the shed now, and the flames were licking up the wooden wall. Skinner & Co., seriously alarmed now, followed Bunter quickly, and Skinner closed the door after him.

"We—we can't put it out now," he muttered, with a scared look. "Better cut off, and—and don't say a word. We might get sacked for this!"

"Mum's the word!" stuttered Snoop. "For goodness' sake clear, before anybody sees it!"

Billy Bunter was already rolling off as fast as his fat little legs could carry him. Skinner & Co. scattered in various directions. Prompt action might have got the fire under, but the scared young rascals did not want to identify themselves with the outbreak. They proceeded to put the greatest distance possible between themselves and the wood-shed.

It was Coker of the Fifth who made the discovery first. Coker of the Fifth was strolling in the Close with Potter and Greene, his study-mates. Coker was laying down the law on the subject of the forthcoming cricket season. Potter and Greene were trying to head him off towards the tuckshop. Coker had had a whacking remittance from Aunt Judy that afternoon, and so his views on cricket were listened to with unaccustomed respect. But Potter and Greene did not see why he couldn't lay down the law just as well over the tea-table in the study, as stalking about the Close.

"I've stood a lot during the footer season," Coker of the Fifth was saying darkly. "But there's going to be a change when cricket comes on. If Wingate doesn't put me into the first eleven for the cricket, there will be trouble. What do you think, Potter?"

"I think it's nearly half-past five," said Potter.

"About the cricket, I mean, fathead!"

"Oh, the cricket! We ain't playing cricket yet, Coker. But I tell you what—we'll have a good talk over it, over tea."

And Potter tried to edge Coker towards the tuckshop again. But Coker was too interested in that important subject of cricket to understand Potter's hint. With his hands in his pockets, Coker swung round and started off again, and his reluctant chums walked with him.

"You see," said Coker, "it isn't as if Wingate could find a better player anywhere, is it? You chaps know how I play footer."

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"I know I'm hungry," mumbled Potter.

"And I'm really better as a cricketer than as a footballer, if possible. Look here, I want you chaps to back me up."

"Nearly a quarter to six," said Greene.

"I want the whole Fifth Form to back up my claims, and simply make Wingate do the right thing, when the cricket comes on," said Coker. Then Coker, at last, dropped the subject and sniffed. "Hallo! What's that burning?"

"What about tea?" said Potter.

"There's something burning."

"Only Gosling burning some rubbish, most likely. I tell you what, Coker, I'm jolly hungry," said Potter; "and we've been stalking up and down here for half an hour."

"Well, we've had a pleasant chat," said Coker.

"Yes—oh, yes! Still—"

"Let's see what's burning," said Coker, with another sniff. "Blessed if I don't think there's something on fire! Look at that smoke!"

A wisp of grey smoke came out on the breeze from behind the School House. Certainly there was a fire somewhere. Potter and Greene groaned in spirit. They weren't interested in the smell of burning; they wanted their tea. But here was Coker starting off on a new tack.

Coker strode round the School House, and Potter and Greene followed him. They didn't want to part with Coker till they had guided him into the tuckshop. After that, he could have gone to the North Pole if he had liked. But even Potter and Greene forgot about tea as they came round the buildings and caught sight of the wood-shed.

"It's on fire!" ejaculated Potter.

There was no doubt about that. Flames were bursting from the window of the shed, and smoke pouring out of it on all sides. The faggots stacked up inside were burning away merrily, with a loud crackling. The three Fifth-Formers stared at it aghast.

"My only hat!" said Coker. "What on earth's caused that? Gosling must have been awfully careless."

"Better call him," said Grene. "We can't do anything."

"Bosh!" said Coker. "We've got to do something. The fire may catch the next shed, and the stables, if it isn't got under. Buzz off, and tell Gosling to get out the fire-hose, and give the alarm. I'll start on it with a bucket."

Potter and Greene rushed off to give the alarm. They were not specially keen to distinguish themselves as amateur firemen. But Coker was an energetic chap. He started making himself useful. There was a tap in the yard at a short distance, and a bucket under it. Coker promptly turned the water on, and filled the bucket, and rushed it across to the burning shed. A volume of smoke caught him in the face, and blinded him, and he staggered and gasped and spluttered, and most of the water swamped down his trousers.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Coker.

"Fire! Fire!" Potter and Greene were yelling.

And the cry was taken up in all quarters.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Fire!

"FIRE!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry, laying down his pen. He had not yet found a rhyme for "demoniac," when that shout came ringing in through the open window of No. 1 Study. "What's the row now?"

"Fire!"

"Some ass larking," said Nugent. "Look here, my war story's running a bit long."

"Cut it short, then," said Bob.

"I don't want to spoil the effect. I was wondering whether you'd mind having your poem left out of this number, to make room for an extra chapter."

"Why, you silly ass—"

"We've got a lot of poetry, anyway," said Nugent.



Snoop made a wild rush at the window to close it, but a stream of hissing water under the chin sent him staggering away. "Oh! Oh! Ow! Beast! Yow-ow! Stoppl! Oh, crumbs!" (See Chapter 11.)

"Inky's doing a blank verse ode, or something, you know. Suppose—"

"I'm not going to suppose that my poem's left out," said Bob warmly. "I've finished it excepting for a rhyme for demoniac."

"Then Inky will have to cut his blank verse short."

"Impossible, my esteemed chum," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The blanky verse is going strong, and is almost as good as Poet Shakespeare. Let me read you recitefully the startfulness of the poem:

"Britannia is rulefully the pride of the ocean,
Her whacking great Fleet is monarch of all it surveys,
It bottles up Germans who sneakfully remain in hiding,
But when the Kaiser's rotten fleet does come out,
The chopper will come down neckfully!"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh read out those lines with just pride. His chums gazed at his speechlessly.

"Is—is that blank verse?" gasped Bob Cherry.

"The blankfulness is terrific, my esteemed chum."

"More blankfulness than verse, I should say," gurgled Squiff. "How do you do these things, Inky?"

"In the East we are poetic naturefully," explained THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 370.

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"BUNTER'S BANKNOTES!"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Listen to these blanky lines on our great King:

"King-Emperor George, lord of a thousand spears,
Mighty in battle, conquering on sea and land,
From India's coral strand three hundred and forty
million faithful subjects
Stretch out their dusky hands in loyalful allegiance.
When Gurkhas and Sikhs once get into Germany,
The lickfulness of the ludicrous Kaiser will be terrific!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hurree Singh looked a little puzzled.

"It is not a comic poem, my esteemed chums," he said mildly.

"My mistake," grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fire!" came in a roar from the quadrangle.

The door of No. 1 Study was thrown open, and Peter Todd and Vernon-Smith looked in.

"Come on, you duffers! There's a fire!"

And they rushed on.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry looked out of the study window. A crowd of fellows were rushing round

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the School House to the scene of the fire. "It's the genuine article, you chaps. Come on!"

Once more editorial labours were abandoned. The Famous Five hurried out of the study, and joined the crowd in the Close. Nearly all Greyfriars was out of doors now, rushing round to the scene of action. The wood-shed was a mass of flames when Harry Wharton & Co. arrived. A thick volume of smoke was rolling from it, and spreading over the old elms. A person who looked like a very black negro was filling a bucket at the tap. It was Coker of the Fifth. He was blackened from head to foot, but he was still working away manfully.

Potter and Greene had returned with the news that Gosling had gone to the station, and that the hose was locked up.

"My hat!" exclaimed Wharton. "That's got to be got under, or it will spread. Pile in, you chaps! Get all the buckets you can—there's some in the stables—pails or anything. Lively!"

The Removites piled in at once. In a few minutes buckets and pails and cans were collected from all quarters, and Harry Wharton & Co. formed themselves in a line from the tap to the wood-shed, filling the pails and passing them from one to another down the line. The water was splashed continuously into the burning shed. Harry Wharton's quick device was soon effective. A constant stream of water soon began to subdue the flames.

Coker of the Fifth retreated from the smoke to recover his breath, but he was soon back again. The intervention of a crowd of juniors exasperated Coker. Wharton was nearest the fire, and he received the buckets in turn and swamped the contents into the flaming wood-shed. Coker caught him by the shoulder.

"Leave that to me, kid. Hand over that bucket."

"Bow-wow! Don't bother."

"Look here, I'm putting this fire out!" roared Coker.

"Get out, Coker!" yelled the juniors.

"Gimme that water, you cheeky fag!" shouted Coker, shaking the captain of the Remove by the shoulder.

"Here you are!" said Wharton promptly. And he gave Coker the contents of the bucket, and Coker uttered a gasping yell.

"Grooooooh!"

The Fifth-Former staggered back, swamped from head to foot. Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, arrived on the scene just as Coker was about to take vengeance.

Most of the masters were out that afternoon, and Mr. Quelch had only just returned. The shouts of "Fire!" and the smell of smoke had brought him at once to the scene.

"That's right, my boys!" exclaimed the Remove-master approvingly, as he saw the Removites hard at work. "Coker, do not get in Wharton's way."

"The—the—the young villain!" stuttered Coker.

"Please get out of the way, Coker. You seem to have had a great deal of water spilled over you already," said Mr. Quelch, and Coker, with feelings too deep for words, retreated.

More fellows and more buckets joined the chain from the tap to the burning shed, and the last flames spluttered out, only a dense cloud of smoke rising from the building.

The juniors swamped in water till the last spark was extinguished.

"That will do, my boys," said Mr. Quelch. "You have acted very promptly and very sensibly. Ahem! You look a little—a little untidy. What was the cause of this outbreak? Does anyone know how the shed came to be on fire?"

"I don't, sir," said Wharton. "We heard 'em yelling 'Fire!' and came out."

"It must be inquired into," said Mr. Quelch, with a frown. "It is extraordinary. Someone must have dropped a match carelessly. You had better—ahem!—go and make yourselves a little more tidy, my boys. I thank you for what you have done!"

The amateur firemen needed tidying a little. They were splashed with water, and smothered with smoke and blacks and ashes. They returned to the School House breathless and smoky and dirty, but extremely well satisfied with themselves.

Mr. Quelch proceeded to make an inquiry into the cause of the fire. But he was not able to get any in-

formation. Nobody knew anything about it, and those who displayed the blindest ignorance on the subject were Bunter, Skinner, & Co.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Squiff's Idea!

SQUIFF came into No. 1 Study to tea. The Australian junior, the latest member of the celebrated and select circle known as the Famous Five, was wearing a thoughtful look.

The juniors had cleaned themselves after their novel experience as firemen, and were looking newly swept and garnished, so to speak. They gathered round the festive board in No. 1 Study with keen appetites.

The outbreak of fire in the wood-shed had caused considerable excitement, and was the one topic of the school. The damage done had been very considerable, and somebody had to pay for it. But as the cause could not be discovered, the loss would fall on the school, much to the satisfaction of Skinner & Co.

If their delinquency had been discovered, the damage would have been assigned to them, to say nothing of the flogging they would have received in addition.

Harry Wharton & Co. were debating the subject as they had tea, but Sampson Quincy Ifley Field was silent. He appeared to be in a brown study.

"Jolly queer how the fire broke out," Wharton remarked. "Somebody must have started it; some silly idiot dropping a match. I remember, there was a pile of shavings in the shed near the faggots."

"What the dooce would anybody want to be striking matches there for in the daytime?" said Frank Nugent.

"Blessed if I know! Must have been that, though."

Bob Cherry snorted.

"I'll bet you I've got it! Some silly ass has been smoking there!"

"My hat!"

"The giddy blades," said Nugent, with a nod. "Ten to one it's that! They must have gone there to smoke after we routed them out of the box-room. My word, there would be a row if the Head knew!"

Harry Wharton frowned.

"If that's so, the cads are keeping it dark," he said. "They ought to be made to pay for the damage—twenty pounds, at least. Of course, we can't say anything. What do you think, Squiff?"

"Eh?"

"Do you think it was Bunter's crowd?"

Sampson Quincy Ifley Field seemed to wake up.

"Eh? I've been thinking, you chaps. That fire was in the wood-shed. Suppose it had been in the school buildings?"

"Might have been, if we hadn't kicked those duffers out of the box-room," said Wharton.

"It's occurred to me—" said Squiff.

"You've been looking like a boiled owl for the last ten minutes," remarked Bob Cherry. "What have you got in your mighty brain now?"

"A wheeze, my son!" said Squiff. "I've been thinking it out, and it will work. And it would be one up for the Remove. Look here, this school isn't properly guarded against fire!"

"Oh, I don't know! There's the hydrant and the hose and the fire-buckets," said Wharton. "We had a fire here once, but nobody was hurt."

"You can't take too many precautions in case of fire," said Squiff.

"Well, I suppose not. What are you driving at?"

"What this school wants is a fire-brigade!"

"A which?"

"A fire-brigade," said Squiff coolly. "That's the idea. Perhaps a real fire will come along some day, and then the Remove will come out top dogs—see? The Remove Volunteer Fire Brigade—what?"

"My hat!"

"By Jove, that's a ripping idea!" said Bob Cherry. "I wonder I didn't think of that. Lots of fun in it, too. We can have fire-drill, and swamp people with water—"

"Hear, hear!"

"And practise sliding down the chutes," said Bob.

"No end of a lark. Fancy sending Bunter rolling down a canvas chute!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And if a real fire comes along, there you are," said Bob. "It's a ripping idea!"

"What about the money?" said Nugent doubtfully. "Those things cost money, you know."

"Well, the Head ought to be willing to stand that, as we're going to look after his blessed school," said Bob.

"Yes, I think I can see the Head laying out quids, so that we can swamp people with water and send Bunter rolling down a chute," grinned Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, of course, we shouldn't put it quite like that to the Head."

"We've got to keep it dark," said Squiff. "Can't tackle the Head. If the powers that be took up the idea they'd plant it on the seniors. Our idea would simply be bagged, but they wouldn't leave the juniors to manage it."

"Ahem! I suppose not," assented Bob, after some thought. "I—I suppose the Head would think that the Sixth could do it better."

"Of course he would; you know these blessed head-masters," said Squiff disparagingly. "The Sixth Form may be the giddy Palladium of the school, but my idea is that the Remove can run a fire-brigade better than the Sixth."

"Hear, hear!"

The Co. assented to that proposition without a dissentient voice. They had not the slightest doubt on that subject.

"But when we've got all the things, and we've formed a regular fire-brigade, they can't take it out of our hands," said Squiff. "Only all the appurtenances have got to be our own property. After we once get going they can imitate us if they like—that will be an unsolicited testimonial for the Remove."

"Hear, hear!"

"So we've got to keep it dark, until we're ready to spring the wheeze on an astonished school," chuckled Squiff.

"But what about the money?"

"We can raise that ourselves."

"Phew!"

"We'll take in all the fellows we can trust, and have a whip-round," said Squiff. "We can all stand something, and we can write to our people for subscriptions. For a noble object like that, even the skinniest pater would shell out something. My uncle's in London now, and I can touch him for a couple of quid, for a thing like that. You can tackle your uncle, Wharton. You other chaps can go for your paters. Inky can draw lakhs and lakhs of rupees from the India Office——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And Smithy and Mauleverer have got lots of tin. We can manage it among ourselves," said Squiff. "And think what a thumping surprise for Greyfriars, when we come out with a brand new fire-brigade, in full working order. Perhaps you'd better make me fire-captain."

"Oh, draw it mild!"

"Well, somebody will have to be captain, you know, and it's best to pick out the chap who's fittest for the job," said Squiff modestly. "I hope you fellows ain't going to raise difficulties at the start."

"We'll elect the captain," said Nugent.

"Good! That's all right, so long as you vote for me!" agreed Squiff. "Buck up with your tea, and we'll call a meeting of all the fellows we can trust with the giddy secret!"

"What about the editorial business?"

"Blow that!" said Squiff. "The blessed War Number can wait! The war won't be over for years yet, and if it is, we can bring out a Peace Number instead. Inky can change his poem into a peace poem——"

"My esteemed chum——"

"Well, I couldn't!" said Bob warmly. "My poem is finished, excepting for a rhyme for demoniac. The only blessed word I can get is ammoniac, and that's no good in a war poem."

"But it would come all right in a peace poem," suggested Squiff. "F'rinstance:

"The Huns, whose harmful batteries did roar,
O'er Belgium's plains with cruelty demoniac,
Have now gone home, and now they make instead
Harmless electric batteries with sal ammoniac!"

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"BUNTER'S BANKNOTES!"

"You silly ass!" roared Bob Cherry, while the rest of the Co. chuckled. "I'm jolly well going to have my war poem in a war number, and——"

"Shush, my infant!" said Squiff, soothingly. "Suppose Greyfriars were burnt to the ground while you're writing war poems. Talk about doddering while Rome's burning. I put it to the meeting, that the war number is postponed, and that the Remove Fire Brigade is constituted forthwith."

"Hear, hear!"

"Well, I agree to that," said Bob. "I dare say it will take me some time to find a good rhyme for demoniac. Look here, I'll read it out, and you fellows can make suggestions."

"Then we'll call a meeting at once," said Squiff, apparently growing deaf all of a sudden. "I'll bring in the fellows."

"Right-ho!"

The Co. proceeded to drag the table into a corner, to make room for the meeting. Squiff soon collected the juniors. Vernon-Smith, and Peter Todd, and Tom Dutton were the first to arrive. Then came Mark Linley, and Penfold, and Fisher T. Fish, and Bulstrode, and Bolsover major, and Tom Brown, and Hazeldene, and Ogilvy, and Micky Desmond, and Treluce, and half a dozen more. No. 1 Study was soon crowded. Squiff had told the Removites that a meeting was being held with an important object, but he had not whispered a word so far of the fire-brigade. Words on that subject were only to be whispered within closed doors. That valuable secret was to be kept until the Remove Fire Brigade was ready to burst upon an astonished and admiring Greyfriars in all its glory. Squiff came back with Wun Lung, the Chinese, the last to arrive. Billy Bunter followed him to the door of the study. Billy Bunter had a suspicion that it was a feed, as he saw the meeting collecting.

But the great secret could not be confided to a chatter-box like Bunter. Squiff helped him out with his boot, and closed the door. But the door opened again, and Bunter's fat face and big glasses glimmered in.

"I say, you fellows, I'm coming in, you know!"

"Get out!" roared Squiff. "It isn't a feed, you—you octopus."

"Oh, really, Squiff. What are all you fellows here for?"

"We're going to inquire into the cause of the fire in the wood-shed," said Bob Cherry. "If you know anything about it, Bunter——"

"Oh! Not at all! Certainly not! I don't want to come to your silly old meeting!" And Billy Bunter promptly rolled away.

Squiff chuckled and locked the door. Then he turned to the curious and somewhat impatient meeting.

"Now we're ready for business."

"What the dickens is it all about?" demanded Bolsover major.

"That's what we're going to explain," said Bob Cherry, now——

"Order!" said Squiff.

"Eh? What?"

"I'm going to explain, as captain——"

"Now, look here, fathead——"

"Look here, ass——"

"I'm jolly well not going to stay here and listen to you two duffers slanging one another," roared Bolsover major. "I'm off!"

"Order!"

Bob Cherry gracefully yielded the point, and Squiff jumped on a chair to address the meeting.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Remove Brigade!

"GENTLEMEN——"

"Hip-pip!" said Nugent.

"Gentlemen——"

"Oh, cut it short," said Bolsover major. "Cut the cackle and get to the hosses."

"Gentlemen, and Bolsover major, this meeting is called——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you silly ass!" exclaimed Bolsover major.

"I—"

"Order! Shut up!"

"Gentlemen, this meeting is called to propound——"

"Good word!" said Vernon-Smith encouragingly.

"To propound a new wheeze, which will cover the Remove with distinction, glory, and credit. Gentlemen are aware that there has been a fire in the wood-shed——"

"If you've fetched us hyer to tell us that," remarked Fisher T. Fish, "I guess we know all about it already, as we helped to put it out."

"We'll help to put you out if you don't shut up. Gentlemen——"

"My only hat!" said Bolsover major, in an exasperated tone, "he's beginning again."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gentlemen!" roared Squiff, "I tell you this meeting has been called——"

"Sure, we've had that already. Squiff darling," remarked Micky Desmond. "Tell us something we don't know intirely."

"Hear, hear!"

"This meeting has been called for a very important object. Nothing less than the formation, organisation, and equipment of the Remove Fire Brigade!"

"My hat! The what?"

There was a buzz of astonishment. Squiff had succeeded in impressing his audience. There was only one fellow who did not join in the surprised buzz. That was Tom Dutton. Dutton was deaf, and he had not heard a word yet.

"The Remove Fire Brigade," said Squiff. "This new institution has not yet been instituted——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But this meeting is called to institute the institution. This is also a council of war, and a committee of ways and means. All gentlemen who are willing to become members of the Greyfriars Remove Volunteer Fire Brigade—known for short as the G.R.V.F.B.——"

"Is that short?" asked Bolsover major.

"Fathead! All gentlemen who are willing to become members can enlist on the spot, and join the committee of ways and means. All others can step out, and go and eat coke; but it is understood that the secret is to be kept. If the Fourth knew about this, they'd bone the idea, and start a rival brigade before we could get going. Not a word outside this study. Temple, Dabney & Co., and everybody, will be kept in the dark. Nothing will be known about the Remove Fire Brigade till all is ready, and it will dawn upon the public complete—like Pallas springing armed from the head of Jove!"

"Bravo!" chorussed the juniors, quite overcome by this classical allusion.

"I guess it's a good wheeze," said Fisher T. Fish. "I don't know who the Palliasse is you're talking about——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pallas, you fathead, not Palliasse!" said Squiff witheringly.

"I guess I've never heard of the person. But it's a good stunt," said Fisher T. Fish. "I reckon it's a first-class stunt."

"A first-class what?" ejaculated Bob Cherry. Fisher T. Fish was always surprising his Form-fellows with some new and weird variety of the American language.

"Stunt," said Fish. "If you don't know what a stunt is, I guess I don't know what you go to school for. It's a good stunt, and it will put the lid on the Fourth. But what you want is a good captain—and I don't mind offering my services."

"You needn't mind offering them, any more than we shall mind declining them," said Squiff. "That point's settled already. As originator of the idea, I am going to be fire captain."

"Rats!" said Bolsover major. "Look at me——"

"Not unless you put on a mask, or a fire-screen, or something."

"Why, you——"

"Order!"

"The captaincy goes by vote," said Harry Wharton laughing. "The question is, are you fellows all willing to become members of the brigade, and help?"

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"Begad! It will be rather a fag," said Lord Mauleverer.

"It will be one in the eye for the Fourth," said Squiff, "and one in the eye for Coker. Coker will be ready to kick himself when he hears of it. If he had brains enough to think of it, he would be on it like a bird. Now, hands up in favour of the fire-brigade."

Every fellow but one put his hand up. Tom Dutton's hand remained down. He was looking inquiringly at Squiff. The suggestion of a junior fire-brigade was heartily received. Perhaps the fact that it would be "one in the eye" for the Fourth had something to do with the general enthusiasm, as much perhaps as a noble desire to fight the flames and quench conflagrations.

"Well, Dutton?" demanded Squiff, as the deaf junior made no sign, "why don't you put your paw up? Do you want to be left out?"

"Eh?"

"Are you in favour of joining the fire-brigade?"

Tom Dutton looked round him.

"Blessed if I can see it," he said.

"Eh? See what?"

"The marmalade."

"Oh, my hat! Not marmalade, you ass, fire-brigade!" roared Squiff. "Give him an ear-trumpet, somebody, or fetch me a megaphone. Yell it at him, Todd."

"We're making up a fire-brigade," Todd howled to his deaf chum. "We want you to be a member."

"Remember what?"

"Member!" shrieked Todd. "Member of the Remove Fire Brigade. It's a wheeze."

"Eh? What about my knees?"

"Oh, crumbs!" groaned Peter.

"Leave him out!" snorted Bolsover major. "If there was a fire, and we waited till we could make him hear about it, the whole school might be burnt down."

"Can't leave out a chap in my study," said Peter Todd. "I'll try again. I say, Tommy, you're going to be a member of the Remove Fire Brigade."

"Look here, if you're pulling my leg, you can cheese it," said Dutton. "I've already said I can't see any marmalade."

"You don't understand!" shrieked Peter. "I didn't say anything of the sort."

"Bought? Where is it then?"

"Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at," said Tom. "If the marmalade's been bought, where is it? What's the joke?"

"You are!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Eh?"

"Look here!" roared Peter, gathering his strength for a tremendous effort.

But Tom Dutton interrupted him.

"Don't shout at me! I'm not deaf."

"Oh, my hat!"

"What's this meeting about?" asked Dutton. "You haven't told me that yet."

"I've been trying to tell you all along."

"Then I'm not going to stop here and hear it," said Dutton. "Squiff can't sing for toffee, and I don't want to hear his song. Do you mean to say that the silly ass is standing on that chair to sing a song? You can excuse me."

And Tom Dutton promptly retired from the study.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll explain it to him afterwards," gasped Peter Todd. "I'll put it in writing for him. It's all right; he's going to be a member. No. 7 Study can't be left out, or the whole thing will be a muck-up. Now, about electing a fire-captain. I put it to you that you'd better vote for me."

"Rats!"

"The ratfulness is terrific!"

"Vote for captain next," said Harry Wharton.

The voting was something of a deadlock, as every fellow present voted for himself. But Harry Wharton, with really noble self-sacrifice, re-cast his vote in favour of Squiff. That settled it, and the Australian junior was duly elected fire-captain of the Greyfriars Remove Volunteer Fire Brigade.



"Gimme that water, you cheeky fag!" shouted Coker, shaking the captain of the Remove by the shoulder. "Here you are!" said Wharton promptly. And he gave Coker the contents of the bucket, and Coker uttered a gasping yell. (See Chapter 4.)

"Now we're getting to business," said Squiff approvingly. "The meeting now resolves itself into a committee of ways and means. Funds will be wanted."

"Oh, will they?" said Fisher T. Fish. "Excuse me, I haven't finished my tea."

"Yank that Yankee back!"

"Look hyer!"

"Every member of the fire-brigade subscribes according to his means," said Squiff. "As it is a noble object, fellows with plenty of money will be allowed to make whacking big donations."

"Hear, hear!"

"It's up to you, Fishy," chuckled Bob Cherry. "This is a chance for those millions of dollars you talk about. I kinder guess and reckon that you can write to your popper in Noo York for some dollars—what?"

"I guess I don't think much of your old fire-brigade, anyway," said Fish. "I'm willing to help with my brains in organising it, but I haven't any dollars to waste."

"We'd rather have your dollars than your brains, old chap. I'm afraid the brains wouldn't be much use, in any case."

"What, you jay, I guess——"

"Shut up!" said Squiff. "Fellows who don't want to

contribute can keep their twopence-ha'penny in their trousers-pocket. We've got to raise what we can, and write home to our people for the rest. The committee of ways and means will now proceed to business."

The committee proceeded. Fisher T. Fish was the only member who did not make any contribution. Some of the others made contributions that were not munificent. Micky Desmond, unfortunately, had only three-halfpence, but he generously placed the whole sum at the disposal of the committee. Russell added threepence. Bulstrode slapped down a shilling with quite a princely air. Ogilvy produced fourpence-halfpenny.

Fortunately, other members were better provided with funds. Lord Mauleverer, the millionaire, started with a five-pound note. Vernon-Smith, not to be outdone, added another. Wun Lung and Hurree Singh contributed handsomely, and half-crowns, half-sovereigns, came in from several others.

"Getting on," said Squiff. "Those who can't pony up can write home, and explain to their people what a noble object it is. Some of them will shell out. Meanwhile, we'll go ahead with what we've raised, and start making the purchases in Courtfield to-morrow."

"Hear, hear!"

And the committee broke up, leaving Squiff hard at

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work with pencil and paper, with the assistance of the Famous Five, making out a list of intended purchases. Editorial work was quite forgotten. The war number of "The Greyfriars Herald" was indefinitely postponed, and Bob Cherry gave all his thoughts to the Remove Fire Brigade, and no longer cudgelled his brains for a rhyme to demoniac.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER. A Little Walk for Bunter!

DURING the next few days Harry Wharton & Co. were a little mysterious. The members of the new fire-brigade kept their secret well. But some of them kept it so very carefully that the other fellows soon had a suspicion that there was something "on."

There were mysterious meetings in No. 1 Study, with the door locked, and fellows would get together in twos and threes and consult in whispers, and "dry up" immediately anybody came along.

Temple, Dabney, & Co. of the Fourth soon spotted it, and they were very curious. They suspected that it was something "up against" their noble selves. But it was in vain that they strove to penetrate the mystery. The amateur firemen whispered enough among themselves, but they never whispered in the hearing of Temple, Dabney, & Co.

Billy Bunter was almost frantic with curiosity. Never had his marvellous gift for haunting keyholes come into such prominence. But the juniors were on their guard against Billy Bunter. When he was discovered near a keyhole he was bumped without mercy; and several times it happened that he was bumped on suspicion, but that could not be helped.

As a member of No. 7 Study, Bunter explained to Peter Todd that he had a full right to share the secret whatever it was. To which Peter replied that he could go back to the blades and smoke cigarettes; and, if he didn't like that, he could go to Jericho and eat coke.

"Oh really, Toddy," said Bunter reproachfully, "this isn't the way to treat a pal, you know. Besides, I don't smoke now. I've run out of money—I—I mean I've realised that it's a bad habit. You ought to confide in me."

"Bow-wow!" said Peter.

Squiff happened to look into the study just then.

"I'm off," he announced. "I'm giving the last order to-day. You coming along, Toddy?"

"Right-ho!" said Peter.

"I say, you fellows, what are you going to do?" demanded Bunter.

"You want to know what I'm going to do?" asked Squiff.

"Yes," said Bunter eagerly. "I'll keep it dark, you know. You oughtn't to leave me out of a secret. You know what a reliable chap I am."

"I do—I does!" grinned Squiff. "You wouldn't think of telling Temple, and squeezing a few tarts out of him for it, would you?"

"Certainly not."

"You wouldn't blab it up and down the house?"

"Never."

"You wouldn't chatter it about to everybody who was ass enough to listen to you?"

"Oh, really, Squiff—"

"You promise to keep it dark?"

"Yes, yes."

"On your honour as a Bunter de Bunter?"

"Yes, yes, yes."

"Then come here, and I'll whisper."

Billy Bunter extended a fat ear, and Squiff, sinking his voice cautiously, whispered:

"I'm going to mind my own business! Ta-ta!"

And Squiff walked away with Peter Todd, leaving Billy Bunter snorting, his very spectacles gleaming with wrath.

"Beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter turned in despair to Tom Dutton, who was doing lines at the study table. He knew that Dutton knew the secret.

"I say, Dutton, old man, what's it all about?" asked Bunter persuasively.

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"Eh?"

"What's it all about?" shouted Bunter.

Tom Dutton jumped up.

"Why, you cheeky, fat rotter—"

"Eh—what's the matter?"

"I'll teach you to call me a lout!" roared Dutton.

"I—I didn't—I wasn't— Oh, yow-ow!"

Bunter flew into the passage, and the angry junior slammed the door after him. The Owl of the Remove picked himself up, and shook a fat fist at the study door, but he did not open it again. With all his curiosity, which was almost feverish by this time, he did not feel inclined for another attempt to extract information from Tom Dutton.

"The rotters!" groaned Bunter. "The beasts! I'm jolly well going to know! Might be a whacking big feed they're planning; there isn't anything else to make such a fuss about. And I'm jolly well not going to be left out! Beasts!"

Bunter rolled away after Squiff and Todd. They were making for the gates, and Bunter made after them. He had the really brilliant idea of shadowing them wherever they went, and discovering what was their mysterious business. As they came out of the school gates the two juniors noted Bunter rolling on their track. They halted.

"I say, you fellows, I'll have a little trot with you," said Bunter affably. "Awfully nice afternoon for a walk—what?"

"You're not wanted!" said Squiff bluntly.

"Look here, I'm going to know that rotten secret!" roared Bunter. "If you think you're going to keep me in the dark you're jolly well mistaken! See? And I'm not going to lose sight of you two rotters till— Yow-ow-ow!"

Bunter sat down in the road, and Squiff and Todd walked on. The committee of ways and means had received some remittances during the last few days, and the amateur fire-brigade was well supplied with funds. Squiff, as general manager, was going to give lavish orders in Courtfield, but he did not want Bunter to be a witness of what he was going to do.

But Billy Bunter was not easily shaken off. He scrambled up, and trotted on behind, keeping at a safe distance this time. Squiff looked back, and caught sight of the fat figure ambling down the road, and looked exasperated.

"That fat boulder's still after us!" he growled.

"Never mind!" said Todd, with a chuckle.

"But he'll watch us in Courtfield."

"No hurry to get to Courtfield. Let's take a little walk across country first."

Squiff grinned. The two juniors left the road by a stile, and started by a footpath. A few minutes later Bunter's fat figure came clambering over the stile, and he followed on their track. The footpath was a mile long, and it led to a village some distance from Courtfield. By the time the village was reached Billy Bunter was puffing and blowing. Bunter was not an athlete, and his late indulgence in "smokes" had done anything but improve his wind. A mile walk was quite enough for him—too much, in fact.

"The beasts!" gasped Bunter. "What on earth do they want in Appleford? But I've jolly well run them down!"

But he hadn't. From the village Squiff and Todd started down a lane, which led by a winding course towards Courtfield Common. Another mile, and Billy Bunter was puffing and panting, and bedewed with perspiration. He fanned himself with his cap as he rolled desperately after the two juniors. Squiff and Todd were good walkers, and they were quite fresh. The Owl of the Remove was feeling anything but fresh.

"Ow! Ow!" groaned Bunter. "I e-c-can't keep this up long! Where on earth are the beasts going to?"

The "beasts" struck across the common by a footpath. Bunter knew that footpath. It was a good mile long, and it led to another village. He groaned at the prospect of a mile walk. But having come so far he determined to "stick it out." His curiosity was at fever point. Something of exceptional interest must have taken the two juniors so far from the school. And Bunter meant to know what it was, if he burst a boiler.

By the time they walked into the village of Longley Bunter was aching all over, and ready to fall down. He hoped that he had run them to earth at last. He saw them stop at a little shop, and flattened his fat face against a pane of glass to watch them. But he only saw them indulging in refreshing ginger-beer.

They came out of the shop, and almost brushed Bunter as they passed. The fat junior leaned against the shop and gasped. They did not seem to notice him. They started off again, and Bunter, without time even to refresh himself with a ginger-pop, groaned, and started on the track once more. To his surprise they walked across the common, taking the footpath back to Appleford.

Bunter rolled on their track, but half-way across the common he halted. His fat legs refused to go any further. He sat down in the grass and panted. He had bellows to mend with a vengeance. Squiff and Todd glanced back, and then walked on, chuckling. As soon as they were out of Bunter's sight they left the footpath, taking a short cut to Courtfield. But Bunter sat in the grass for a good half-hour, puffing and blowing, completely "done."

He staggered up at last. He had a two-mile walk between him and Greyfriars, and the prospect made him shudder. How he ever got over that walk he hardly knew. He rolled on disconsolately, stopping every now and then to rest and groan. By the time he reached Greyfriars dusk was closing in, and Gosling had come down to close the gates. The Owl of the Remove was just in time to escape being locked out.

Feeling as if he could scarcely drag one fat leg after another, the fat junior limped on to the School House. He had only one consolation—if the two juniors had gone back to Appleford, and stopped there to do their business, whatever it was, they would miss locking-up, and would get lines. That was his only consolation. And even of that consolation he was deprived as he came into the School House. In the lighted hall a group of juniors were chatting, and Bunter jumped as he saw Squiff and Todd among them. They greeted him with smiles.

"Hallo, got back?" asked Squiff.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter, sinking into the nearest seat.

"Had a nice walk?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"Yow!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There goes the bell for calling-over!" said Bob. "Buck up, Bunter!"

"Oh, crikey!"

Billy Bunter could hardly drag himself into Hall for calling-over, and he had barely breath enough left to answer "adsum" when Mr. Quelch called his name. When Peter Todd came up to the study later he found Billy Bunter stretched in the armchair, with an expression of anguish on his fat face.

"Tired?" asked Todd cheerfully.

"Yow! I'm aching all over!" groaned Bunter.

"What did you take such a long walk for, then?"

"Ow! Where did you and the other beast go?"

"Eh? We went to Courtfield."

Bunter sat bolt upright.

"Courtfield!" he yelled.

"Certainly!"

"Courtfield!" gasped Bunter. "Then—then why did you go miles and miles out of your way?"

"Because there was a fat rotter sneaking after us, and we thought we'd tire him out, and shake him off!" explained Peter.

"Ow! You—you beast!"

Billy Bunter collapsed in the armchair. And Peter Todd, with a cheerful and satisfied smile, sat down to his prep.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Coker, Too!

"COKER, old man!"

"Been robbing a bank?"

Potter and Greene uttered those exclamations simultaneously as they came into the study on Wednesday afternoon. Coker of the Fifth was there, and he was engaged in a most extraordinary occupation. He was sitting at the table, counting banknotes.

Coker of the Fifth usually had plenty of money, and when he was short of that useful article a letter to his kind Aunt Judy generally brought him a fresh supply.

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But never before had his study mates seen him counting a wedge of banknotes. Evidently Horace Coker was in a state of remarkable and unusual wealthiness. And Potter and Greene had never felt so chummy.

"Twenty-four—twenty-five," said Coker, finishing his counting. "That's right."

"Twenty-five banknotes!" gasped Potter.

"Only quid notes," said Coker.

"But—but that's twenty-five quid!" gasped Greene.

"Yes," Coker nodded.

"Well, my hat! I say, Horace, old man, where on earth did you get it?" Potter and Greene generally called Coker Coker. But if ever there was an occasion for calling him Horace, certainly that occasion was the present.

"My Aunt Judy has turned up trumps," said Coker. "She's a jolly good old sort. She stood me the fifteen quid for the football cup, you know. Blessed if I don't believe she'd stand me a motor-car if I asked her."

"She must be fond of you," said Potter.

"She is," said Coker.

Potter was about to remark that there was no accounting for tastes. But the wedge of banknotes restrained him. He remarked instead that it was no wonder.

"Well, I'm a pretty good nephew," said Coker. "Chap robbed her once, and I went after him and got it all back. Then she's got me down in her will, you see, but she knows I'd rather she stuck it out up to a hundred. And I let her come and see me as often as she likes, and I spend some of the vacations at her place. Still, I must say she's uncommonly decent to stand me twenty-five quid in one whack for my fire-brigade."

"Your what?"

"I'm going to let you fellows into the secret now," said Coker. "Shut the door, Greene, old man. I haven't said anything before in case aunty didn't stomp up. But I've got an idea—a really top-hole wheeze."

"It's a half-holiday to-day," Potter remarked casually. "As you happen to be in such tremendous funds, what about having a car out?"

Coker shook his head.

"And a big feed somewhere," suggested Greene.

"No time for feeds now," said Coker. "I tell you this is a top-hole wheeze. You fellows know what I can do when I set my mind to work. I don't want to swank about it, but you know I'm a chap with ideas."

Potter and Greene, with one eye on the wedge of banknotes, agreed that Coker was a chap with ideas. They would have agreed to anything just then. If Coker had said that he was the Prince of Wales, Potter and Greene would not have contradicted him.

"You know there was a fire here the other day—last week," said Coker. "Some kid set the wood-shed on fire somehow. Well, that put an idea into my head."

"There was room for it," murmured Potter.

"Eh? What did you say?"

"I said I'm not surprised, Coker. But what about having a really ripping outing this afternoon?"

"You can come with me to Courtfield if you like."

"Courtfield! What are you going to do there?"

"Give the orders for the things."

"Oh, a feed!" said Potter, brightening up.

Horace Coker snorted.

"Certainly not!"

"What are you going to buy, then?" asked Potter, his face falling again.

"Well, we shall want a lot of hose."

"Hose! Cycling hose, do you mean?"

"Fathead, no! Fire-hose!"

"Fire-hose," said Potter faintly.

"Yes, and canvas chutes."

"C-c-c-canvas chutes?"

"And rope."

"R-r-r-rope!"

"And a lot of other things," said Coker. "You fellows can help me look over the things in the Courtfield Emporium."

"But—but what—what are those things for?" stuttered Potter. "You're not going to open a shop, I suppose?"

"My fire-brigade?"

"Oh, your fire-brigade!" said Potter feebly. "Your—your fire-brigade. Oh!"

"Yes," said Coker, with much satisfaction. "That's the wheeze. That fire the other day was only in the wood-shed. Suppose it had been in the School House, eh? Might all have been burnt to death in our beds."

"I—I don't see how. We don't go to bed in the middle of the afternoon, do we?"

"Might have happened at night, mightn't it?" said Coker witheringly. "Don't be an ass, Potter! My opinion is that sufficient precautions ain't taken here against fire. I pointed that out to my aunt Judy, and she agreed with me at once that it was a ripping idea to start a Fifth-Form Fire Brigade."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Astonishes you a bit—what?" said Coker. "Tain't often you meet a chap who thinks of things like that, is it? Well, I'm a chap who thinks of things. I don't want to boast, but where would you find a chap to think of a thing like that, excepting in this study?"

Potter was on the point of suggesting Colney Hatch, but he refrained in time.

"I'm going to show 'em," said Coker, apparently alluding to Greyfriars and the universe generally. "I'm going to show 'em that when a thing's got to be done, and done well, Horace Coker is the man for it. You chaps are going to help me. We'll get the rest of the Fifth in it. The Sixth are not going to be allowed to meddle. Those cheeky prefects would want to run the whole thing. Of course, the whole matter's in my hands from start to finish. I'm rather of a managing turn, you know."

"B-b-but what are we going to do?"

"Haven't I told you? Start a fire-brigade, and go in for fire-drill, and so on. It's a ripping wheeze. When a fire happens, we turn out, quench the flames, and perhaps save the Head's life," said Coker. "Suppose his house caught fire? He's rather a stiff old johnny, and mightn't get out. Then we rush to the rescue, through fire and flames——"

"Oh, do we?" said Potter.

"Yes, we do!" roared Coker. "At least, I do. I don't suppose you would be much good. You can come along with me to order the things now," went on Coker. "As captain of the brigade, I stand the whole expense. We'll go in for regular drills on half-holidays, and get into awfully good form, all ready to tackle a fire as soon as it breaks out."

"Suppose it doesn't break out?"

"Well, that would be a disappointment, of course. Still, very likely there will be a fire," said Coker. "Anyway, it's a good idea to be prepared. That old ass Gosling had the fire-hose locked up the other day, and had gone out with the key. Nice state of affairs. Might all have been burned in our beds—in our studies, at any rate. There are going to be regular drills, and all members of the fire-brigade will be entertained to a big feed by the captain after every drill."

Potter began to think that Coker would get recruits, after all.

"Mum's the word at present," said Coker impressively. "Those young cads in the Remove would simply jump at this idea, if they had sense enough to think of it—simply jump! They've got the nerve to set themselves up against me—cheeky fags! They'll sing pretty small when our fire-brigade gets going. But not a word till we're ready. Now let's get down to Courtfield. We'll drop into the bun-shop to tea after we've done the shopping."

"Just what I was going to suggest," said Potter brightly.

And Coker & Co. started forth. The Famous Five were chatting in the gateway as they came out. Squiff had just come back from Courtfield on his bike.

"On Saturday," Squiff was saying. "The whole lot to be delivered——"

"Shush!" said Wharton warningly, as the three Fifth-Formers came along. Coker & Co. bestowed lofty glances on the juniors, and walked away towards Courtfield.

Aunt Judy's munificent remittance was expended with THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 370.

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a lavish hand by Horace Coker. Potter and Greene helped him with their advice—but they began to feel a little uneasy about that feed in the bun-shop. Fortunately, there was enough left for that. Coker presided at that feed in a mood of great content and satisfaction.

Some of his purchases had not been obtainable on the spot, but the orders were given, the money was paid, and everything way to be delivered on Saturday afternoon. So Coker was satisfied.

"We start on Saturday," he said. "The carrier will bring the whole shoot on Saturday afternoon. I expect you fellows to back me up. It's simply a topping wheeze, you know. I only hope there won't be a fire before Saturday. After Saturday it can break out as soon as it likes. We'll be ready."

"Oh, ripping!" said Potter. "Pass the jam."

Coker was simply bubbling with satisfaction when he returned to Greyfriars with his crumbs. Later that evening he called a meeting of the Fifth in the Form-room. Some of the Fifth did not trouble to come. Blundell, the captain of the Form, was conspicuous by his absence. He wasn't going to attend a blessed meeting called by that ass Coker. Not if he knew it! But a dozen fellows turned up, and Coker explained his great wheeze to them.

To Coker's indignation, some of the Fifth-Formers only grinned, and declined to form a senior fire-brigade under the captaincy of Horace Coker. Bland offered to join on the express condition that he was made captain, and that all the arrangements were left in his hands, and that, above all, Horace Coker gave his solemn word to obey orders without starting any of his usual rot.

When Coker and Bland had been separated, the meeting continued. Coker dabbed his nose while he addressed the meeting. Bland had retired to bathe his eye, which needed it badly.

But somehow or other even those Fifth-Formers who agreed that the fire-brigade was a ripping good idea did not seem satisfied with Horace Coker as fire-captain. Another member retired to bathe his eye, as the result of further argument.

But the fact that Coker was standing all the exes, and that a first-rate feed was to follow every drill, appealed to some of the Fifth. Fitzgerald and Lloyd and Williams major joined the corps, and agreed to back up Coker.

"Six is enough," said Coker, as the other Fifth-Formers retired grinning. "Six is plenty—six of the best, you know."

"Hear, hear!" said the new members.

"And when we get the thing fairly going, they'll all come round trying to wedge in—I know that," said Coker. "But six of us will be enough to deal with a fire—under my leadership. First drill next Saturday afternoon, as soon as the things come. Keep it dark till then."

"Bedad!" said Fitzgerald. "Sure, I heard young Field of the Remove saying something about a fire-brigade this afternoon, Coker—that kid they call Squiff. He was talking to Cherry about it. They shut up like oysters when I came along, but I caught the word fire-brigade."

Coker looked thunderous.

"The young rotters! They may have spotted it already! Still, they can't do anything before Saturday. Those fags couldn't raise the tin. It's settled. First drill on Saturday afternoon."

And the meeting broke up, the members of the Fifth-Form Fire Brigade retiring to Coker's study for supper.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Coker's Little Mistake!

QUITE a number of Greyfriars fellows were looking eagerly anticipative on Saturday afternoon.

Harry Wharton & Co. expected the supplies for the Remove Fire Brigade to arrive that afternoon. Coker was also expecting a consignment. The secret had been well kept on both sides. Even Billy Bunter had been unable to penetrate the mystery. The fat junior had left no stone unturned. And, as it happened,

he had paid dearly for his curiosity. He had spotted a meeting of the Remove heroes in the Rag, and had attended, unseen, at the window. With great determination Billy Bunter lunged on the window-sill to hear what was going on within, and it came on to rain. He did not succeed in hearing anything, but he was wet through by the time he gave it up in disgust. And at prep. that evening in No. 7 Study he developed a fit of sneezing, and when he went to bed he was sniffing and sneezing incessantly. So on Saturday, when Harry Wharton & Co. were in cheerful and anticipative mood, Billy Bunter was wrestling with a cold in the head, for which he did not receive the slightest sympathy from his Form-fellows.

Mr. Quelch looked at him severely when the Remove was dismissed.

"You appear to have a cold, Bunter," he said.

"Just a touch, sir," sniffed Bunter.

"You had better speak to the matron. It may be better for you to go into the sanatorium."

Billy Bunter looked alarmed. He would not have been averse to cut his lessons for a few days, but the short commons of the sanatorium made him shudder, even to think of them. He did not like gruel; and in the sanatorium there was no possibility of getting jam-tarts, dough-nuts, and sausage-rolls, and the other delicacies in which his fat soul delighted.

"Oh, no, sir!" he exclaimed eagerly. "I—I'm all right, sir. I—I don't want to—to miss my meals—I mean, my lessons, sir!"

"Well, speak to the matron," said Mr. Quelch. "We shall see."

Billy Bunter spoke to the matron, as he was commanded to do, and he meekly agreed to take the medicine she gave him; but he contrived to "dodge" the sanatorium. That building, at a little distance from the School House, was isolated, and Bunter shuddered at the prospect of being interned there. He would rather have been interned in a concentration camp. To be cut off for several days, perhaps a week, from the supplies from the tuckshop would, he felt, make him really ill. So he went out into the Close sniffing and snuffing, and the other fellows gave him a wide berth instead of sympathy. They did not want to catch his cold.

Harry Wharton & Co. punted a footer about while they were waiting for the arrival of their consignment. But Coker was too keen to think of anything but the Fifth Form Fire Brigade. The fact that Squiff had been heard to speak on the subject of a fire-brigade, as reported by Fitzgerald, alarmed Horace Coker. He feared that the Removites had spotted his brilliant idea, and that there might be some scheme afoot for robbing him of the honour and glory of founding and commanding the School Amateur Fire Brigade. The bare idea of the Remove fags chipping in, in such a way, made Horace Coker furious. After dinner, he haunted the gates and the porter's lodge, waiting for the carrier.

"I'm expecting a big consignment," he told Gosling—"a lot of things from the Courtfield Emporium."

"My heye!" said Gosling.

"Eh?" said Coker.

"Master Field 'ave said jest the same thing to me, sir," said Gosling—"which he's expecting a lot of things from the Hemporium."

"Oh, he is, is he?" said Coker. "I'll emporium him! I'll—I'll—My only hat! What kind of things is he expecting, Gosling?"

"Which he didn't say, Master Coker, but I'm to take them in to the Rag at once," said Gosling. "Werry particular about that was Master Field."

Coker snorted. He walked down to the gates to watch for the carrier, and Potter and Greene joined him there.

"Anything gone wrong?" asked Potter, noting the cloud of wrath upon the brow of the great Coker.

"I don't know," said Coker. "It looks to me as if those Remove kids have spotted the little game somehow, and they've got designs on my property. They'd have nerve enough to raid our fire-brigade outfit, you know; they've got cheek enough for anything. We shall have to keep our eyes open."

"Here comes the carrier," said Greene.

The carrier's cart from Courtfield arrived. It stopped at the school, and Gosling was called out. A number of very large bundles were handed down. Gosling took

them into his lodge. Then Coker strode in after him, with a grim brow.

"That's my little lot," he said.

"No; these are for Master Field," said Gosling. "Which there's his name on hevery parcel, sir."

That was true enough. Every bundle was directed to "S. Q. I. Field, Greyfriars." But Coker was not satisfied.

"Looks to me as if the young cads have been up to some trick," he said to his comrades. "They might have chipped in, and changed the address somehow, so as to get hold of our props."

"Hum!" said Potter doubtfully.

"Anyway, I'm jolly well going to see," said Coker obstinately. "I'm not chancing it. No objection to my opening one of these parcels, Gossy?"

"They're Master Field's, sir."

"Why, look here!" exclaimed Coker, pointing to a label on the largest and heaviest bundle. "One hundred feet rubber hose—what?"

"My hat!" said Greene.

"That's mine!" roared Coker. "Why, I ordered it myself at the Emporium on Wednesday afternoon!"

"My heye!" said Gosling.

Coker simply yanked the bundle open. Undoubtedly, there it was—the coiled-up fire-hose, brand-new, and quite in order. There could be no further doubt.

"My fire-hose!" almost stuttered Coker. "Bought and paid for with my own money! That young villain has changed the address somehow—sneaked into the carrier's cart while he was boozing somewhere, perhaps. You know old Cripps. You remember once we raided a hamper out of his cart, and he was none the wiser."

"Well, of all the nerve!" said Greene. "This is rather thick, even for those Remove kids!"

"Lucky we spotted it," said Coker. "It's all right, Gosling; we're taking these bundles. They're ours. If young Field comes inquiring after them, you refer him to me. I'll talk to him! The—the young pirate—the beastly Prussian! Call the other fellows, Potter, and we'll help Gossy carry this lot in. We'll get 'em into the gym to unpack."

"Right-ho!"

And Coker & Co. carried off the numerous bundles addressed to Sampson Quincy Idley Field, with the help of the astonished Gosling. Gosling had his doubts at first, but Coker showed him his receipts from the Courtfield Emporium, and that settled it. The Fifth-Formers were in possession of the supplies, and Gosling had returned to his lodge to refresh himself with gin-and-water after his labours, when Harry Wharton & Co. looked in.

"Carrier come yet, Gossy?" asked Wharton.

Gosling grunted.

"Which he 'ave," he replied.

"My things arrived?" exclaimed Squiff eagerly.

"Yes, Master Field."

"Where are they?"

"Which I'm surprised at you, Master Field!" said Gosling severely. "Master Coker—he 'ave explained to me that you 'ave changed the addresses on them bundles! He's taken them away."

The Famous Five stood transfixed for a moment. They could scarcely believe their ears.

"Coker!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Yes, sir. Which these tricks——"

"Coker's taken our bundles!" roared Squiff.

"Which he told me to refer you to 'im, Master Field. And wot I says is this 'ere——"

"Where's he taken them?"

"Which they're in the gymnasium now, and——"

"The—the burglar!" howled Nugent. "Our bundles, Coker! My hat!"

"Which they're unpacking them in the gym," said Gosling. "And wot I says, young gentlemen, is this 'ere——"

But the young gentlemen did not wait to hear what Gosling had to say. They crowded out of the porter's lodge in a state of great excitement.

"Coker's spotted the wheeze, after all!" said Bob.

"And collared our bundles!"

"The cheeky rotter!"

"The cheekfulness is terrific! But we are not going to take this lying downfully, my esteemed chums."

"No jolly fear!" exclaimed Wharton emphatically. "It's no good talking to Coker. Call all the fellows together, and we'll jolly soon have our parcels back!"

"Yes, rather!"

From all sides the members of the Remove Brigade came to their leader's call. When they learned of that unexampled raid by Horace Coker, their indignation knew no bounds. It was agreed on all hands that there was only one thing to be done—to attack in force, without losing a moment, and recover the raided property by force of arms. No time was lost. Fifteen determined juniors advanced upon the gym, where Coker & Co. were unpacking the consignment from the Courtfield Emporium.

THE TENTH CHAPTER. Two of Them!

"YAH! Burglars!"

"Spoofers!"

"Give us our props, you rotters!"

Coker & Co. looked round. They were very busy unpacking fire-hose and canvas chutes, and ropes and axes, and other paraphernalia of the fire-brigade. They were interrupted by the arrival of the crowd of angry and indignant Removites.

Coker waved his hand loftily.

"You kids clear off!" he said. "I know your little game, and I've nipped it in the bud! You get out while you're safe!"

"Are you going to hand over those things?" shouted Wharton.

"No fear!"

"Then we'll jolly well take them!"

"Pile in!"

"Go for them sockfully!"

"Look here," roared Coker, "you— Oh, my hat! Kick those kids out, you chaps! Knock 'em sky-high! Oh, crumbs! You young villains! Yecop!"

The Removites made a determined rush.

There were fifteen of them, and there were only six Fifth-Formers. So the seniors, in spite of age and size, were at a great disadvantage. In fact, they had no chance at all. They were simply bowled off their feet by the rush of the Remove.

The great Coker went down with a bump that almost shook the gym. His comrades were bowled over like skittles.

Excited juniors swarmed and sprawled over them, hammering them and bumping them till the Fifth-Formers felt as if they had been struck by a cyclone and an earthquake or two all at once.

The gym was filled with the sounds of strife. Wild yells came from the Fifth-Formers as they were bumped and rolled over and pommelled.

Five of them scrambled away from the swarming foe and bolted out of the gym. But Coker wasn't the fellow to bolt. Coker never counted odds. Coker put up a most terrific fight.

But the odds were too great.

With a dozen fellows grasping him and clutching him, he was rolled along to the door and chucked out in a heap.

He lay there, quite breathless, till he recovered sufficiently to pick himself up. Then he did not flee. He limped back into the gym, boiling with rage.

The Removites had taken possession of the fire-brigade property. They were packing it up to carry it off to the Rag, where it would be safe from reprisals.

"You young villains!" spluttered Coker.

"My hat! He's come back!"

"Collar him!"

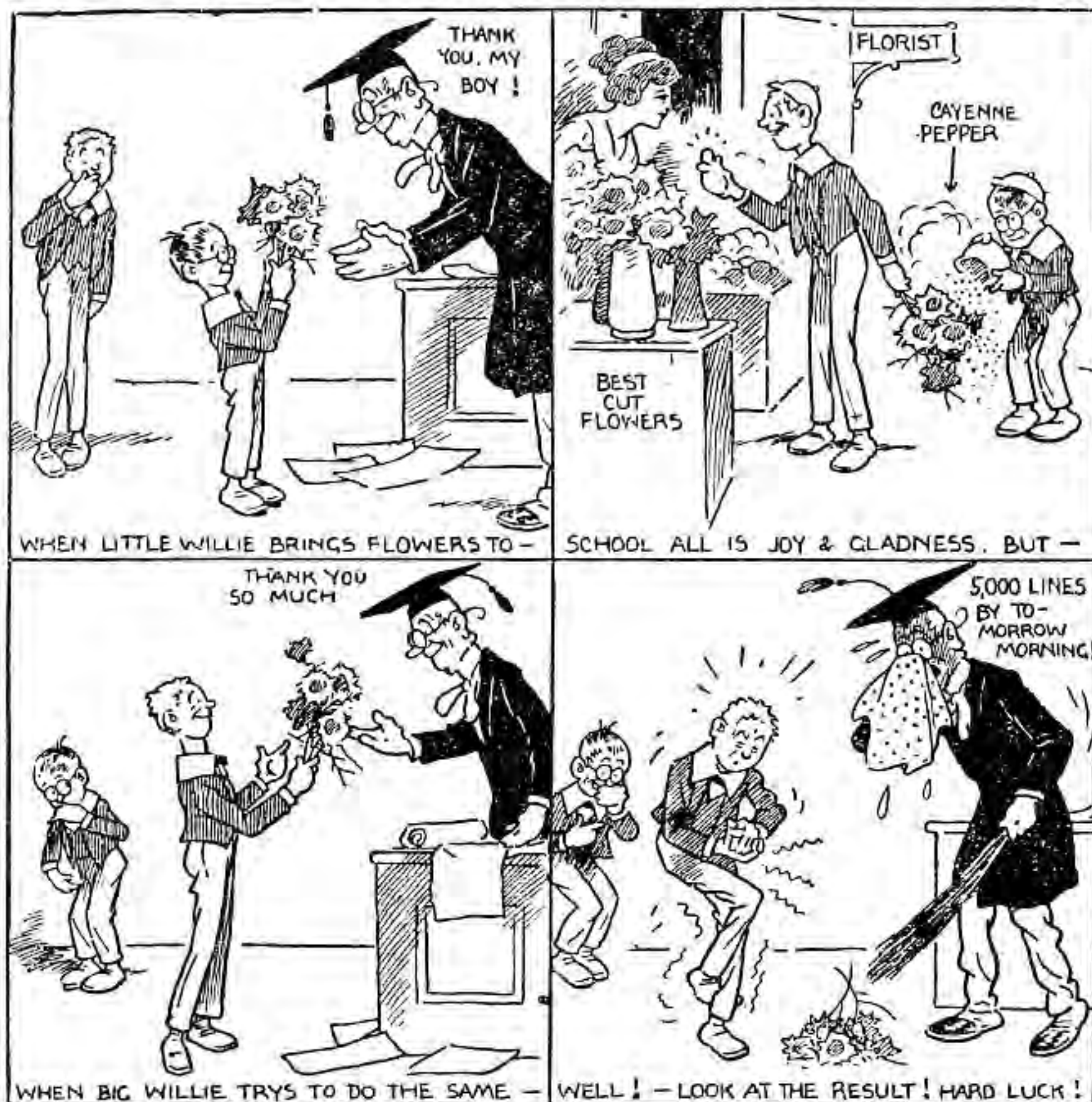
"Rag him!"

Coker was in the thick of it again in a moment. This time the juniors did not throw him out. One of the ropes was uncoiled, and it was coiled again round Coker as he struggled in the grasp of the Famous Five.

Coker's struggles did not avail. The rope was coiled round him, and knotted, and knotted and coiled, till there seemed to be more coils and knots than there was of Coker. He had almost disappeared from view when the juniors had finished. He lay on his back, his furious face protruding from the coils of rope, and helpless to move hand or foot. All he could move was his tongue, and certainly he moved that at a great rate.

But Coker's personal remarks did not trouble the Removites. They packed up their property, and bore it off in triumph under the furious eyes of Horace Coker.

OUR SCHOOL CARTOON SERIES.—No. 1.



WHEN LITTLE WILLIE BRINGS FLOWERS TO— SCHOOL ALL IS JOY & GLADNESS. BUT —
WHEN BIG WILLIE TRIES TO DO THE SAME — WELL! — LOOK AT THE RESULT! HARD LUCK!
BIG WILLIE ENDEAVOURS TO PLEASE HIS FORM-MASTER, BUT FAILS— THANKS TO LITTLE WILLIE!



Sizzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz! A stream of water shot in at Mr. Preut's open window, and the Fifth-Form master made a sudden bound out of his armchair. He was taken by surprise. That was no wonder, under the circumstances. "Good heavens! what a sudden rainstorm—why—what—yaroo!" he roared, as a stream of water from outside caught him fairly in the neck. (See Chapter 14.)

"Oh, my hat!" Coker gasped, as they marched out of the gym, leaving nothing behind but the rope that was coiled round him. "The young villains! The Huns! The cheeky rotters! My property! Oh, crumbs!"

Potter looked cautiously into the gym.

"Hallo, you there, Coker?"

"What did you run away for?" roared Coker.

"Ahem!"

"They've taken all our preps!" yelled Coker.

"Shall I untie you?" murmured Potter.

"Yes, you idiot!"

It was not a very grateful reply, but Potter kindly proceeded to untie Coker. It was a long process. Potter had never seen so many knots in his life before. As Boy Scouts, Harry Wharton & Co. had learned all varieties and added a few original ones of their own. Potter worked away at the knots with sore fingers. He tried his knife at last, but the rope was thick and strong, and he had

to saw at it. Once or twice the point of the knife gave Coker a painful jab here or there, and Coker roared.

"Buck up, you fathead! Don't run your silly knife into me! Haven't you got any sense? Yow! There you go again!"

"Doing my best," murmured Potter.

"You silly idiot—yow!—there it goes again!"

It was a curious coincidence, but whenever Coker called Potter names, Potter's knife slipped, and gave him a painful jab. It was quite a long time before Coker was released.

He jumped up at last, in the midst of a heap of rope-ends.

"They've taken all the things!" he howled. "Where are the other fellows? We're going to get 'em back at once!"

"They're gone into the Rig," said Potter. "Better

ask Mr. Prout to speak to 'em. I don't want any more scrapping with a gang of fags. It—it's undignified!"

"There's a whole army of 'em in the Rag," said Greene, coming into the gym. "Nearly all the Remove. Better call in Prouty, Coker."

"I'll speak to 'em first," said Coker.

"Ahem! Better——"

"Oh, rats!"

Coker strode away to the School House. There was a buzz of enthusiastic voices in the Rag. That famous apartment was crowded with Remove fellows. And there was a yell as Coker appeared in the doorway, Potter and Greene keeping a good distance behind him. They did not want any more ragging from the juniors. It was not only undignified, but it was decidedly painful.

"Here's Coker again!" yelled Peter Todd. "That chap's never satisfied. Go for him!"

"Are you going to hand over my property?" shouted Coker.

"Your property! I like that!"

"What awful cheek!"

"Are you going to hand it over?" raved Coker.

"Ha, ha! No fear!"

"The no-fearfulness is terrific. The cheek of the esteemed Coker is sublime. Collar the esteemed rotter!"

"I shall call in Prout if you don't!" howled Coker.

"I'm not going to scrap with fags. Mind, if you don't hand it over at once, I'll fetch Prout!"

"Fetch your grandmother!" said Squiff.

"Must be dotty!" said Harry Wharton, in wonder, as Coker strode furiously away. "Prout's not likely to make us hand over our property to Coker."

"Oh, he's only gassing!" said Todd.

But Coker was not "gassing." He strode away to Mr. Prout's study. The master of the Fifth was sitting by his open study window, enjoying the spring sunshine and one of his big black cheroots. Coker coughed as he came in; the smoke of that cheroot was strong and pungent. Mr. Prout looked at him inquiringly.

"What is the matter, Coker? You look very untidy."

Coker burst forth with an explanation of the unexampled cheek and audacity of the Removites. Mr. Prout reluctantly quitted his comfortable armchair, and followed Coker to the Rag to see justice done. The Removites looked astonished as the Fifth-Form master came in.

"My boys," said Mr. Prout severely, "you must not carry this—ahem!—joke too far. I understand that you have taken possession of things belonging to Coker. Please hand them back to him at once."

"But they're ours, sir!" exclaimed Wharton, in astonishment. "They're ours—Coker collared them but they're all ours. They're the things we've ordered for the Remove Volunteer Fire Brigade, sir."

"Dear me!" said Mr. Prout.

"It's all spooof, sir!" howled Coker. "There isn't any Remove Volunteer Fire Brigade. It's the Fifth-Form Fire Brigade, sir, and I'm the captain!"

"Oh, draw it mild, Coker!"

"Come off!"

"Dry up cheeselessly, my esteemed Coker!"

"Blessed if that don't take the bun!" said Squiff indignantly. "Why, I ordered these things myself, and they were sent to me, addressed to me, here. Here's Gosling, sir. Ask him if they weren't addressed to me."

"Dear me! This is very odd, very perplexing indeed," murmured Mr. Prout. "Are you sure, Coker——"

"Master Coker——" began Gosling. "Which——"

"They're mine, sir!" howled Coker. "After the fire the other day, sir, I had the idea of starting a volunteer fire-brigade."

"It was my idea!" roared Squiff. "I suggested it to these chaps, and we raised the tin and laid in these things."

"You young rotter!"

"You cheeky ass!"

"Silence—silence!" exclaimed Mr. Prout.

"Which your things 'ave come, Master Coker?" shouted Gosling, striving to make his voice heard. Coker jumped.

"My things! What do you mean?"

"A fresh lot, sir, from the Courtfield Hemporium, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 370.

addressed to you," said Gosling. "Which I think you've made a mistake, sir. Which they're much the same to look at, and the label on one says a 'undred feet of fire-ose, sir, so——"

"Ah!" said Mr. Prout. "Apparently you have made a mistake, Coker."

Coker gasped.

"It seems that this—this extraordinary idea of forming a—a volunteer fire-brigade occurred to both parties," said Mr. Prout. "It is a—a—a good idea—a very good idea, and I wish you every success. Pray do not let there be any more disputes."

And Mr. Prout rustled away.

Coker stood rooted to the floor. He realised that he had made a mistake, and that that consignment from the Courtfield Emporium did not belong to him. But he was not satisfied. He was very far from satisfied.

"You cheeky young sweeps!" he stuttered at last. "Do you mean to say that you've got the thumping nerve to start a fire-brigade?"

"What-ho!" said Squiff. "And if you try to borrow our idea, you cheeky boulder——"

"It was my idea!" roared Coker.

"Rats! It was ours!"

"I'm not going to allow you to start anything of the kind!"

"Bow-wow!"

"We're not going to have the Fifth Form chipping in," said Harry Wharton decidedly. "If you start any fire-brigade bizney, Coker, there will be trouble!"

"You cheeky fags!"

"You thumping duffer——"

Coker looked like charging at the Removites, but he thought better of it. He strode out, and slammed the door of the Rag with a tremendous slam. He found his consignment in Gosling's lodge quite in order. The Fifth-Form brigade unpacked their property once more in the gym. All was ready for the first drill. But Coker was furious. He was convinced that the Removites had somehow spotted his great wheeze, and borrowed it. The Removites was equally convinced that Coker had spotted their wheeze, and borrowed it. It was really a case of great minds running in grooves; but whatever was the case, there was no doubt that there were now two amateur fire-brigades at Greyfriars, and both parties felt that it wouldn't do. And the thoughts of both the fire-brigades were directed less towards extinguishing any conflagrations that might arise than towards extinguishing one another.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Extinguished!

THE Head was pleased to approve of the fire-brigades.

In fact, he commended them highly.

He considered that the drill would be very useful to the boys, even if the fire-brigades did not prove useful in time of fire.

With the Head's approval, the rival fire-brigades went ahead with their practice.

After lessons every day they turned out to drill. As they often turned out at the same time collisions were sometimes unavoidable. Perhaps the amateur firemen did not always seek to avoid them.

Certain it was that at the first drill Coker & Co. were somehow drenched to the skin by streams of water from the fire-hose wielded by the Famous Five.

Equally certain it was, that the Removites, practising with a canvas chute from the box-room window, found the bottom of the chute fastened up when they descended one after another, and came down in a heap inside the chute, which fortunately burst at last, and let them escape.

Then accidents happened in a mysterious way to the property of both fire-brigades. Coker's chutes were found on one occasion drenched with something that smelt remarkably like asafœtida, which rendered practice with them decidedly disagreeable for quite a long time.

After that, the Remove fire-hose was discovered cut into three pieces; and the mending of it kept the young heroes busy for a whole half-holiday.

These accidents were never quite explained. Of course, accidents are things that will happen, in the best-regulated fire-brigades.

But they led the rival firemen to be very careful with their property, and to keep it strictly under lock and key.

Both brigades were assiduous at drill, and both were looking forward to a fire. But no fire occurred, greatly to their disappointment. The wood-shed had been rebuilt, and anxious firemen gave it a look in sometimes, in the hope that a fresh conflagration might have broken out.

One afternoon Bob Cherry's hopes were raised by the sight of smoke curling out of the window of the wood-shed.

"Fire!" gasped Bob. "Oh, what a little bit of luck! Call out the brigade!"

"Hold on!" said Squiff. "That doesn't look much like a fire. Looks more like the smoke of a cigarette!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's look, anyway, before we call out the giddy fire-brigade," said Harry Wharton laughing.

They looked in at the window of the wood-shed.

Five juniors were seated there, smoking—Bunter, Skinner, Snoop, and a couple of other smart youths. They grinned at the Famous Five.

"You can't get in," said Billy Bunter; "the door's locked. He, he, he!"

"Go and eat coke!" said Skinner.

"Mind your own business!" said Snoop defiantly.

"You silly asses!" said Squiff. "I'll bet it was you mugs set fire to the wood-shed last time, with your fat-headed smoking!"

"Can't prove that, can you?" grinned Skinner.

"He, he, he!"

"Come away, my infants," murmured Bob Cherry. "I've got an idea!"

The Famous Five retired from the window. The door of the wood-shed was locked, and there was no chance of getting at the blades. But Bob Cherry's eyes were twinkling. He had an idea.

"Chance for jolly good practice," he remarked, with a chuckle. "It must have been those silly jays set fire to the shed last time. They're not going to have another chance. You know, there's a proverb that there's no smoke without fire. When we see smoke, we've a right to conclude that there's a fire, and put it out."

"What the dickens——"

"Get out the hose," said Bob. "We're going to put that fire out!"

"But there isn't a fire," said Nugent.

"Then we'll put the smoke out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites understood at last, and they hastened to get the fire-hose out.

The hose was connected to the hydrant, and Bob Cherry carried the nozzle carefully to the window of the wood-shed.

The smokers looked at him with disdainful glances.

"Have a fag?" said Bunter loftily.

"Thanks, no!"

"I'm smoking to keep down my cold," explained Bunter. "Nothing like a good smoke to cure a cold—what?"

"You fat idiot!"

"Oh, really Cherry——"

"It's more important to cure the smoke than to cure the cold," said Bob. "That's what I'm going to do! Got that door fastened, Squiff?"

"Yes, rather!"

Squiff had jammed a wedge under the door so that it would not open.

"Then we're ready!"

The smokers jumped up in alarm as Bob Cherry introduced the nozzle of the fire-hose into the window.

"Look here!" roared Skinner. "What's your little game?"

"I'm going to put the smoke out!"

"You—you rotter! If you dare—— Oh—oo-coch!"

Squish! came the stream from the fire-hose.

It caught Skinner under the chin, and fairly bowled him out. Skinner sprawled on the ground in a pool of water.

"I—I say!" roared Bunter. "I don't—— Hold on! I—I won't smoke any more—— Yow-ow! Leave off—— Grooooooh!"

Bunter caught the stream with his fat face.

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"BUNTER'S BANKNOTES!"

EVERY
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"
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ONE
PENNY.

Snoop made a wild rush to the window to close it, but a stream of hissing water under the chin sent him staggering away.

"Oh! Oh! Ow! Beast!"

"Yow-ow! Stop it!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

Whiz! Splash, splash! Whiz! Bob Cherry played the stream of water on the unhappy blades of the Remove without mercy.

Bunter & Co. scrambled for the door, and dragged at it furiously. But the door was wedged tight, and did not open. The stream of water smote them in the back, drenching them to the skin. They scuttled away from the door, and dodged round the shed, in wild and frantic efforts to escape the merciless stream.

But there was no escaping it. They ran and dodged and jumped and howled and shrieked, but the water played on them without mercy.

The whole shed was swimming with water now. Bunter & Co. were streaming with it.

"Leave off!" shrieked Skinner. "We—we give in! We—we won't smoke any more! Oh, dear! I shall c-c-catch c-c-cold! Ow!"

"Yow-ow! Leave off, you villain!"

"Grooooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the firemen outside.

"Oh, you beasts! Ow, ow, ow! Ooooooch!"

Skinner pushed at the door again. It came open at last. Streaming with water, the unhappy blades staggered out of the wood-shed, amid howls of laughter from the Remove Fire Brigade.

The funds of the Remove Fire Brigade were called upon for a handsome tip to Gosling, when he found the wood-shed swimming in water. But the amateur firemen considered that it was worth it. They had not had a chance yet to extinguish a fire, but the smart set of the Remove had been thoroughly and utterly extinguished!

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Unfed!

"A TCHOO! Atchoooooooooh!"

Thus William George Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove was looking woeful when Todd came into the study at tea-time. He was sneezing and snuffling, and had three mufflers round his fat neck, and was dabbing his fat little nose incessantly with a handkerchief.

"What's the matter with you?" demanded Todd.

"Atchooo!"

"Is that Russian?"

"Choooooooooh! Grooooooooooh Woooooooooh!"

"Dear me!" said Cousin Alouzo sympathetically.

"You seem to have a cold in the head, my dear Bunter."

Bunter gave a watery blink.

"You thilly ath! Have you only just theen that?" he gurgled. "I've got a beasly gold in by 'ead, and it's all the fault of thode beads!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Peter.

"Whad are you gagging at, you bead?"

"Serve you jolly well right!" said Peter heartlessly.

"You've been snuffling about with a cold for a week now owing to spying outside the window of the Rag. Now you've got it bad, and you'll have to go into sanatorium!"

"You rodder! I shouldn't have gaught a gold the odder day if you hadn't gept your beasly segret, and it was only a beasly vire-brigade, after all!" snuffled Bunter. "If I'd known whad it was I shouldn't have wanted to know, you rodder! Now I've got a real gold through being drenched with wadder in the wood-shed, and I've a jolly good mind to go and tell Mr. Guelch!"

"Go and tell him!" said Peter cheerfully.

"You'll jolly well ged a ligging!"

"Oh, that's all right! I'll tell him what we swamped you for, and he'll be quite pleased!"

"You sneagging bead! Loog here! A fellow ought to feed a gold. The least you can do is to stand me a good feed. If you don't, I'll dell Guelch!"

"Rats!" said Peter. "The proper thing is to starve a cold!"

"Rod! You have to starve a fever and feed a gold!"

"Well, ain't you feverish?"

"Yes, I'm frightfully feverish," said Bunter, who would never have admitted that there was a limit to his sufferings—"horribly!"

"Then starve your fever and let your cold alone!" suggested Peter.

"Rads! Look here! I'll starve the fever if you like, but I'm going to feed the gold!" said Bunter. "You stand me—"

"Just what I can't do," said Peter. "It's hard enough to stand you at any time, and with that beastly cold you're simply not to be stood."

"I don't mean that!"

"But I mean it!" said Peter. "If you're going to have a cold, you can't stay in this study. It's unreasonable!"

"I gan'd helb it, gan I?" roared Bunter.

"Of course you can. Fellows who keep fit don't catch colds," said Peter decidedly. "It all comes of over-feeding and smoking, and getting fat and flabby, and snuggling over a fire instead of taking exercise. I'm simply not going to have a puffing and perspiring porpoise in this study. You can't expect it."

"You horrid rodder!"

"I'll give you five minutes to get over that cold!" said Peter determinedly. "If you ain't well in five minutes, out you go!"

"My dear Peter," said Alonzo Todd mildly, "Bunter really cannot recover from his unfortunate affliction in that extremely brief space of time."

"That isn't my fault. I'm not going to catch his cold," said Peter. "He'll start smoking here next, I suppose. Stop that snuffling, Bunter! Go and snuffle in the sanatorium! It was specially built for flabby wasters to snuffle in!"

"My dear Bunter, it would be advisable to request the matron to send you into the sanatorium," said Alonzo.

"I won'd go into the sanatorium!" roared Bunter. "They'll keep me short of food, and I shall die very likely!"

"Rats!" said Peter, shaking his head. "No such luck!"

"You rod-den bead!"

Peter took out his watch. He took up a cricket-stump in the other hand. Bunter blinked at him with watery and furious eyes.

"Whad are you doig?" he demanded.

"Timing you."

"You thilly ath! I gan'd gure a gold in fibe minudes."

"You'll get chased out of this study if you don't."

"Oh, you rodder! You bead! You gad!"

"Time's nearly up," said Peter, unmoved. Peter's opinion was that the sanatorium was the proper place for invalids, not his study. And he had no sympathy whatever for Bunter, considering how he had caught his cold. Alonzo had plenty of sympathy; he felt as sympathetic towards a fellow with a cold as he did towards the Gooby-Booby Islanders, for whom he subscribed a good deal of his pocket-money, for the noble purpose of providing them with trousers.

But Alonzo's gentle voice did not count for anything in No. 7 Study. In that apartment Peter was monarch of all he surveyed.

"Time's up!" said Peter, slipping his watch back into his pocket. "Now, then, Bunter, you snuffle just once more, and you get it where the chicken got the chopper!"

"Atchoooo! Ooooooch!"

Bunter hardly finished that snuffle. He had to make a wild break for the door to escape the cricket-stump.

In a state of mental fury and physical misery, the fat and flabby Owl trundled down the passage, looking for more hospitable quarters. He blinked into No. 1 Study, announcing his arrival with a tremendous sneeze. There were draughts in the Remove passage, and Bunter was peculiarly sensitive to them just now. Wharton and

Nugent were at tea in the study, and they grinned at the sight of Billy Bunter's streaming eyes and flaming nose. They did not mean to be unsympathetic, but Bunter looked very funny, and remarkably unlike a bold and dashing blade.

"I say, you fellows!"

"Here, you keep your distance!" exclaimed Nugent. "Don't you give me your filthy cold! You'd better get into the sanatorium sharp!"

"I won'd go into the sanatorium! I'm not goig to be starbed! I want to feed my gold, you rodder!" gurgled Bunter. "I'm goig to have dea with you chabs."

"You're jolly well not!" said Wharton decidedly. "We don't want your disgusting microbes. Why don't you keep fit, and you wouldn't catch colds."

"How gan I helb gatching a gold when a thilly idiot thwamps me with wadder from head to foot?" howled Bunter.

"Well, you shouldn't smoke in the wood-shed. You set it on fire once with your tomfoolery. Look here, as soon as Quelchy sees you he'll bundle you off to the sanatorium. Better go at once, before you get worse."

"I want to feed my gold."

Bunter rolled into the study, with a four-point-seven sneeze. But the two juniors promptly seized him and rolled him out again. The fat junior tramped away down the passage to No. 14. Squiff was a good-natured fellow, and perhaps he would help in the noble purpose of feeding Bunter's cold. Squiff and Fisher T. Fish were having tea, but at the first sight of Bunter's blazing nose in the study doorway Fisher T. Fish jumped up and seized a poker.

"Absquatulate!" he yelled.

"Loog here!"

"Vamoose! I guess I don't want your microbes! Levant!"

"I say, Vishy—"

"Light out!" shouted Fish.

Bunter might not have understood the American language, but he could not misunderstand the jab of the poker on his fat waistcoat. So he "vamooseed" with a roar, and Fish slammed the door after him.

"Oh, grigey!" groaned the unhappy Owl. "The rod-den beads! I subbose I'd hedder dry Bob Cherry. He was the beast that gave me the gold!"

And Bunter opened the door of No. 13, where Bob Cherry and Mark Linley, Hurree Singh, and little Wun Lung were seated round the tea-table. Bob Cherry had a paper in his hand, and he was reading out his poem destined for the war number of the "Herald," his study-mates bearing it with real heroism.

"I say, you fellows, that bead Dodd's durned me out, and I want to feed my gold!" said Bunter pathetically.

"My hat! You do look in a rotten state!" said Mark Linley. "You'd better ask Quelchy to send you into the sanatorium."

"You thilly duffer! I won'd go there! I want to feed my gold, not to be starbed to death!"

"You can't feed any blessed colds here," said Bob Cherry. "You can take that cold as a judgment! You got it through spying and playing the giddy goat!"

"Let it be a lessonful warning to you, my esteemed Bunter," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, "and do not again play oxfordly!"

"Loog here, you beads—"

"Can't you suggest a rhyme for demoniac?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Whad!"

"I've finished my poem excepting for a rhyme for demoniac."

"You thilly idiot! I—"

"Bunttee goee outee!" said Wun Lung, as the fat junior rolled in. "No wantee catchee cold. Bunttee goee toposide quickee, or me hittee with pokee!"

"I want to feed my gold, you bead!" roared the unhappy Bunter. "Yow! Keep that heathen rodder away! Ow! All righd, you bead; I'm goig!"

And he went. In the passage the Owl of the Remove groaned dismally. He had nowhere to lay his weary head. He blinked into Vernon-Smith's study, but the Bounder of Greyfriars promptly hurled a cushion at him, and he vanished. He looked in on Bolsover major, and Bolsover major caught up a cricket-stump, and Bunter

ANSWERS

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 370.

Our Companion Papers: "THE GEM" LIBRARY. Every Wednesday. "THE DREADNOUGHT," Every Thursday. "THE PENNY POPULAR," Every Friday. "CHUCKLES," 1d. Every Saturday. 2



Much has been said of Germany's cowardly tactics in sowing the seas with death-dealing mines, in defiance of international law, and no condemnation can be too vigorous. Our artist shows the scene on a German mine-layer when one of these fearful weapons is being lowered overboard, in the hope that it will cause the destruction of a fine ship, and the loss of human life. Whether it be British or neutral shipping and lives that suffer, the Huns care not!

had just time to escape. After that he let the Remove studies alone. He drifted disconsolately downstairs, and found Snoop and Skinner in the common-room. They backed away from him at once as he came in sneezing.

"Here, you keep your beastly microbes away from me!" exclaimed Skinner.

"I say, you fellows, I want to feed my gold. Look here, I stood you a lot of smokes," said Bunter indignantly. "I've run out of tin, and I want to feed my gold. I'm expecting a hospital-order—"

"You can expect a thick ear if you come near me!" said Snoop unfeelingly. "I don't want to catch your rotten cold! Why don't you go into the sanatorium? You'll have it all to yourself; there's nobody else laid up. They'll give you some nice gruel."

"Grooh! I want to feed my gold, you filthy idiot! Look here—"

But Skinner and Snoop walked away, leaving Bunter.

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"BUNTER'S BANKNOTES!"

to waste his eloquence on the desert air. He rolled away again, and rolled into Mr. Quelch in the passage. He would have dodged the Remove master, but Mr. Quelch spotted him at once.

"Bunter!"

"Yeth, thir," groaned Bunter.

"You have a bad cold?"

"Oh, no, thir! I—I'm all right."

"Nonsense! I will take you to the matron, and you must go into the sanatorium at once. Otherwise you will give it to the other boys."

"Blease, sir, I don't want to go into the sanatorium. I—I'm afraid of missing my lessons, thir."

"Very commendable, I must say," said Mr. Quelch suspiciously. "However, you are not in a fit state for lessons now. You will go into the sanatorium at once!"

"I want to feed my gold, sir!"

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

"Mrs. Kebble will arrange about your diet, Bunter. Come with me!"

Bunter groaned, and went with him. There was no help for it. A quarter of an hour later he was in the sanatorium, with the prospect of remaining there for several days at least—and not consuming a single jam-tart, cream-puff, or pork-pie during the whole time. That cold was destined not to be fed.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Giving Coker a Chance!

SWISH! Swish! Splash!

Dusk was falling on Greyfriars the next day, and Horace Coker and the other members of the Fifth-Form Fire Brigade were at practice. They were drenching the Head's garden with water, streaming it over trees and shrubs, not to mention their own trousers.

The Famous Five were chatting in the School House doorway. They had been at practice, but had knocked off. Somehow or other Bob Cherry had caught a stream of water from Coker's hose, and he had had to go to the dormitory for a change. When he rejoined his chums in the doorway there was a grin on his face.

"Coker's at practice!" he remarked.

"Yes, the ass!" growled Squiff. "Practising our wheeze! Lot of good those Fifth-Form duffers would be if there was a fire!"

"I don't believe there ever is going to be a fire," said Nugent dolefully.

"Oh, a fire might break out any time, you know!" said Wharton encouragingly. "Bunter may start smoking in the sanatorium and set his bed on fire!"

"No such luck!"

"It's pretty rotten if we go through all this training for nothing," said Mark Linley laughing. "Still, it wouldn't do to start a fire. We shall have to be patient. Perhaps a Zeppelin may drop a bomb on us some day."

"And if there is a fire those Fifth-Form bounders will try to wedge in," said Squiff. "Still, we'll make it plain that it's our fire if it does happen."

"I was just thinking that we might give the Fifth a chance," said Bob Cherry, in a thoughtful way. "I've just seen old Prout in his study—"

"Blow old Prout!"

"He's sitting by his study window, smoking those terrific cheroots," said Bob, unheeding. "And there's a fire in his study."

"Well, ass, he always has a fire in the cold weather! Nothing new in that."

"You come with me," said Bob mysteriously.

The juniors, somewhat puzzled, followed Bob into the quadrangle. He led them under Mr. Prout's study window.

The study was not lighted, but the rosy reflection of a big and blazing fire could be seen within. Mr. Prout was not visible, but he was sitting in an armchair just inside the window, in the gloaming, smoking. From the open window came a regular column of smoke from his big black cheroot.

"See that?" whispered Bob.

"Well?"

"That's enough for Coker," said Bob cautiously, as they returned to the School House. "Suppose there was a sudden alarm of a fire in Prout's study?"

"What!"

"That's enough smoke for Coker; he never stops to think."

"B-h-but—"

"He's working his giddy hose now, and he'd be glad of a chance of rescuing his Form-master," said Bob.

"Why, you awful ass—"

"Give a fellow a chance, you know. Coker's simply burning to distinguish himself; and as soon as he hears there's a fire in Prout's study—there is, you know—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He'd smell a rat if he got the news from us," said Frank Nugent.

"No need. You can get your minor to take him the news. Dicky will do it like a shot. Coker pulled his ears to-day."

"He—he wouldn't be such an ass," said Wharton. "Coker's an awful ass, but he wouldn't be such an ass as that."

"Give him a chance, and see," grinned Frank. "I'll call my minor."

Dicky Nugent was called out of the Second Form-room, where he was making toffee in a cocoa-tin over the Form-room fire. He looked very ruddy and considerably grimy.

"Well, what is it?" asked Nugent minor. "Buck up! I've left that young duffer Gatty looking after my toffee, and he's bound to muck it up if I don't watch him."

"Never mind your toffee now," said Bob. "It's a jape up against Coker, young 'un—"

"No time for japes!" said the fag cheerfully. "I leave that to you Remove kids!"

"Why, you cheeky little scoundrel!"

"Ta-ta!" said Dicky.

"Hold on!" exclaimed his major. "Shut up, Bob! Look here, Dicky, there's a fire in Mr. Prout's study, and smoke coming out of his window. We want you to give the alarm and fetch Coker on the scene. If he swamps Prout's study with water we'll stand you a pot of jam."

Dicky Nugent chuckled.

"There'd be a row," he said.

"That's Coker's look-out."

"Might mean a licking for me."

"No. We'd own up we put you up to it, of course, if there's trouble. You see, we want to give Coker a chance of distinguishing himself," said Harry Wharton.

"What kind of jam?" asked Dicky Nugent thoughtfully, evidently balancing the pros and cons of the matter.

"Plum jam," said Frank. "What are you shaking your head for, you young rascal?"

"Not good enough," said Dicky. "Coker might lam me. Make it raspberry jam."

"Well, raspberry jam, then," said Nugent.

"And a pound of dough-nuts?"

"Why, you mercenary Shylock!" said Frank indignantly.

"Put in the dough-nuts and I'm your man," said Dicky. "I'm standing a feed in the Second Form-room, and three herrings and a tin of sardines don't go very far among seven or eight chaps. Am I going to have the dough-nuts?"

"Yes, if you like."

"I'm your man, then. Mind, a pot of raspberry jam and a pound of dough-nuts, honour bright!" said Dicky.

"Honour bright!" said the Famous Five solemnly.

"Buzz off, then!" added Bob.

"Hold on, though. What size pot of jam?" asked Dicky. The hero of the Second Form was evidently on the make.

"A pound pot, you blessed miser!"

"Oh, come!" said Dicky warmly. "Make it a three-pound jar. Don't be mean!"

"Rats!"

"Then I'm off!"

"Hold on! It's a three-pound jar, you Shylock!"

"Honest Injun?"

"Yes, fathead! Now buzz off!"

And Dicky Nugent, having like a wise merchant secured his terms in advance, scuttled out into the dusky Close in search of Coker and the Fifth-Form Fire Brigade.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Coker to the Rescue!

HORACE COKER was going strong.

The Fifth-Form Fire Brigade had drenched the Head's garden, and themselves, and very nearly everything within range; and Potter was hinting that it was about time to get in to the feed which was to follow the drill. A feed in Coker's study followed every drill. Otherwise, there would have been a plentiful lack of enthusiasm on the part of the Coker brigade, and Horace would probably have been left to carry out his drills "on his own."

The Fifth-Form firemen were pausing in their labours.

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when an excited fag came tearing up in the growing dusk. He was shrieking:

"Fire! Fire!"

"Hallo! What's that?" exclaimed Coker.

"By Jove!" said Greene. "Looks like a chance for us."

"Fire!"

"Where?" shouted Coker.

"In Mr. Prout's study!" howled Dicky Nugent.

"Quick—quick! The smoke's pouring out of his window."

"We're coming!"

Dicky Nugent cut off.

The Fifth-Form firemen lost not an instant. Coker rushed the hose across the Close at top speed.

Coker's eyes were gleaming with excitement.

Now was his chance!

He was going to show all Greyfriars what the Fifth-Form Fire Brigade was worth. He was going to show those cheeky Remove fags that, when it came to dealing promptly with a fire, Horace Coker was the man. It was simply a thumping stroke of luck that the fire-brigade should have been at practice when the fire broke out. Everything was ready. Coker was right on the spot.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, meeting the excited Coker as he charged across the Close with the trailing hose. "What's up?"

"Get out of the way! It's a fire!" panted Coker.

"Rats! Where?"

"Prout's study. Let me pass, you young idiot!" roared Coker.

"Look here, you Fifth-Form duffers, keep out of it!" shouted Bob. "That's our fire, if there is one, and you're not going to—"

Potter and Greene hurled him out of the way. They rushed on towards Mr. Prout's study. Bob Cherry picked himself up, and chuckled. His objection had been raised simply to banish any doubts Horace Coker might have had about the fire, and to make him keen to get to work before the rival fire-brigade could arrive upon the scene.

But Coker had no doubts.

The dancing reflections of firelight in the study, and the smoke that was coming out of the window, were more than enough for Coker.

"Got that end fixed?" he shouted to Fitzgerald.

"Sure, it's all right!"

"Good!"

Sizzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz!

A stream of water shot in at Mr. Prout's open window.

The Fifth-Form master made a sudden bound out of his armchair. He was taken by surprise. That was no wonder, under the circumstances.

"Good heavens! What a sudden rainstorm! Why—what—yaaroooh!" roared Mr. Prout, as the stream of water from outside caught him fairly in the neck.

He went down with a bump on the floor of the study, and the water swamped over him.

"Oh—oh! Yah! Oh! Oh, dear!"

Splash! Splash! Sizzzzzzzz!

"Ow! Help!" shrieked Mr. Prout. "Some mad-man— Help—help!"

"All right, sir!" shouted back Coker. "We're here."

"Help!"

"Here, you take the hose, Potter!" yelled Coker. "I'm going in for him! He must be burning to death to yell like that! Quick!"

"But—"

"Don't talk to me about danger!" gasped Coker. "I'm going in! I'll jolly well show 'em that we're the real fire-brigade! Play the water over me as I get in."

"But, I say—"

"Don't jaw, you ass! Take the hose!"

"Grooooooh!" spluttered Potter, as the excited Coker turned the hose on him. "Why— Ooooh—oooooh! Grooooooh!"

"You silly idiot, take the hose, and play it on me!"

Potter clutched at the nozzle, and he played the water on Coker. There was no doubt about that; he was glad of the chance. The heroic Coker made a jump for the study window, and scrambled in.

The stream of water shot over him, and past him, and splashed right and left in the study.

In the dusky Close an excited crowd was gathering.

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"BUNTER'S BANKNOTES!"

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Voices yelled out to know what was the matter. The Famous Five, almost doubled up with laughter at the success of their scheme, roared to Coker to "go it!"

But Coker did not need any urging.

He was going in.

He plunged headlong in at the study window, and stumbled over Mr. Prout, who had been floored again by the stream of water catching him under the chin.

Coker's natural conclusion was that the Form-master had been overcome by the smoke, and he was too excited to observe that there wasn't much smoke in the study. There was some, because the flooding water had drenched the fire, and made it smoke. There was not enough to have overcome Mr. Prout, but Coker didn't think of that. All he thought of was that he was there to rescue his Form-master, and, above all, to show the real value of the Fifth-Form Fire Brigade.

"Oh! Ah! Yow! Help!" came in stuttering accents from Mr. Prout, as the burly Coker stumbled over him.

"I'm here, sir!" panted Coker. "I've come to save you! I'll have you out of the window in a jiffy!"

"What! How—who—ah—oh—dear me—help—yah!"

Coker had no time to listen to Mr. Prout's wild ejaculations.

He seized him in his strong arms, and whirled him to the window.

"Potter—Greene—here—take him—quick!"

"What—Coker—help—mad—insane—oh—oooh!"

Mr. Prout was whirled bodily through the window, and received into the arms of Greene and Fitzgerald.

They rushed him away into the Close, and set him down, gasping.

"Sure, you're safe now!" panted Fitzgerald.

"Help! Dr. Locke! Oh, I am drenched! Help! Mr. Quelch! Oh, dear! I shall catch cold! Oh! What—what—what—"

"All serene!" shouted Coker from the study window.

"The fire's out now—not a spark left. Shut off that water, Potter! Why, you silly idiot— Grooh!" Coker disappeared into the study for a moment. Potter was not apparently eager to shut off the water. He bobbed up again, roaring.

"You thundering ass, stop it! The fire's out!"

Then Coker scrambled out of the window.

He rushed towards his rescued Form-master, who was sitting in a pool of water, simply babbling with rage.

"Not hurt, sir? Safe and sound—what?"

"You—you villain!" raved Mr. Prout.

"Wha-a-a-at!"

"You shall be expelled from the school! You shall be flogged! Oh, dear! Dr. Locke, you see what these young villains have done!" shrieked Mr. Prout.

The Head had arrived on the scene. All Greyfriars, in fact, was on the scene now. Dr. Locke was in a state of the greatest astonishment. The crowd was buzzing with excitement.

"What ever has happened?" gasped the Head.

"Fire in Mr. Prout's study, sir," said Coker. "But it's all right; we put it out. Not a spark left, sir. I fetched Mr. Prout out by the window. He was overcome by the smoke, and calling for help. We've put it out, sir!"

"Indeed, Coker, that was very prompt—very commendable!"

"The young scoundrel!"

Dr. Locke jumped.

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



"Mr. Prout! After what Coker has done——"

"You see what he has done!" shrieked Mr. Prout, staggering to his feet, with water streaming down him. "I demand that that infamous boy—that—that criminal be expelled from the school, sir!"

"What!"

"What!" howled Coker. "Oh, he's wandering in his mind, sir! I rescued him at the risk of my life—dragged him out of the roaring flames!"

"There were no flames!" shrieked Mr. Prout. "There was no fire! There was nothing of the sort. I was sitting quietly in my study, smoking my cigar, when this—this dastard suddenly drenched me with water!"

"No fire!" stuttered Coker.

"There was none—none! Then this—this—this unspeakable young scoundrel seized me—seized me, sir, and hurled me from the window, and his ruffianly associates dragged me here!" yelled Mr. Prout.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

"But there was a fire!" howled Coker. "I—I saw the smoke; it was pouring out of the window, rolling out in clouds!"

Coker was drawing on his imagination a little. But he was very excited. For his heroic rescue to be treated in this contumelious manner was a little too much. Mr. Prout might have been at least decently grateful.

"It was the smoke of my cigar, if you saw any smoke at all!" yelled the Fifth-Form master.

"Your cigar! Oh, my hat!"

"That is an excuse—a flimsy excuse! There was no fire, Dr. Locke! This infamous young ruffian——"

"But we—we were told there was a fire!" stammered the unfortunate Coker. "A fag came along yelling fire!"

"You—you utterly absurd boy!" said the Head. "Calm yourself, Mr. Prout! Coker has made a ridiculous mistake. I cannot believe that he did this outrageous thing intentionally. Some foolish youth has played a practical joke on him, and he was stupid enough to be deceived."

"Oh, my hat!" said Coker. "But—but the kid told me there was a fire in Mr. Prout's study, and—and then I came and saw the smoke!"

"Who gave the alarm of fire?" demanded the Head, with a terrific frown.

Bob Cherry came meekly forward.

"I—I told a kid to tell Coker, sir!"

"You did, Cherry! You told a boy to make this false statement!"

"It was true, sir. There was a fire in Mr. Prout's study; I saw it myself!"

"Cherry!"

"It—it was in the grate, sir!"

"What!"

"Only a—a—a little joke on Coker, sir!"

"Go to my study at once, Cherry. You see the damage you have caused by this absurd practical joke. You will be severely caned. Coker, if you had had the slightest common-sense you would not have fallen a victim to this joke. In future I forbid you to have anything whatever to do with anything in the nature of a fire-brigade. If you are found handling a hose or anything of the kind again I will flog you!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

Mr. Prout tottered away. He was badly in need of a change. The Head followed Bob Cherry to his study. He found the rest of the Famous Five there, and eyed them grimly.

"What do you boys want?" he snapped.

"If you please, sir, we—we were all in it!" said Harry Wharton meekly. "It—it—it was only a joke, sir!"

"Indeed! Then you will share Cherry's punishment!"

The punishment was not light. When the Famous Five quitted the Head's study a quarter of an hour later they were doubled up, and simply crawling. For the next hour nothing was heard in No. 1 Study but groans and moans—what time Dicky Nugent & Co. were enjoying a feed in the Second-Form room, with a three-pound pot of jam and a pound of doughnuts.

As for Horace Coker, he felt as if life were not worth living. The Fifth-Form Fire Brigade received a thousand lines each from their infuriated Form-master, and were

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gated for a week. And the fire-brigade had come to a sudden end. Coker very nearly came to a sudden end, too, at the hands of the brigade. It took Potter and Greene and the rest a whole hour to tell Coker what they thought of him. And they swore solemnly to slaughter him if he ever so much as whispered the word "fire-brigade" in their hearing again. But Coker was not likely to whisper it. Coker was a stickler, but there were limits. Even Horace Coker was fed up with fire-brigades.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Mark Linley—Hero!

HARRY WHARTON stirred and awoke.

It was past midnight, and the school was deep in slumber.

But the Famous Five were not sleeping so soundly as usual. That terrific licking they had received in the Head's study had not yet ceased from troubling. So the weary were not wholly at rest.

On consideration the chums of the Remove had agreed that it was worth it. The rival fire-brigade had been covered with ridicule. Coker could not show his face in public without being chipped. All the same, it was very painful.

Wharton turned his head on the pillow. As he did so he caught a reflection on the window—a dancing reflection of light.

He sat up in bed.

"My hat!"

Another glance, and he was out of bed, and dashing to the dormitory window. There was no doubt about it—through the deep gloom of the night there came a ruddy reflection of flame.

"Fire!"

There was no doubt; it was a real fire. Somewhere in the school precincts. It did not take Wharton long to ascertain where. It was the sanatorium.

"Fire! Wake up, you chaps!"

The Remove woke up as Wharton's voice rang through the dormitory. The captain of the Remove was already bundling into his clothes.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What the——"

"Wharton, what——"

"Fire! Turn out! The sanatorium's on fire!"

"Great Scott!"

The Famous Five were dressed—or half-dressed—in a twinkling. Now was their chance. But they were not thinking of that. They were thinking of Billy Bunter, sleeping in the sanatorium. The building was on fire, and Bunter was in danger.

Nearly the whole Remove had turned out of bed, but the Famous Five were the first out of the dormitory. Bob Cherry rushed off to ring the alarm-bell. The others bundled out of a window into the Close, and raced for the sanatorium. After them came Tom Brown and Mark Linley and Penfold. And after them a crowd of other fellows, half-dressed and yelling:

"Fire! Fire!"

Harry Wharton & Co. raced across the Head's garden and arrived at the sanatorium. It was a small, two-storey building standing alone. Flames were bursting out of the lower windows. The alarm had already reached Gosling, and he had arrived, half-dressed, on the spot.

"My heye!" gasped Gosling. "Mrs. Kebble's in there! My heye!"

But Mrs. Kebble was already out, wrapped in a long cloak and half fainting.

"Fire! Fire!"

"The hose—quick!" shouted Harry.

Then the Remove Fire Brigade showed the results of their practice. Almost in a twinkling the hose was rushed on the scene, connected with the hydrant, and the schoolboy firemen were pouring a flood of water upon the burning building.

"It was the chimney!" Mrs. Kebble was moaning, as she leaned heavily on the dazed Gosling. "I thought it wanted sweeping. And I was keeping up a fire all night for the hot water. And now—it must have caught, and——"



In the above illustration is depicted one of our masked batteries in action. The range of the enemy is found and the gun is sighted by means of wonderful calculations, while the gunners themselves are unable to see the mark at which they are aiming, and, of course, are also screened from the view of the enemy. Note the cover of trees which is erected to hide the battery, and also the aeroplane setting out to make a reconnaissance of the German position.

"Help! I say, you fellows, help!"
"There's Bunter!"

The fat face and glimmering spectacles of Billy Bunter appeared at an upper window. The smoke and heat had roused out the Owl of the Remove at last.

"Help!" he yelled. "Ow! Help!"

"All right, Billy! Keep your pecker up!" shouted Linley.

"Ow! Help!"

Sizzzzzzzz! went the streaming water into the flames. The fire had a firm hold on the lower part of the building, and flames and smoke were bursting out of every lower window. Columns of smoke rose about the building and rolled off into the night.

"Help! Ow! Help!"

"Come down the stairs!" shouted Squiff.

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"I can't! They're alight!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Get a ladder, somebody!"

Bunter disappeared from the window. A thick volume of smoke had enveloped him, and, coughing and spluttering, the Owl of the Remove disappeared. The whole school was turning out now, as the clang of the alarm-bell rang through the night.

Gosling deposited Mrs. Kehble on the ground, and rushed away for his ladder. A dozen fellows rushed with him to help him. What was happening to Bunter in the burning building? Mark Linley whipped off his jacket and bound it round his head. Wharton caught him by the arm.

"Hold on, Marky! You can't go in there!"

"Get the ladder—quick!" said Mark.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"BUNTER'S BANKNOTES!"

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

"The ladder! The ladder!"
 "Help!" came a feeble cry within the building.
 It was followed by silence. It was Bunter's last cry.
 Mr. Quelch arrived upon the scene, with a dressing-gown floating in the night wind. He caught Harry Wharton by the shoulder as he was rushing into the building and dragged him back.

"Wharton, are you mad? Stop!"
 "Marky's gone in, sir!" shouted Wharton. "I'm going after him!"

"Linley! Good heavens, he will be killed!"
 "Bunter's there, sir! Marky's gone for him! I'm going, too!"

"I forbid you, Wharton! Stand back, Field! Do you hear?"

The juniors hung back, chafing. Mark Linley had plunged in, and vanished in the smoke and the flames.

"Here comes the ladder!"
 Mr. Quelch was pale as death.

"They may be saved yet. Good heavens! Dr. Locke, this is terrible! Linley of the Remove has gone in for Bunter!"

"Bless my soul!" stammered the Head.

Where was Mark Linley? With his jacket bound over his face, the brave Lancashire lad was stumbling through the smoke, licked by the flames as he rushed for the stairs. The staircase was thick with smoke. Had his face been bare, the junior would have been overcome. As it was, he choked and gasped, and felt his senses reeling. There was a deafening roar round him—the roar of flames. How he won through, and up the stairs, Mark Linley never knew. But he reached the upper floor. The flames were licking up the staircase, but the upper floor was not yet burning. The smoke was dense. The Lancashire lad dragged the jacket from his face and looked about him, but he could not see a foot before his eyes. But he knew his way in the building. He remembered the window where Bunter had been seen.

In the eddying, rolling smoke he stumbled over an inert form on the floor. He bent down. His fingers touched a pair of glasses. It was Bunter.

"Bunter!"
 The fat junior was unconscious, overcome by the smoke. Mark Linley, exerting all his strength, dragged the heavy body upon his shoulder. Behind him there was a roar of flames. The staircase was ablaze now, and his retreat was cut off.

Staggering under Bunter's weight, he reeled to the window. Smoke was pouring out of the window in a black volume; through the floor under his feet he felt the heat, and in places the fire was licking through. At any minute now the floor might collapse, and send him whirling into the cauldron of heat below.

His strength was going, his brain was reeling. With a terrible effort, he dragged Bunter through the window and held him on the sill. There was a shout below:

"Here he is!"
 "The ladder! Quick—quick!"

The end of the ladder crashed on the window-sill. Coker was holding it. Harry Wharton came tearing up, and after him Squiff. Wharton grasped Bunter, and swung him back to Squiff. The insensible junior was carried down.

"Marky!"
 Mark Linley's face looked from the volume of smoke. He made an effort to climb through the window, but he was too far gone. He was reeling back into the smoke, when Wharton plunged half through the window and grasped him.

"Hold on, Marky!"
 The Lancashire lad clung to him. Wharton dragged him through the window. There was a roar as he came down the ladder with the fainting junior on his shoulders.

"Hooray!"
 It was answered by another roar from within the building. The floor had fallen through. Flames and smoke poured from the window, and myriads of sparks, as Wharton reached the ground with his burden.

"Safe and sound! Oh, Marky, old man!"
 Mark Linley leaned on Bob Cherry's shoulder, panting for breath. The fresh air revived him. Save for a few burns, he was unhurt.

"Bunter!" he gasped. "Is Bunter all right?"
 "Bunter is safe, Linley," said the Head's deep voice. "He has fainted, that is all. You are more hurt than Bunter. My dear, brave lad, you have saved a life this night!"

"Good old Marky! Bravo!" roared Bob Cherry.
 "Hooray!"

Then the Remove firemen set to work to get the fire under. Bunter was carried into the School House to bed, but Mark Linley remained with the Remove Fire Brigade, working as hard as any till the last spark was extinguished. Then, grimy and fatigued, but remarkably well satisfied with themselves, the Greyfriars Remove Volunteer Fire Brigade trooped back to the School House.

Billy Bunter was not hurt. Mark found his burns very painful for a week or more; but they were not serious, and he bore them quietly. The complaints were made by Billy Bunter. Bunter had a bruise on his head, and he told Linley that he might really have been a bit more careful getting him out—a remark which only made Mark smile.

The Remove Fire Brigade had justified its existence. Even Coker had to admit that. And Squiff, with great self-abnegation, insisted upon handing over the post of fire-captain to Mark Linley as a recognition of his great services to the brigade in covering it with glory. Mark modestly objected, but Squiff's motion was carried unanimously by the brigade, and Mark was duly elected captain—a position which he had fairly won by his gallant dash Through Fire and Flame.

THE END.

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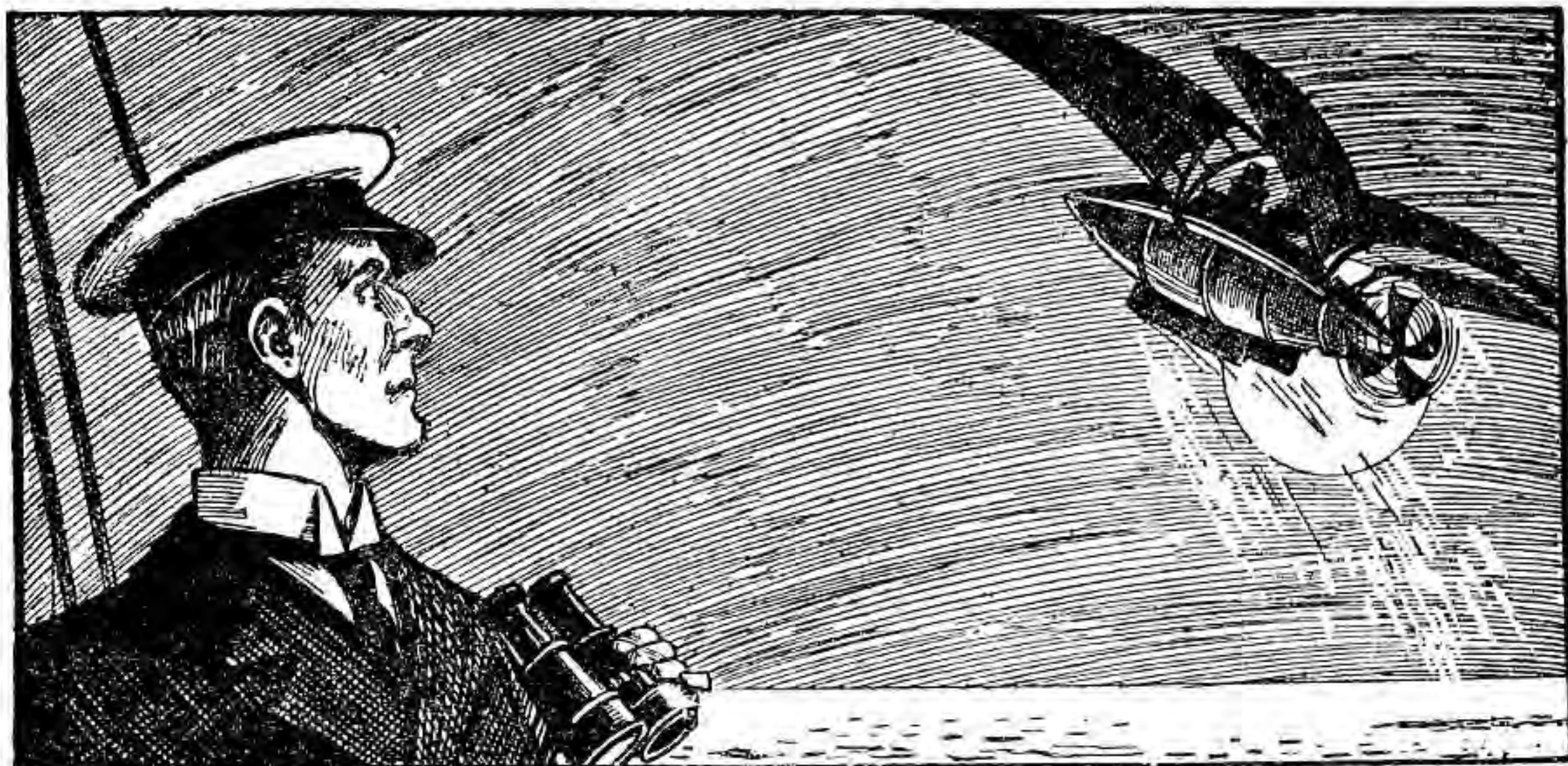
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INTRODUCTION.

The well-known millionaire, Ferrers Lord, is the inventor of a wonderful vessel known as the Unconquerable. On the trial trip this ship reveals her marvellous abilities by travelling alternately beneath the water and in the air. The Unconquerable is to be entered for the Florida Cup, in competition with a flying-machine built by Paul Guthrey and named the Icarus. The Florida Cup, together with a sum of money amounting to twenty million dollars, is being offered by an American millionaire named Lister P. Hagenbeck to the owner of the first machine that can fly fifty miles in sixty minutes.

Paul Guthrey, who is in urgent need of the prize-money, hires a gang of unscrupulous men, headed by Martin Arkland, who steal the Unconquerable, so Ferrers Lord is compelled to commence the construction of Unconquerable the Second.

Ching-Lung—a Chinese prince and a friend of Ferrers Lord—and Prout, Maddock, Barry O'Rooney, and Gan-Waga—members of the crew—go for a cruise in the meantime on the prince's yacht. They land on a small island, where they meet Martin Arkland, who is working under Senor Paravalt, a wealthy Brazilian, also employed by Paul Guthrey.

Paravalt takes Ching-Ling and his friends prisoners, with the object of preventing them taking part in the competition for the Florida Cup; but Ferrers Lord arrives in his submarine, Lord of the Deep, just in time to prevent Paravalt from sailing away from the island and leaving the prince and his comrades stranded. Ferrers Lord compels Paravalt to go on board the submarine in order that he may view the race for the cup.

All America was excited over the competition for the Florida Cup, and it was thought that Guthrey's machine, Icarus, would be the only competitor, as the existence of Unconquerable II. was not generally believed. But just as the Icarus starts on the course, the Unconquerable rises up out of the sea, and is soon following in the wake of her competitor.

Meanwhile, Martin Arkland, seeing the miscarriage of his schemes, attempts to get away in a rowing-boat but is stopped by Gan-Waga, who capsizes his boat. When Arkland reaches the surface, Gan-Waga's revolver is thrust into his face.

(Now go on with the story.)

The Great Race—And the End of the Icarus.

"Now, yo' gotted wets," grinned Gan-Waga, "and it alls yo' owns bad 'nuff faults. I nots wants to turns de boat overs, only yo' so nastiness. Ho, ho, ho, ho! De cartridges watertights, Martins, so yo' can be shots or drownededs, whichever yo' likes. Dears, dears! I nots particularfuls, Martin. Ooh, yo' swims butterfuls, Martin—like a little frogs with four lame legses. Yo' delighted to see me, hunk? Why yo' not laffs, hunk? Yo' are a nice boys."

Gan-Waga's left arm swung over and drove Arkland's head under water. Then the Eskimo fired three shots into the air.

"Backwater, souse me!" roared the voice of Ben Maddock. "Have you got the little thief, blubber-biter?"

"What yo' tink, Ben?" gurgled the amphibious Eskimo. "I just pushes hims down so dat he nots see yo' comings, and run away. Ohmi, ohmi! Here he come ups, ups, upsy! Isn't he a butterfuls divers, hunk? Take him homes and put him through the mangles, Ben. Oh, do be kindful to hims, Ben!"

Arkland was dragged into the boat. Gan-Waga emptied the revolver to celebrate the victory, and swam for the submarine.

"Is she gaining?" asked Rupert Thurston. "My hands shake so that I can hardly keep my glasses to my eyes."

"Caramba! I am in the same plight," added Diaz Paravalt. "This is no sight for a man with a weak heart, Senor Thurston. Poor Guthrey! What must he be suffering now! Icarus! Icarus! She widens the gap! Unconquerable falls behind! Viva, Icarus!"

The spell was broken, and a mighty cheer burst out. The distance between the two tiny cones that hung against the background of blue sky seemed to be increasing. It was hard to judge for the leader was fifteen miles away. Both were travelling on even keel. The British aeronef was flying at an altitude of about two thousand five hundred feet, the Icarus kept much lower.

"Ten miles—Icarus, 10 minutes 27 seconds. Unconquerable, 10 minutes, 41 seconds."

Men with megaphones thundered the news the moment it

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 370.

NEXT
MONDAY—**"BUNTER'S BANKNOTES!"****A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.**

was signalled. At first the crowd refused to believe the figures. It was practically the speed of an express train. But when repeated by telephone and telegraph, there was no alteration. And America was winning. All was pandemonium. Scores of cornets and other noisy instruments struck up "Yankee Doodle," and "Hail Columbia," but the strains were smothered in the roar. The one person whose blood was not at fever heat was the "mad Englishman." Hal Honour stood at the deserted buffet of the club, helping himself to sandwiches and bottled beer. He walked to the open window and shaded his eyes with his hand. The engineer smiled as he listened to the tempest of cheering. He took a couple of small circular mirrors from his pocket, and, catching the sunlight on one, he deflected the rays to the other.

A succession of long and short flashes answered his simple little heliograph from the bows of the submarine, and the engineer laughed.

"Yes, we've got Arkland safe," flickered the helio. "What can Unconquerable do? We are feeling anxious."

The reply set Barry O'Roonney, Maddock, Prout, and Herr Schwartz howling like maniacs, and Joe and Gan-Waga helped in the chorus. They joined hands, and danced round Thurston, Ching-Lung, and Diaz Paravalt, not like sensible, grown-up, civilised men, but like a pack of wild cannibals who had just captured a plump missionary. The excitable little cook threatened to become absolutely delirious. He danced and howled until he could dance and howl no more. Then he embraced the flagstaff to support himself, murmuring incoherently that there would be sausages for breakfast.

"Yell, yell, yell, ye haythens!" cried Barry, addressing the crowd. "Truth, ye'll have plenty of time to give your windpipes a rest presently. Hurroo! That'll stop ye, Oi think! Look at her, look at her! Unconquerable! Unconquerable! That's shut 'em up! Hurroo!"

The frantic cheering died away, and ended in a sound that oddly resembled a sob. The Unconquerable gave a downward plunge to the same level as the Icarus. The gap between the two aeronefs began to diminish perceptibly. The Unconquerable was creeping up slowly but surely.

"By all the snakes in Indiana, it'll be a race," said Ted Holland. "Gee-whizz! The Britisher's built of greased lightning!"

Icarus was beaten! The gap grew narrower and narrower till it seemed but a handbreadth. Then, with a terrific burst of speed, Unconquerable the Second leapt clear by three times her own length. Faster and faster still. She was like a racehorse matched against a mule. She might have been a projectile hurled from the throat of some enormous gun.

The roar of her propellers sounded like distant thunder. Louder and louder it grew. The bitter sting of defeat was forgotten in wonder and admiration. The vast crowd swayed and rocked, and cheer followed cheer. The Unconquerable glided gently in between the masts, and the boom of a gun signified that the race was over, and that the Florida Cup had been lost and won.

Humming and quivering, the aeronef remained poised barely fifty feet from the ground. A man, whose face was concealed by a black mask, looked down.

With difficulty the police and troops kept back the surging crowd. The aeronef sank, and a rope ladder touched the sand. There was a cause. The signaller on the roof of the clubhouse was heliographing to make sure that the victorious aeronef had taken the proper course.

"All right!" thundered a megaphone.

Hal Honour seized the trembling ladder.

"There can be no doubt that I have fairly won, Mr. Holland," he said.

"Won? Gee-whizz! You've just knocked the whole bottom out of the earth!" answered the Yankee. "Yes, sir, you've won; you've paralysed us! As I'm a gentleman, I'll see that your bets are honourably paid, but I'm not so sure that you'll handle all the stakes. Here's the Florida Cup, Mr. Honour!"

Honour took the splendid gold trophy, bowed, and handed it back to Holland.

"I shall be grateful if you, as president, will accept this on behalf of the Aero Club, Mr. Holland," said the engineer, "as a memento of the first real contest between two flying-machines. I merely leave the trophy in your custody. If anyone desires to challenge my right to it, nothing will please me more than to defend my title. Gentlemen, I thank you for your courtesy and kindness!"

He climbed the ladder, paused to wave his hat, and passed through an open manhole. The sliding door closed and hid him.

The Icarus had been completely forgotten; for her conqueror was the centre of all attraction, the cynosure of all eyes.

What had happened to the Icarus? Paul Guthrey had not attempted to complete the course. To the general amazement it was seen that the beaten aeronef was heading away to the north-west. Could it be that her inventor had lost control of her steering gear? They were ready enough to cheer their beaten champion, for although the Icarus had met more than her match in the peerless Unconquerable, she was still a power to be reckoned with.

Ted Holland watched her steadily.

Surely the millionaire was not ashamed to face defeat from such a redoubtable antagonist! Then in some mysterious fashion a hint of the truth swept like wildfire through the crowd. The Icarus was running away, if such a term can be used.

Ur-r-r-r! The Unconquerable's propellers roared as she leapt seaward. Ur-r-r-r!

"Full speed!" cried the deep voice of the masked steersman. "Take the wheel, Honour!"

Ferrers Lord took off his mask. There was a tinge of colour in his usually pale cheeks, and his eyes were sparkling.

"They have overtaken her, Hal, as I knew they would!" he shouted. "She has broken down."

The engineer nodded. The Icarus had swung broadside on, with her stern dipping dangerously. She rose slowly, but it was plain to see that she was in difficulties. The spectators held their breath as she began to sink again. The slant increased. Like a winged racehorse of the skies the Unconquerable tore to the rescue.

There they were side by side, the Icarus gently sinking, and almost vertical, the Unconquerable on an even keel. The two vessels resembled a black cross. No one could tell what was happening. Suddenly the Unconquerable backed away. A cloud of smoke obscured her bows, and the Icarus, a mass of torn and shattered wreckage, hurtled down and plunged into the sea. Then the dull boom of a gun rolled across the water.

Ferrers Lord had won the game. The Unconquerable sank gently, dived, and vanished.

The shell that had sent the Icarus to destruction had done its work thoroughly. Portions of the wreck were raised, but the craftiest brains failed to read the riddle. And where was Paul Guthrey, the inventor? Where was Unconquerable the Second? The stakes and wagers were duly claimed by Messrs. Gannet, Purley, & Saltash. But the directors of the great bank were as silent as oysters when questioned about their mysterious client. Then came the astounding news that the vast firm of Paul Guthrey & Co. was in liquidation, and that thousands of shareholders were ruined.

"Poor beggar!" said Ching-Lung. "That explains why he took such risks to steal your secret, Lord. It would have saved him. Don't be too hard on him. The victor can afford to be merciful."

"We must be just first, Ching," answered the millionaire, with a smile. "I shall look after the shareholders and reorganise the business. As for Paul Guthrey—well, his future depends on himself. If he is worthy, I do not intend to crush him. Arkland is the more dangerous of the two, so we must make him useful." He glanced down to where the aero-submarine floated beside the Lord of the Deep. "I think that Unconquerable really lives up to her name," he added. "And yet she is a mere toy to the vessel I have in my mind."

THE END.

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FOR NEXT MONDAY:

"BUNTER'S BANKNOTES!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.

In our next grand, long complete story of the chums of Greyfriars, Billy Bunter, whose strange antics of late have given endless amusement to "Magnet" readers, again comes into the limelight. The fat junior's colossal remittances, brought about by the speculations of Bunter senior on the Stock Exchange, have evaporated, and the horn of plenty has been completely drained. The Owl of the Remove does not, however, relish being in the state which is called "stony," and accordingly sets his wits to work to raise the wind. This he succeeds in doing in a most mysterious manner, and fairly astonishes the natives by getting sundry banknotes into his possession. It afterwards transpires, however, that he has fallen into the clutches of a couple of clever rogues, and the Greyfriars fellows are considerably amused to find that

"BUNTER'S BANKNOTES!"

though genuine enough so far as outward appearances go, are in reality destitute of cash value.

A HUMOROUS EPISTLE.

The contents of my morning post-bag are of a varied kind, as may be expected when several hundred letters arrive daily. The majority of these communications are, I am glad to say, of a most loyal and enthusiastic nature, but I not infrequently receive letters of quite a different order, the writers of which are obviously hankering after cheap notoriety.

The following precious epistle is a fair specimen of those I have lately been receiving. So utterly ridiculous, and, I venture to say, falsified, are the writer's statements that it would be a mere waste of time and energy on the part of my staunch chums to rise in arms against him. He must be regarded more in sorrow than in anger. However, I reproduce his letter exactly as I received it, and have no doubt that all Magnetites who read it will be greatly amused:

"Most Honourable Sir (?).—Myself and numerous friends beg leave to ask you to give us yur permission to form a Anti-Magnet Club. We have but one ideal in life, i.e., to squash the 'Magnet' and its works of iniquity. The blood-thirsty tails contained therein are not fit for any boy to read.

"I am constantly taking this vile paper from the pupels in my form, and these are the most depravitated set I have in my 30 year of experience as a master of a public school, come across.

"I have know doubt whatever but that you will not publish this letter, but if published I shall be pleased to anser any questions upon the subject. I remain for ever, a Anti-Magnetite,
 S. P. S."

I might mention that among all the schoolmasters of my acquaintance I have never yet found one so utterly ignorant of the rudiments of English composition and spelling as S. P. S. This being so, it would seem that my amiable correspondent is not a master at a public school at all, but some juvenile practical joker. Such jokes, however, are not in the best of taste, and I should advise S. P. S., for his own good, to discontinue his unguarded deceptions, or he may run himself into serious trouble.

A SPIRITED RALLY.

One of my West Norwood chums, who controls a splendid "Magnet" and "Gem" Club in his district, has been good enough to send me a copy of the amateur magazine which is produced monthly for the purpose of recording the club's doings and inspiring all true Magnetites to rally round the banner and work shoulder to shoulder in the interests of the companion papers.

The magazine in question makes very interesting reading, and its youthful editor is to be highly commended. I have pleasure in reproducing the opening verses of a stirring "call to arms" which is contained in the March number:

RALLY ROUND!

- " 'Magnet' readers, one and all,
 Hear our League's entrancing call!
 Come, you fellows, on the ball!
 Rally round!
- " 'Gemites,' filled with splendid zeal,
 Free and faithful, true as steel;
 Put your shoulder to the wheel!
 Rally round!
- " Ye who read the 'Penny Pop,'
 Do not let your spirits drop;
 Don't be caught upon the hop!
 Rally round!
- " 'Dreadnought' chums, so staunch and true,
 Show the League what you can do!
 Now, then, lads, it's up to you!
 Rally round!
- " Ever steadfast and sincere
 To the books you hold so dear,
 Speed them on their high career!
 Rally round!"

I think that if this same spirit of enthusiasm prevailed everywhere I should possess more readers than I could conveniently cope with. They would be "as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the seashore, innumerable." Exactly how many new Magnetites have been enrolled through the splendid efforts of the West Norwood League I cannot say, but I should imagine that a goodly number of non-readers had been won over to our ranks.

The president of the League to which I refer assures me that he is still open to receive additional members, also fresh subscribers to his magazine. All communications on either subject should be addressed to Mr. William E. J. Pike, 127, Knight's Hill, West Norwood, S.E., who, provided a stamped addressed envelope is enclosed in each case, will be pleased to furnish "Magnet" readers with all the information they desire.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

C. & H. Cooper (Leicester).—Kipps is still at Greyfriars, and you will certainly hear more of him anon.

W. H. L.—Many thanks for your long letter and suggestion. The latter is very good, but, I am sorry to say, impracticable.

"Natty" (Edinburgh).—Keep a packet of acid-drops in your pocket, and place one in your mouth whenever you feel the desire to smoke. The flavour of the sweet will destroy the craving; but I should have thought your will-power would have been equal to the task.

"Jimmy."—I don't see that your friend need worry about having big feet. As for those who are caddish enough to mock him on that account, their ignorant conduct should be utterly ignored. They don't read the MAGNET, I'll be bound.

The Editor

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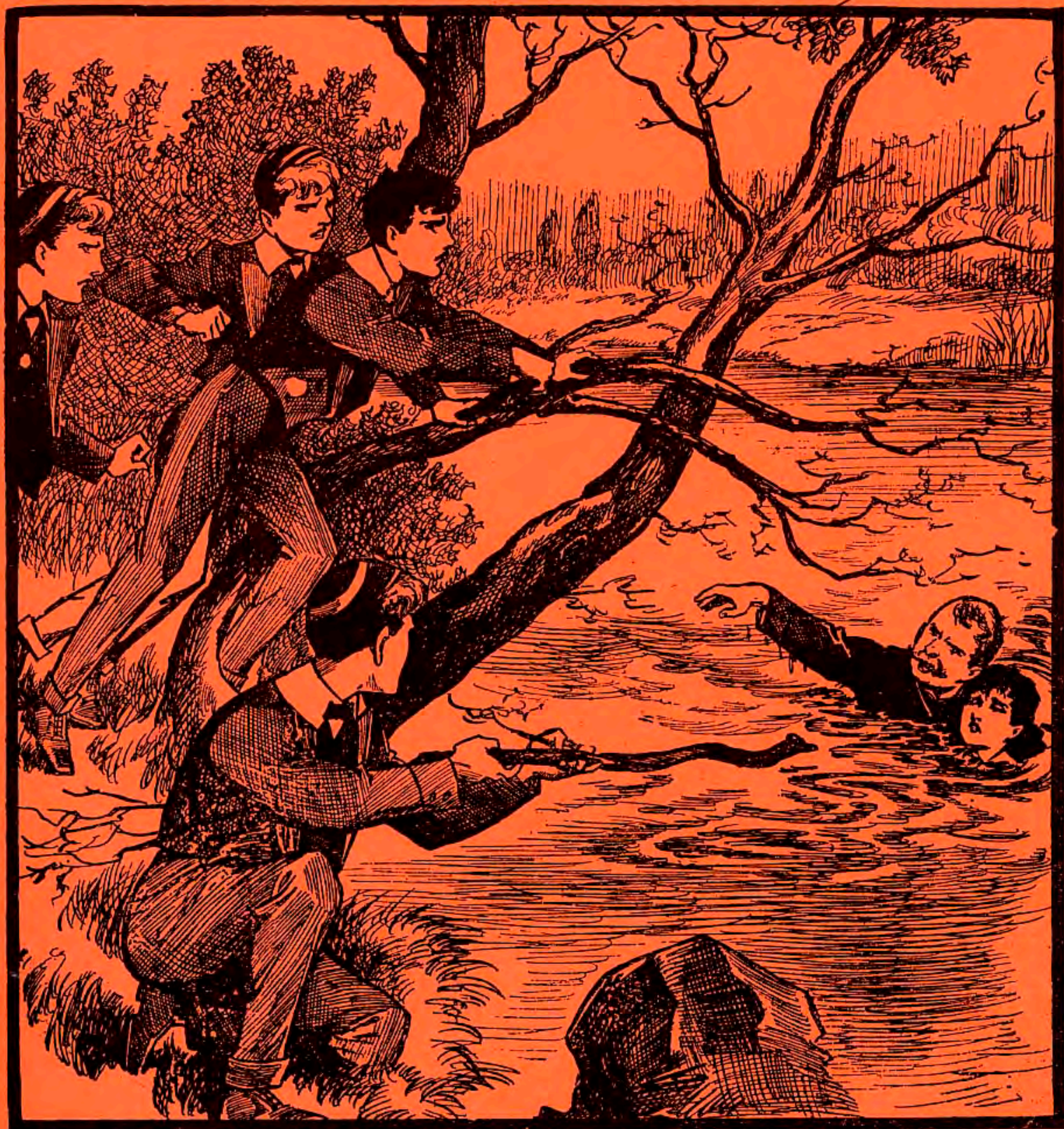
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