

"BUNTER'S BANKNOTES!"

A Magnificent Long Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars. By Frank Richards.



BILLY AND SAMMY BUNTER IN THE COINERS' HANDS!

(An Exciting Scene in the great tale of School Life contained in this Issue.)

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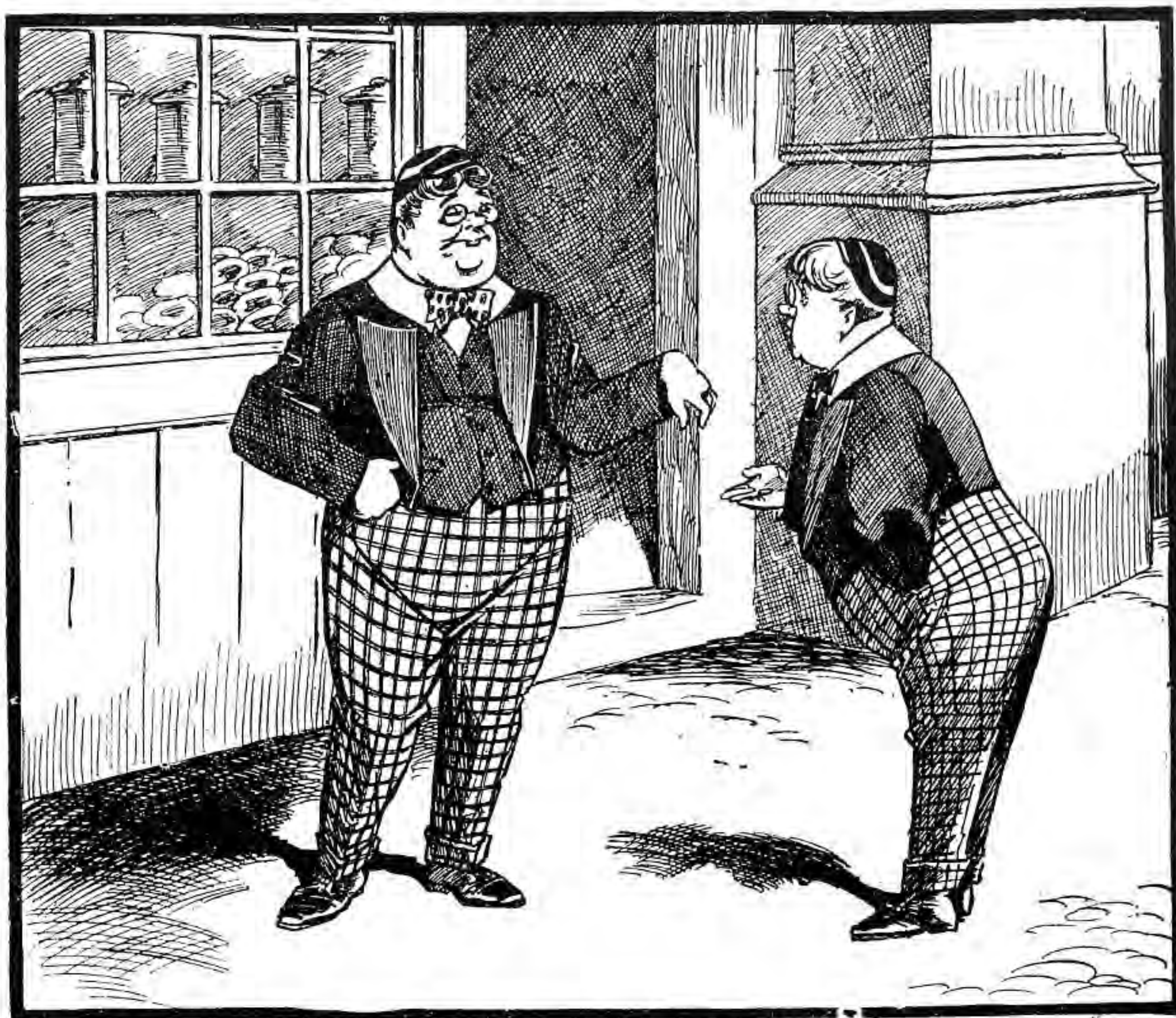


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'BUNTER'S BANKNOTES!'

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

By FRANK RICHARDS.



Billy Bunter extracted a half-sovereign from his pocket, which he had received in change for one of his pound notes, and gave it to his minor with a lordly air. He could afford to be generous—having found the horn of plenty. "There you are, young 'un!" he said. (See Chapter 9.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Ins and Outs!

BILLY BUNTER came into his study, No. 7 in the Remove passage at Greyfriars, with startling suddenness.

Peter Todd, his study-mate, was sitting at the table doing lines. Peter gave a jump as Bunter came in.

It was like a flash. The door flew open, and Bunter flew in, and the door slammed again behind him.

Billy Bunter sat on the study carpet and roared. "Yow!"

"You silly ass!" shouted Peter. "What do you mean by coming into the study like a jumping kangaroo?"

"Grooh!"

"You've made me drop ninety blots on this impot, you

fat chump. Can't you walk into a study?" demanded Peter indignantly.

"Ow! Ow!"

Peter Todd stared at his imposition, which was too liberally ornamented with blots to be taken into Mr. Quelch's study. Then he stared at Bunter again, and picked up a ruler.

"You potty porpoise!" said Peter. "If you want to try gymnastics and acrobatic tricks, you can do it in the gym, not in the study. I'll—"

"Yow! Keep off, you fathead! I didn't do it!" roared Bunter. "You howling ass, I was chucked in!"

Peter held back the ruler just in time.

"Oh, you were chucked in, were you?" he said. "And who chucked you in?"

"Those beasts, Bob Cherry and Wharton," groaned Bunter, setting his glasses straight on his fat little nose.

"Oh, dear! I've had a shock. Yow!"

"And why did they chuck you in?"

"Because they're beasts—yow, keep that ruler away, you rotter! Because they're going out on a picnic!" howled Bunter.

"Rats!" said Peter. "I don't see why they should chuck a porpoise into my study simply because they're going on a picnic. Take that, and—"

"Wow—wow! I wanted to go with them!" yelled Bunter. "Chuck it, you fathead! You see, Marjorie is going to be with them, so I pointed out to Bob Cherry that I simply had to go, because Marjorie's rather gone on me, you know—yow-ow! Keep that ruler away—and then the beasts picked me up and threw me in here. Ow!"

Billy Bunter scrambled up and dodged the ruler.

"Well, one good turn deserves another," said Peter Todd. "You've been chucked in—so now you're going to be chucked out!"

"I—I say, Toddy—" The Owl of the Remove dodged round the table. "D-d-don't be a beast, you know. I've got an idea." He dodged again, pausing for breath.

"I say, Toddy, wouldn't it be a lark—he, he, he—"

"Wouldn't what be a lark, you gurgling porpoise?"

"I've got an idea, Toddy. Suppose we get some of the fellows together, and follow the rotters, and raid their feed? They're getting a ripping spread, and I think they're going to the old priory. We could rush them, you know, and collar the tuck, and—and—"

"And what about Marjorie?" demanded Peter.

"Oh, she'd be jolly glad to have me with her instead of Wharton and that crowd," said Bunter confidently.

"She's rather gone on me, you know—Yow-ow! Keep off! Oh, you beast, Toddy!"

Peter Todd's strong hands were upon the Owl of the Remove. He jerked the door open, whirled Bunter through the doorway, and tossed him into the passage.

There was a loud bump in the passage as Bunter alighted on the linoleum, and five juniors who were chatting outside No. 1 Study turned to look at him. They were Harry Wharton & Co., the Famous Five of the Remove.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, here he is again!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "We told you to stay in your study till we were gone, Bunter. You can't expect us to take the trouble of chucking you in over and over again."

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Collar him," said Nugent.

"Leggo!" roared Bunter. "That beast, Todd, chucked me out, I tell you—"

"Can't help that," said Harry Wharton. "Todd's not going to leave his rubbish about the passage like this. Heave-ho! All hands on deck!"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh threw open the door of No. 7; and Wharton and Nugent, Bob Cherry and Squiff, grasped the fat junior all together, swung him off the floor, and tossed him into the study. Hurree Singh closed the door again, as Bunter bumped on the carpet, and the Famous Five walked away chuckling.

Peter Todd gave a roar of wrath as the study shook under Bunter's weight. He had done only two lines of his new impot, when that terrific shock sent a fresh shower of blots spurting from his pen. He jumped up in great wrath.

"At it again! My hat, I'll—"

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Bunter yelled.

"Ow! I couldn't help it, you idiot! Do you think I like it, you ass? Those beasts have chucked me in again!"

"Then I'll jolly soon chuck you out again," said Peter, grasping him forcibly. "They're not going to chuck rubbish into my study in this way. I can keep it up as long as they can, I fancy."

Peter dragged open the door, and once more the yelling Bunter went bumping into the passage. The yell he gave as he landed there might have been heard half across the Close. It was echoed by a shout from the Famous Five.

"Here he comes again! Collar him!"

"Yow, you beasts! I won't—yow—leggo—that beast, Todd—I say, you fellows—oh, crumbs! Oh, jiminy!"

Up went Bunter in four strong pairs of hands, and Inky opened the door again. Bump! Bunter landed once more on the study carpet. Peter Todd simply jumped at him. As he had said, he was prepared to keep it up as long as the Famous Five. Peter Todd could always be relied upon to keep his end up.

"Out you go!" he gasped, as he yanked Bunter off the carpet.

"Oh! I say, Toddy, 'tain't my fault—oh, dear, I'm hurt—yow-ow—Toddy, old man—oh, crikey!"

Bump!

Once more William George Bunter was sitting in the passage, and the study door slammed after him. There was a whoop from the Famous Five that would have done credit to a war-party of Red Indians.

"Collar him! Our turn again!"

Billy Bunter scrambled to his feet barely in time, and fled wildly down the passage. Bunter was not an active youth; but he was very active just then. He fairly flew, with the Famous Five whooping after him. Bunter's statement that Marjorie Hazeldene was "gone" on him, as he elegantly expressed it, made them merciless. But fear lent Bunter wings. He did the length of the Remove passage in record time, and flew up the stairs. Just escaping Bob Cherry's grasp, he bolted into a box-room, slammed the door, and turned the key. Then he sank down on an empty trunk to pump in breath.

The Famous Five, chuckling, returned to No. 1 Study. Billy Bunter was not likely to trouble them any more just yet. In No. 1 Study, a large lunch-basket reposed on the table, closely packed with all sorts of good things from the school shop. It was a half-holiday at Greyfriars, and the Famous Five were taking advantage of the sunny spring weather to hold the first picnic of the season, in company with their girl chums from Cliff House School. The honour of William George Bunter's company was not desired, to judge by his late experiences in and out of No. 1 Study.

The chums of the Remove found Hazeldene in the study. Hazel was Marjorie's brother, which was the greatest recommendation he had.

"I came here for you," said Hazel, "where have you been off to?"

"Only looking after Bunter," said Bob Cherry, with a chuckle. "Ready? Then let's get off."

Bob Cherry picked up the big lunch-basket, and the party started. They were to call at Cliff House for Marjorie and Clara. From the high window of a box-room, two little round eyes blinked behind a large pair of glasses, and watched them go. Billy Bunter shook a fat fist after the departing picnicers.

"Beasts!" he growled.

Then Billy Bunter set his wits to work. For Bill Bunter, that afternoon, was in the unpleasant state known as "stony"; and Billy Bunter was determined that he would be on the scene when the picnic started, though the skies should fall.

THE SECOND CHAPTER:

Bunter's Army!

"SKINNER, old chap—"

Skinner of the Remove was standing outside the school shop, with his hands in his pockets, regarding, with a wistful eye, the good things in Mrs. Mible's little window. He brightened up as Billy Bunter poked him in the ribs.

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"Hallo, Bunter!" Skinner was quite cordial. "Coming into the tuckshop, old chap?"

A few weeks before, Skinner would probably have acknowledged that poke in the ribs by knocking Bunter's cap off, or calling him some complimentary names. But of late, Skinner, and some more fellows, had been very civil to Bunter. For on many occasions during the past few weeks, Billy Bunter had been in great funds.

Bunter, the most impecunious fellow at Greyfriars, the borrower of deadly skill, who could extract loans as a dentist extracts teeth, had never had much politeness wasted on him before. But Bunter in funds was quite a different Bunter. Of course, the fellows hadn't believed it at first, and howls of laughter had greeted his statement that his pater had made money on the Stock Exchange. But "money talks," as Fisher T. Fish declared; and Bunter had had quite a heap of money. So it was no longer surprising to see him in funds, and he was worth being polite to. Unfortunately for Bunter, his money never lasted long. Mrs. Mumble always did quite a thriving business when Bunter had any cash, and it all went the same way. So that now the Owl of the Remove had ups and down—periods of great plenty, alternating with periods of famine, like the fat years and the lean years in Egypt of old.

As it happened, this special afternoon was one of the lean years, so to speak. But as Skinner was not aware of that, Skinner was smiling his sweetest and friendliest smile.

"Feel like a picnic?" asked Bunter.

"What-ho!" said Skinner. "Those rotters have just gone out on a picnic. Never thought of asking me."

"Well, I ask you," said Bunter. "Look here, Skinner, get together seven or eight chaps——"

"My hat!"

"Bring 'em into the Rag, and I'll tell 'em all about it. It's a regular ripping feed—a real corker!"

"Rely on me," said Skinner.

Billy Bunter rolled off to the School House with a fat smile of satisfaction. He had laid a really ripping plan. He had a strong suspicion that the old priory in Friar-dale Wood was to be the scene of the Famous Five's picnic. And he had schemed to raid that picnic, knock the picnickers into a cocked hat, and collar the feed. It was a very bold scheme for Bunter to scheme, as he was not a great fighting-man, and the Famous Five were fistical heroes. But numbers would tell. With about two to one in their favour, Bunter's army would carry the day—the Famous Five would be put to ignominious flight, and the feed would remain to the conquerors—to the victor the spoils.

Billy Bunter waited in the Rag for the recruits to arrive. Snoop was the first fellow to come in. Snoop looked at Bunter, and then looked round the Rag, and seemed puzzled.

"Where is it?" asked Snoop.

"Eh! Where's what?"

"Skinner told me there was a feed."

"So there is," said Bunter. "Not here. Wait till you're all here, and we're going out to the feed."

"Oh, good!" said Snoop. "I didn't know you were in funds again, Billy." Bunter was Billy to his dear friends when he was in funds.

"Hallo!" said Fisher T. Fish, the American junior, as he came in. "I guess I'm on, Bunter. Where's the feed?"

"All in good time," said Bunter.

Bolsover major came in with Stott. They, too, looked round inquiringly, evidently expecting to find the feed there present, in the Rag. Bolsover grunted when he was told to wait for the rest to arrive. Bunter intended to explain his scheme when the whole army was collected. Bolsover, the bully of the Remove, did not like waiting, and he was only half inclined to honour Bunter's feed with his lordly presence, anyway. However, he waited.

Ogilvy and Morgan and Wibley came in next. They weren't chums of Bunter's, but a feed was a feed. Then came Alonzo Todd and Micky Desmond, and Skinner himself. The forces were collected. Including Bunter, there were eleven fellows, and the Owl of the Remove considered that his army was quite strong enough to deal with the Famous Five and Hazeldene. He had mapped it out nicely in his mind. He was going to give directions, like a really good general, while the mere fighting was done

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by the other fellows. After the victory, there was the feed to follow, graced by the presence of Marjorie and Clara. Bunter had not the slightest doubt that the Cliff House girls would be willing, indeed eager, to exchange the Famous Five's company for his.

"Well, here we are," said Skinner. "Now, about that picnic, Bunter. There's enough of us—what?"

"Oh, rather!" assented Bunter. "We shall be able to handle 'em."

"Eh! Handle whom?" asked Skinner, in surprise.

"Those beasts, Wharton and the rest," explained Bunter. "You see, we're going to collar their picnic."

"What!" ejaculated Bolsover major.

"I'm going to lead you," explained Bunter. "We're going to drop on the rotters, give 'em a hiding, and collar the feed. See?"

"I understood you were standing a feed!" yelled Skinner, glaring at the Owl of the Remove. The prospect of a pitched battle instead of a picnic did not appeal to Harold Skinner in the least.

"It's just the same; I'm going to lead you——"

"You lead!" snorted Bolsover major contemptuously.

"Yes, I'm likely to follow your lead, you porpoise—I don't think!"

"Oh, really, Bolsover——"

"I guess it's no go," said Fisher T. Fish. "I kinder reckon I'd rather you stood the feed yourself, Bunter. I'm not looking for a scrap."

"Same here," said Snoop. "You stand the feed, Bunter."

"Hear, hear!"

"It's up to you, Bunter."

"I—I'd stand it like anything," said Bunter. "But, you see, I can't."

"Why can't you?" demanded Skinner.

"I'm stony."

"Stony!" shouted the new army, with one voice, in every tone of anger and indignation and astonishment.

"Yes, I say, you fellows, you see I've been disappointed about a postal-order. But this is a really good wheeze, you know. They've got a ripping picnic, and we——"

"Rats!"

"I'll lead you——"

"Bosh!"

"I say, you fellows——" protested Bunter feebly. He had felt quite a Kitchener with his new army; but somehow the recruits did not seem to take to the idea at all. They were not going on the war-path.

Bolsover major raised his hand.

"You've fetched us here, Bunter," he said. "You'll stand the feed."

"I c-c-can't."

"Oh, rot! If your pater's been swindling on the Stock Exchange, as you've been bragging, he can let you have some of the loot, I suppose. My belief is that you are rolling in ill-gotten cash. You'll stand that feed."

"I can't!" yelled Bunter. "I'm stony! You follow my lead——"

"You can't!" ejaculated Bolsover major. "Then you've fetched me here for nothing, you fat oyster! Take that!"

"Yaroo!"

Bolsover major plumped Billy Bunter down on the floor, and strode out of the Rag in great indignation. Billy Bunter sat on the floor and gasped for breath.

"I—I s-say, you fellows, now that beast's gone, you'll follow my lead——"

"I guess I'll follow you to the tuckshop," said Fisher T. Fish. "I kinder calculate that I don't follow you anywhere else."

"Don't I keep on telling you I'm stony!" roared Bunter.

"Then take that!"

"Yow-ow!"

"And that!" howled Skinner wrathfully.

"Gerrooo!"

"And that! And that! And that! And that!" chorussed the rest of the army, as they gathered indignantly round Bunter. "You fat spoofer! And that! And that! And that!"

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"THE HUN HUNTERS!"

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry
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Every member of the new army bestowed a kindly attention on Bunter—a shove, or a cuff, or a kick—and then they marched out of the Rag. Billy Bunter was left alone, sitting on the floor in a dazed condition, groping wildly for his glasses, and panting for breath. It was ten minutes at least before he recovered wind enough to scramble up, and limp disconsolately out of the Rag. Bunter as a generalissimo was evidently not popular. The new army had vanished, and Billy Bunter was left to carry out his raid, if he chose, on his own.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Trouble for Two!

"HERE we are again!" said Bob Cherry.

The six juniors, carrying the big lunch-basket in turn, came tramping through the woods, green and fragrant in the spring sunshine. The old priory, embosomed in the green woods, had come into sight. In that picturesque old ruin, the Greyfriars fellows often picnicked in summer days, and they had chosen the old place as the scene of the first picnic of the season. It was a solitary spot, a good distance from the village and from any habitation, and they expected to have it all to themselves.

Of the old building, only shattered walls and broken doorways remained, and it was open to the skies of heaven, and the interior was green with grass and bushes. The underground part of the old place was quite intact, and more than once the Removites had explored the dismal vaults, and the damp, dark passage that led away towards the crypt at Greyfriars. Long centuries before, when Greyfriars had been a monastic establishment, there had been a connection between the two buildings. And to judge by the drinking vessels and other relics discovered in the ruins, the old friars had not had a bad time, in the far-distant days of King John.

Squiff, the Australian, was much more keenly interested in the relics of former days than the Greyfriars fellows. He was never tired of pottering about ruins, and reading ancient, half-decipherable inscriptions.

"Jolly old place," remarked Sampson Quincy Ifley Field. "Hallo! There's somebody on the premises."

The chums of the Remove were entering through the ancient doorway, of which little but two blocks of masonry remained. It was arranged for Bob Cherry and Wharton to fetch their chums from Cliff House, while the other fellows were preparing the camp. They had fully expected to find the ruins as solitary as usual, but they were disappointed.

Near the entrance to the old vaults—a yawning opening in the heavy mass of ancient masonry—a man was sitting on a block of stone, smoking. The juniors came upon him quite suddenly as they came into the ruins, and, as he caught sight of them, the stranger started, and half rose to his feet.

He was a man of middle age, with a clean-shaven, wrinkled face and somewhat shifty little eyes. He was smoking a black pipe, and the strong scent of shag pervaded the spot. He was a stranger to the juniors, and why he had chosen that solitary spot to smoke his pipe was more than they could guess. He was bare-headed, too, and his feet were in carpet slippers. For a man to be bareheaded and in slippers in a place so far from any human habitation was surprising, to say the least.

He took the pipe from his mouth, and stared at the juniors. They looked at him in return.

"Good-afternoon!" said the stranger, after a pause.

"Good-afternoon!" said Wharton.

"What do you want here?"

"We're going to picnic."

"Oh!"

But the chums of the Remove paused. A picnic with the addition of that individual with his black pipe was not what they wanted. The rank smell of the tobacco he was smoking worried them, for one thing. They looked at one another.

"Don't let me stop you," said the stranger. "I'll join you, if you like, my lads."

"Thanks!" said Wharton drily.

"The thankfulness is terrific, honoured sahib,"

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remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, in his polite manner and wonderful English.

"Perhaps you don't want my company," said the stranger, contracting his brows.

"Well, we're not exactly yearning for the company of people we don't know," remarked Bob Cherry, not liking the man's manner at all.

"Then get out!"

"What!"

"Clear off with you!"

"We shall please ourselves about that," said Wharton, nettled. He was looking at the man in astonishment. It seemed as if the fellow, a complete stranger to them, wanted to pick a quarrel—for what reason they could not imagine.

The man, too, was evidently in an uneasy frame of mind. He had glanced behind him at the dark opening of the vaults with a disquieted look. He had opened his lips to reply angrily to Wharton, when a voice came from the dark opening.

"Crawley!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Somebody else there."

"There's something on," murmured Squiff. "That fellow wants to get rid of us for some reason, and he's going to kick up a row."

The man, evidently Crawley by name, turned round as a younger man came out of the opening. The young man was in his shirt-sleeves. He gave a jump at the sight of the juniors, taken by surprise at the sight of them.

"Who the deuce—" he began.

"Some young gentlemen come here to picnic," said Crawley. "They don't like my company. I'm going to kick them out."

"Go ahead!" said Bob Cherry. "You're welcome to try."

"The welcomefulness is terrific."

The two men exchanged glances, and came towards the juniors. It was evident that they were "spoiling" for trouble. The juniors lined up to give them a warm reception. They were not in the least disposed to be bullied by that pair of rough-looking fellows.

"You're clearing out of this!" said Crawley threateningly. "We were here first, and you can get off! See?"

"Bow-wow!"

"And if you don't go quiet we'll shift you!" shouted Crawley.

"Shift away!"

The two men rushed at them savagely. They seemed to have no doubt of their ability to deal with half a dozen junior schoolboys. But the Famous Five were made of sterner stuff than they supposed. They stood up to that rush coolly. Wharton and Squiff collared Crawley, and four pairs of hands were laid upon his companion. In a moment they were swept off their feet and bumped on the ground.

"Ow!" gasped Crawley.

"Yow!" stuttered his companion.

"Have some more?" said Bob Cherry sweetly. "You haven't shifted us yet, you know!"

A torrent of lurid language answered him. Bob Cherry promptly bumped Mr. Crawley on the ground again, and cut short the flow of his eloquence. Then, leaving the two aggressive gentlemen gasping on the ground, the juniors walked out of the old priory. With those two exceedingly unpleasant persons there, they did not feel disposed to have their picnic on that spot.

"We'll get along to the cliffs and picnic there," said Harry Wharton. "We can't bring Marjorie and Clara here with those beasts there."

"No fear!" said Frank Nugent. "They don't seem to be going, and I suppose it would be rather thick to boot them out. Come on!"

"It's jolly queer," remarked Hazeldene, as the juniors walked on towards the sea. "I wonder what they're doing there? One in slippers, and the other in his shirt-sleeves! It's queer!"

"The queerfulness is—"

"Terrific!" said Bob Cherry. "Must be exploring the ruins, I suppose—though I don't see what johnnies of that kind want exploring the ruins. Anyway, we've given them a lesson in manners."

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"Yes—archæology is simply a hobby with me," said Crawley. "I'm a rich man—in fact, a millionaire. I know schoolboys are sometimes short of money. Now, I'll tell you what I'll do, Master Bunter. You keep my little secret, about the archæological investigations I'm making in these ruins, and I'll be your banker." "My—my—my banker!" ejaculated Billy Bunter. "Yes," continued the stranger. "I'll stand you as much pocket-money as you want!" (See Chapter 4.)

"Must be something on there," said Squiff, with a shake of the head—"something they didn't want us to spot."

"Looks like it," agreed Bob. "Still, it isn't our business. We can picnic on the cliffs just as well, and we couldn't bring Marjorie and Clara near those swearing brutes."

The juniors went on to the cliffs, and soon found a good spot for the camp in sight of the shining sea. Bob and Wharton brought Marjorie and Clara to the camp by the time the other fellows had the stove going and the feed prepared. And the picnickers settled down cheerfully to tea, and forgot all about the curious encounter in the old priory—though they were destined to remember it later.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. Bunter Makes a Discovery!

"BEASTS! I'm here first, after all!" Billy Bunter, puffing and blowing after a long walk, rolled breathlessly into the old priory in Friardale Wood, an hour after the juniors had left, after their curious encounter with the two unknowns.

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE HUN HUNTERS!"

But Billy Bunter found the ruins deserted, and he concluded that he was there first. He rolled in and sank down on a block of masonry to recover his breath. He fanned his fat face with his cap, and grunted.

"Beasts! I suppose they've gone to fetch Marjorie first; and they'll be all coming along here together," murmured Bunter. "Rotters! They won't be able to chuck me out when Marjorie's here, anyway! Cads, to want to keep me out of their blessed picnic, after all I've done for 'em! Beasts!"

Billy Bunter settled down to wait and watch. He was certain that the old priory was to be the scene of that picnic. Bunter had unusual gifts as a gatherer of information. His ears seemed to have been designed by nature on a specially large scale for that purpose. A word let drop in his hearing was enough for him. And, comforting himself with the reflection that Harry Wharton & Co. couldn't possibly "chuck" him out in the presence of Marjorie and Clara, he waited for the picnickers to arrive.

But they did not arrive. Half an hour passed, and there was no sign of them. Bunter looked at his watch, and grunted again. He rolled away to the doorway, and

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

blinked along the footpath through his big spectacles. But there was no sign of the picnickers. He came back discontentedly into the old priory.

"The beasts!" he murmured. "I know they were coming here—I happened to hear Bob Cherry say so. I—I wonder if they got here first and dodged out of sight?" He blinked round the ruins. "Oh, the rotters! I'm fearfully hungry!"

It was not likely, but it was possible. Billy Bunter proceeded to explore the priory. He blinked into every clump of bushes; he stared over or behind every mass of the old brickwork. But every corner was silent and deserted. He came at last to the opening in the ancient wall that gave admittance to the steps down into the vaults. The fat junior blinked into the cavity.

"The rotters! They—they can't have gone in there to dodge me! It's too jolly dark and cold. They wouldn't be there all this time. Oh, the rotters! They may be exploring the place before the feed. I know that idiot Field likes messing about in ruins and such rot! I'm fearfully hungry!"

Billy Bunter did not feel inclined to penetrate into the dark depths of the vault, in case the picnickers were exploring them; but he was determined not to give up the trail. He stood in doubt, just inside the opening, listening, with his fat ears distended. Then he gave a sudden start. A sound had come from the silence and darkness below the winding steps that led downwards.

Bunter's eyes gleamed behind his glasses.

"They're there, the rotters! I've run 'em down!"

The Owl of the Remove hesitated no longer. He rolled in, and cautiously picked his way down the winding stone steps into the vaults. The sound he had heard made it certain that someone was below, and who could it be but the juniors he was seeking? The fat Removeite had no doubt about it.

He groped his way down the dark stairs, grunting as he bumped upon the corners. He felt the level of the old vaults beneath his feet at last, and peered round in the intense gloom. Not a glimmer of light broke the darkness. It closed on him like a black cloak.

"I say, you fellows!" shouted Bunter. His voice rumbled away in the hollows with an echo like thunder. "You bounders, I know you're here! I know you've put out the light because you heard me coming."

The deep echoes answered and died away, and there was silence. Bunter was certain that he had been heard, but there was no reply. He listened savagely, and caught the sound of a footstep in the darkness.

"I can hear you!" he yelled. "Show a light, you beasts!"

Silence!

Snorting with wrath, Billy Bunter groped his way towards the spot where the footstep had been audible. He was in the flagged passage, with damp, reeking walls that led away from the vaults into the depths under the wood. His fat hands were outstretched before him as he went.

"Will you show a light, you rotters?" he shouted. "I know you're here, and I'm jolly well not going away—see?"

Silence!

"Oh, you beasts!" said Bunter. "I'll jolly well run you down, all the same!"

He groped on furiously. Suddenly his outstretched hands came in contact with an unseen form in the darkness. There was a low exclamation, and he felt a grip fasten on him.

"Ow! Found you, you rotters! Leggo my neck!" shrieked Bunter in alarm, as a hand fastened like iron on his throat.

The grasp did not relax, and not a word was spoken. Billy Bunter was borne down on the cold flagstones, and a knee was planted on his chest, the iron grasp on his throat never relaxing.

Bunter spluttered in alarm.

"Is that you, Cherry, you beast? Yow! You're chook-chook-choking me! Ow—wow! Wharton, make him leggo! Ow!"

"The light, Crake!" said a hard voice.

Bunter shivered.

It was a man's voice—a hard, terrifying voice. It was THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 371.

not the chums of the Remove that he had found, after all!

The fat junior was scared now.

"I—I say, leggo!" he stammered. "I—I was looking for my friends here, you know. I—I—I didn't mean—Ow!"

"Hold your tongue!"

"Oh, dear!"

A lantern gleamed in the darkness. Bunter's terrified eyes blinked at the man who was holding him down, and at the younger man who held the lantern. Both of them were complete strangers to him. They wore large, heavy beards, which covered up half their faces, and caps pulled down over their brows.

The expression on their faces did not reassure Bunter. The Owl of the Remove was trembling now. He understood that he had "run into" something that he was very far from bargaining for.

"I—I say," he murmured, "I—I didn't know you were here, you know. I—I say, leggo! I—I say, I'll get out if you like."

Crawley—for the man who held Bunter was Crawley, though he had grown a large beard during the past hour—looked at him with glittering eye. But a survey of the fat, terror-stricken face seemed to reassure him. The other man—Crake—looked relieved also as he scanned the Owl of the Remove in the lantern-light.

"It's only a schoolboy," he said.

"Yes. Not one of those we saw here——"

"Lemme gerrup!" mumbled Bunter.

"What are you doing here?" asked Crawley, allowing the fat junior to rise to his feet, and watching his face like a cat. "Why did you come down here?"

"I—I was looking for the other chaps," stuttered Bunter. "I—I thought they were hiding down here."

Crawley started.

"Six boys, with a lunch-basket?" he asked.

"That's it," said Bunter eagerly. "They dodged me; they wanted to leave me out of the picnic, the beasts! I'm looking for them."

"They went away," said Crawley.

"Oh, the rotters!"

"You came here to look for them," said Crawley. "You did not know that we were here?"

"Of course I didn't," said Bunter, beginning to recover his nerve a little, and wondering what the two men could possibly be doing in that dismal recess under the earth. "Nobody ever comes down here. What are you up to?"

"What?"

"What are you fellows doing down here?" said Bunter inquisitively. "Nothing down here, excepting lizards and bad smells."

Crawley and Crake exchanged glances. The Owl of the Remove was too short-sighted to note the significance of their glances. The two men were evidently at a loss how to deal with him, but Bunter did not observe it.

"Where do you come from?" asked Crawley at last. "Do you live near here?"

"Yes; I belong to Greyfriars."

"That's the school," muttered Crake, "two or three miles from here."

"Those other boys belong to your school?" asked Crawley.

"Yes; the rotters!"

"What is your name?"

"Bunter. What's yours?"

Crawley did not reply to that inquisitive question. Billy Bunter blinked at the two men curiously. He was not very keen, but he could not help seeing that there was something very extraordinary in the presence of these two men in the subterranean passage, under the old priory. He could not help understanding, too, that his sudden arrival had alarmed them.

"I think I'll get out," said Bunter, his nervousness returning.

In the light the two men did not look reassuring, and he remembered painfully that grasp of iron on his throat.

"Stop a minute," said Crawley.

"I'm in rather a hurry——"

"Stop!"

Crawley rapped out that word in a tone that made

Billy Bunter jump. The fat junior stopped at once, beginning to shake again.

"I say, you know—" he mumbled.

"The fact is," said Crawley, after a glance at his companion, "we—we don't want you to talk about having seen us here."

"Oh, all right!" said Bunter. "I won't say a word."

He had already determined to relate every incident of that strange encounter in the common-room at Greyfriars.

"Those boys—they knew you were coming here, I suppose?" said Crawley carelessly.

"No, they didn't, the beasts!"

"Oh!" Crawley looked at his companion again, unnoticed by the short-sighted Owl. "You didn't mention to anybody that you were coming here?"

"Yes, I did," said Bunter, quite unconscious of what depended on his answer. "Skinner and the rest know I'm here, of course. They wouldn't come, the beastly funks!"

"Your schoolfellows know you are here?"

"Of course they do."

"Oh! Suppose—suppose you were late back, they'd—they'd come to look for you, I suppose?"

"No fear," said Bunter. "Catch them taking the trouble!"

"But—but suppose you stayed out all night?" said Crawley.

Bunter blinked.

"I couldn't," he said. "Besides, I don't want to."

"But supposing you did. They'd come here and look for you—what?"

"Mr. Quelch would, jolly sharp, and yank me home," said Bunter. "Not that I'm likely to do anything so fatheaded as that. What should I want to stay out all night for?"

Billy Bunter did not realise then, nor till long afterwards, that he had had a narrow escape of staying out all night, and a good many nights, without wanting to. But the fact that he would inevitably be searched for in the old priory saved him from that unpleasant experience.

Crawley looked at the younger man again, and Crake shook his head.

"Quite so," said Crawley, with a smooth smile, looking quite good-tempered now. "I daresay you were surprised to see us here."

"Yes, rather. What the dickens are you doing here?" said Bunter. "Blessed if I can see what anybody can want in this hole."

"I don't mind telling you," said Crawley; "I'm an archaeologist."

"A which?" ejaculated Bunter.

"I belong to the Archaeological Society. I am making a report of the—the architecture of these ruins," said Crawley, watching his face as he spoke; "that is my business here. This young man—Mr. Thompson—is my assistant. But the fact is, we do not want our presence here known, because—because we are really trespassing. We haven't been able to get permission to make our investigations; do you see? A permit from the—the County Council is needed, and we haven't got it. So I am going to ask you, as a favour, not to say anything about having seen us here."

"Oh, certainly!" said Bunter.

"By the way, do you happen to be short of money?" asked Crawley casually.

"Stony!" said Bunter.

"Well, I am a rich man," said Crawley.

"Are you?" said Bunter in surprise.

Mr. Crawley was not dressed like a rich man, so far as the Owl of the Remove could see.

"Yes; archaeology is simply a hobby with me," said Crawley. "I'm a rich man—in fact, a millionaire. I know schoolboys are sometimes short of money. Now, I'll tell you what I'll do, Master Bunter. You keep my little secret about the archaeological investigations I'm making in these ruins, and I'll be your banker."

"Mum—my—my banker!" ejaculated Bunter.

"Yes. I'll stand you as much pocket-money as you want."

Billy Bunter almost fell down. He had sometimes had day-dreams of a rich and generous uncle, who would be devoted to him and hand him all the pocket-money he asked for. Unfortunately, his family did not include such an uncle. But here was a perfect stranger offering to take the place of that much-to-be-desired relative.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 371.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE HUN HUNTERS!"

EVERY
MONDAY,

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ONE
PENNY.

Bunter's eyes grew as round as saucers behind his glasses.

"Gammon!" he ejaculated breathlessly.

"I mean it, my boy," said Mr. Crawley affectionately. "You—you remind me of my own little boy, at—at Eton. Look at this."

Billy Bunter looked at the banknote Mr. Crawley extended to him. It was a currency note for one pound.

"That—that's for me?" stammered Bunter.

"Yes; take it."

Billy Bunter took it willingly enough. He could hardly believe in his good luck. He thanked his lucky stars which had led him to the old priory to encounter that shabby but benevolent millionaire.

"I—I say, you're awfully good," said Bunter. "Of course, I won't say a word."

"Whenever you're in want of a little pocket-money, give me a call," said Mr. Crawley, still watching Bunter's face like a cat. "Come here to-morrow—"

"Can't," said Bunter. "Saturday's next half-holiday."

"Well, I shall be here again on Saturday afternoon," said Mr. Crawley. "I am here almost every day, making my investigations. Come and see me."

"What-ho!" said Bunter.

"But don't mention a word to anyone."

"Not a word," agreed Bunter.

"Especially about coming to see me. Not a syllable to anyone about where you are going, when you come here."

"Right-ho!"

"And don't forget that I'm your banker."

"I—I say, are you really a millionaire?" stammered Bunter.

"Yes, more than a millionaire."

"Then—then—"

"Well?"

"You—you're simply rolling in money?"

"Rolling in it," agreed Mr. Crawley.

"Well, as a matter of fact, I'm rather short of tin," said Bunter. "I—I've been sending a lot of money to the Prince of Wales's Fund, and so on. I'm badly in want of a few pounds."

Bunter's price was going up already. The eager, greedy look on his fat face did not seem to displease Mr. Crawley. He took three more currency notes from his pocket, and handed them to Bunter.

"Four quid!" gasped Bunter, his eyes almost starting from his head.

"And all yours," said Mr. Crawley. "But mind, not a word. If the—the County Council knew that I was here, I should have to leave at once, and then you could not see me again. If you say a single word, it will get about, and that means no more pocket-money for you. Come on Saturday afternoon, and I will have five of these little notes for you."

"Rely on me," said Bunter. "Good-bye! By the way, what's your name, sir? Rothschild?"

"No," said Mr. Crawley, smiling. "My name is Jackson. But don't mention to anyone that I gave you the money."

"No fear!"

"And not a word. I trust you."

"What-ho! I'll see you on Saturday, rather!"

Billy Bunter was in a hurry to depart now. Crawley and Crake came up the stair with him into the priory, and Bunter saw them walk away into the wood, as he started for Greyfriars. As soon as Bunter was out of sight the two men came back into the priory. Crawley's face was sombre, and Crake was gritting his teeth.

"It was the only way," Crawley muttered. "The others knew he was here, so—"

Crake nodded.

"I know! But on Saturday—"

"Ail will be safe then."

"If he holds his tongue till Saturday!" muttered Crake.

"I think he will. I could read in his face that he was a greedy and unscrupulous young rascal." Bunter would have been flattered if he had heard that opinion expressed by the benevolent millionaire. "Anyway, we

had to risk it. It will be all right on Saturday, if he holds his tongue, and I think he will. That will make us safe from the——"

"The County Council!" grinned Crake.

And both of them laughed as they descended into the vaults under the old priory.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Something Like a Spread!

BILLY BUNTER seemed to be walking on air as he trotted back to Greyfriars.

He was in the seventh heaven.

The picnic did not matter to him now. The Famous Five could keep their old picnic. With four pounds in his possession, Billy Bunter was not likely to bother about that picnic.

He was only anxious to get back to Greyfriars, and commence operations in the school shop.

Bunter could scarcely believe in his good luck. Several times, on the way home, he took the currency notes out of his pocket, to blink at them, and assure himself that they were real.

That afternoon he had been stony broke, and in desperate straits for a feed. Now he had four whole "quids" in his possession.

It was almost too good to be true. But it was true enough—there were the quids.

Billy Bunter was considerably obtuse, and he was not much given to reflection. But even Bunter could not help seeing that it was an extraordinary occurrence. Of course, there might be such persons as benevolent millionaires, who took delight in supplying needy schoolboys with pocket-money. From what Bunter had heard of millionaires generally he would not have supposed, certainly, that they were a benevolent class.

Still, there might be such a person—an old gentleman rolling in money, who found pleasure in supplying the wants of a really nice and agreeable schoolboy like Bunter. Bunter remembered the old gentleman's statement that he resembled his own boy at Eton. That helped to account for the fancy the millionaire had taken to him.

"Some blessed old crank, bothering his head about archæology and rot," said Bunter to himself. "Of course, it's natural enough that he should take a fancy to a fellow like me. All the same, he's jolly well handing out this cash because he's afraid of the County Council stopping his pottering about in those ruins." Bunter shook his head wisely. He was not likely to attribute the old gentleman's generosity wholly to motives of benevolence. "Well, I'll keep his giddy secret, rather, so long as he shells out!"

Bunter chuckled.

He was not a good hand at keeping secrets, certainly, but this secret was worth keeping. No reckless chatter on his part should cause trouble between that rich old archæologist and the County Council, so long as pocket-money was forthcoming as fast as Bunter asked for it. And, of course, a few pounds more or less would be nothing to a millionaire.

Queer that the old fellow dressed so shabbily, if he was rolling in money. But millionaires are sometimes eccentric. Anyway, he evidently was rolling in money, or he couldn't have shelled out four pounds for nothing.

"Mum's the word!" murmured Bunter. "My hat! What a stroke of luck! What a thumping stroke of luck! Wouldn't that cad Skinner like to get on the track of the old bounder? And Snoop, too! They'd squeeze money out of him—the cads! They'd not be in the least ashamed to ask him for money, the rotters! My word! I'm going to have a high old time now! If I hadn't been so taken by surprise I could have got a tenner out of him. Blessed if I don't squeeze him for a tenner on Saturday. I'm keeping his blessed secret, anyway; and he might be fined or something if the County Council found him out."

The prospect of a tenner on Saturday made Bunter almost dance home to Greyfriars.

As he came in at the gates, Skinner and Snoop spotted him, and the joy irradiating his fat visage struck their eyes at once.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 371

"Piggy must be in funds again!" murmured Snoop.

"Looks like it," said Skinner. "There's no tea in my study; Smithy's gone out. If that fat idiot is in funds——"

Bunter blinked at them, and passed them with his nose in the air, on his way to the tuckshop. He had not forgotten the desertion of the new army. The direction of Bunter's steps, as well as the joy in his looks, convinced the two juniors that the Owl of the Remove was indeed in funds. And they proceeded to shed soft sawder upon him.

"Hold on, Bunter," said Skinner affectionately.

"Can't stop."

"I say, that was a ripping idea of yours this afternoon——"

"You didn't seem to think so at the time," snorted Bunter. "You kicked me, you beast!"

"Ahem! I—I was really trying to kick that cad Fish for—for punching you, and—and you got it by accident."

"Rats!" said Bunter.

"And, I'll tell you what," said Skinner, "we'll come with you now. Won't we, Snoopey?"

"I'd follow Bunter anywhere," said Snoop. "My opinion is that Bunter ought to be captain of the Remove. I've mentioned that to you before, Skinner."

"You have," agreed Skinner. "And I said it would be simply ripping, didn't I?"

"You did," said Snoop.

Billy Bunter thawed.

"I'm not after that rotten picnic now," he said. "I'm in funds."

"Not really!" exclaimed Skinner.

"Yes. I've had a postal-order. From one of my titled relations," said Bunter loftily.

"When the deuce did you get it, then?" asked Snoop, puzzled. "You were stony broke when you went out."

"Ahem! I—I—I mean a remittance. It's come in currency notes," said Bunter. "I—I called at the post-office for it."

Skinner regarded him curiously. Bunter was so confused that Skinner began to think he was mistaken about the funds after all. There was no reason, so far as he could see, why the Owl should blush and stammer over getting a remittance from the post-office.

"Gammon," said Skinner.

"Look here!" said Bunter, flourishing his fat fist with four pound notes in it. "Look at that!"

"My hat!"

"Four quid!" gasped Snoop. "I—I say, Bunter, your pater is shelling out rippingly. I wish I could swap my pater for him."

"He's made a lot of money on the Stock Exchange lately," said Bunter loftily. "Naturally, he's sent me a good remittance."

"Why, you just said this was from one of your titled relations!" said Skinner.

"Ahem! I—I meant—that is to say——"

Skinner looked more and more suspicious.

"Look here, Bunter, where did you get those notes?" he demanded.

"I've had a remittance, I tell you!"

"Hum!" said Skinner. "I remember you found a banknote of Wingate's once, and made out it was your own."

"Why, you—you rotter!"

"I say, it's teatime," said Snoop. "Bunter's going to stand it."

"You can go and eat coke!" said Bunter wrathfully. "Do you think I've been robbing a bank, you silly fat-heads?"

And Bunter rolled into the school shop, and tossed down a note on the counter, and proceeded to give liberal orders. Skinner and Snoop looked at one another rather queerly.

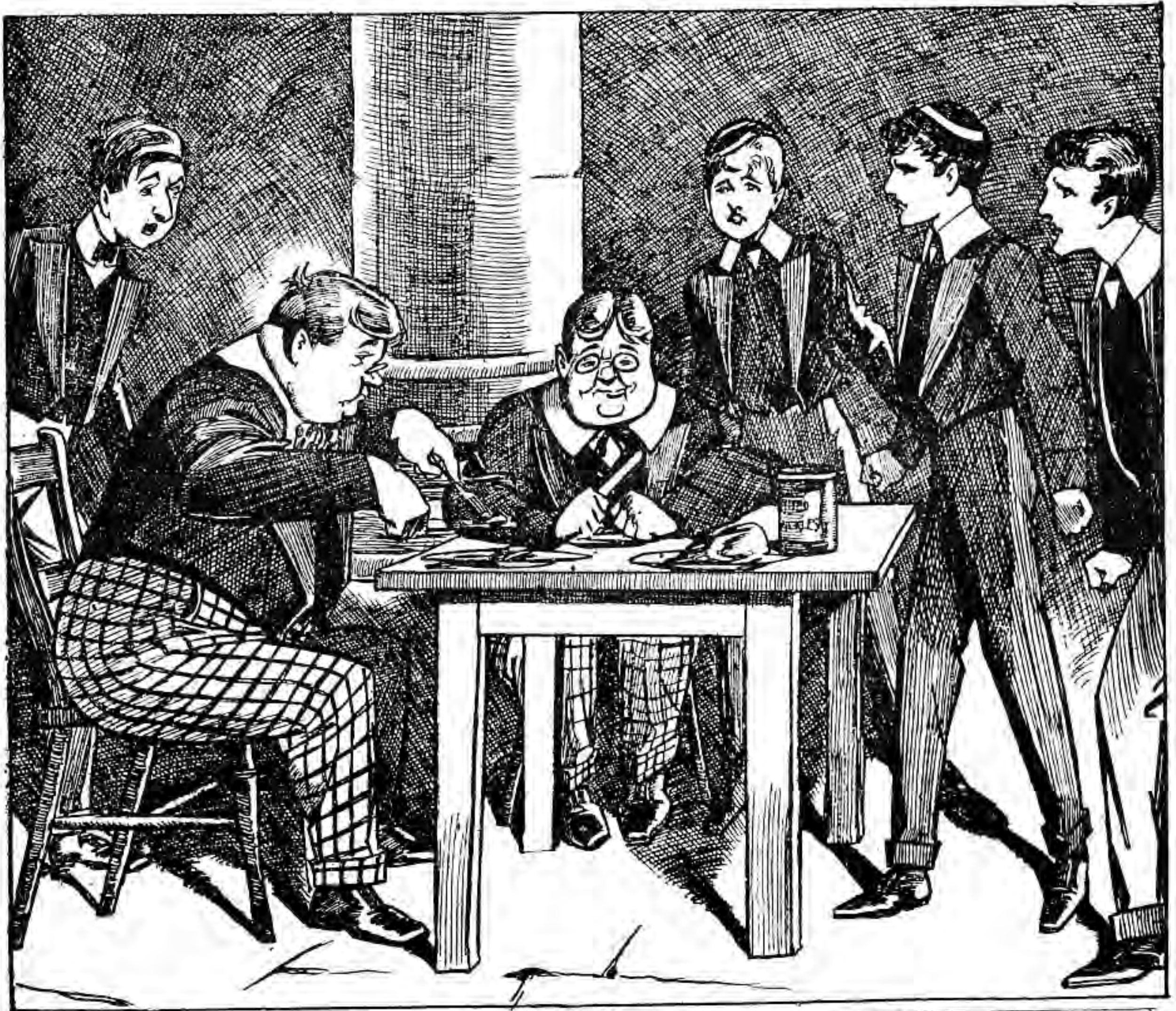
"Where did he get that tin?" murmured Skinner. "Blessed if I don't half think he's been up to something!"

"Shouldn't wonder," said Snoop callously. "'Tain't our business. We'll take it 'hat he's had a remittance, and if there's anything fishy about it they can't put it on us."

"Hear, hear!" chuckled Skinner.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 371

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"Oh really, Cherry," said Bunter, with his mouth full, "I'm frightfully hungry, you know. Those disgusting villains only gave me a crust to eat—me, you know. What was the good of a crust to me! The beasts! I say, they're counterfeiters—they've been making spooof notes, and I've found them out. I shall expect a reward for this." "What!" cried the juniors. (See Chapter 13.)

The precious pair followed Bunter into the tuckshop. The Owl of the Remove was seated on a high stool at the counter, keeping Mrs. Mimble very busy. Skinner and Snoop proceeded to apply soft sawder again, with such success that they were invited to join in the feed. Fisher T. Fish dropped in, and joined them, too, and then several other fellows came along as the news spread. There was soon quite a convivial party in the school shop. Somewhat to their surprise, Billy Bunter showed no desire whatever to limit their depredations. Even in funds the Owl of the Remove was not famous for his liberality, but on this occasion he was quite princely. The knowledge that he had only to ask his millionaire friends for a new supply of money when his present cash was exhausted made Bunter generous, not to say lavish.

"Pile in, you fellows!" he said hospitably. "Go it! Don't spare the Tommy! It's my treat, you know, and I don't care a rap what it costs!"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Peter Todd, coming into the shop. "Rolling in wealth again, Bunter, while there's famine in the study?"

"Pile in!" said Bunter. "Have your tea here. It's my treat!"

"My hat! Are you feeding the whole school?"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 371.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE HUN HUNTERS!"

demanding Peter, in astonishment, as he surveyed the crowd of fellows all tucking in at Bunter's expense.

"Why not?" said Bunter. "I've had a lot of money from one of my titled relations!"

"Rats!"

"Oh, really, Toddy——"

"Must be rolling in tin, anyway," said Bulstrode. "Here's to Bunter's pater, and may it be years and years before he's found out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat!" said Glenn. "Blessed if I don't wish my pater was a burglar!"

"Why, you rotter!" howled Bunter. "My pater isn't a burglar. You know jolly well that my pater's on the Stock Exchange!"

"Well, what's the difference?"

"Why, you—you silly ass——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up, Glenn!" said Bolsover major. "Any fellow's father is respectable who sends him whacking remittances like this. He may be a stockbroker, or a burglar, or a shipowner, or anything in that line, but these tarts are jolly good!"

"Hear, hear!"

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

"One pound ten shillings," said Mrs. Mimble, as a hint to Bunter that the score was mounting up.

"Don't you mind that," said Bunter loftily.

"Ahem! But——"

"You hand me some more tarts, please!"

"Yes, but——"

"Mrs. Mimble wants to see the colour of your money!" chuckled Tom Brown.

"Pooh!" Bunter tossed a second currency note on the counter. "I tell you I've got lots of them. Now gimme those tarts!"

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Mimble. Even Lord Mauleverer, the richest fellow at Greyfriars, did not often expend money in this style. But Billy Bunter's orders were fulfilled promptly. The tuckshop was crowded by this time; even Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth had condescended to join in the feed. Bunter threw down a third of his currency notes, making a mental resolution to call on his millionaire friend before Saturday.

Six juniors, coming from the direction of the gates in the dusk, heard the merry voices from the tuckshop, and paused to look in. Harry Wharton & Co. had returned from their outing. The sight of the shop crammed with fellows, and Bunter perched on the high stool presiding over the feast, astonished them.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Wherefore these giddy revels?"

"Bunter's rolling in giddy gold!" said Ogilvy. "Bursting with it. Come in!"

Billy Bunter blinked towards the juniors looking in at the doorway. There wasn't much room for them to have come in if they had wanted to.

"Hallo, you rotters! Had your picnic?" sniffed Bunter.

"Yes, thanks!" said Wharton.

"Well, you can go and eat coke! You wouldn't have me in your picnic, and you're jolly well not coming to my feed! See?"

The Famous Five laughed and walked on. Hazeldene slipped into the tuckshop, however, and joined the merry party.

"Three pounds fifteen shillings," said Mrs. Mimble, in almost an awed voice.

"My only hat!" murmured Skinner. "The porpoise is going it!"

Bunter threw down the last of his notes.

"There you are! Make it up to four quid. Dash it all, make it up to five, and I'll settle the other quid to-morrow!"

"I never give credit, Master Bunter," said Mrs. Mimble stolidly. The good lady was only too well aware of the difficulty of extracting payment from Bunter, even when he was in funds.

Bunter snorted.

"I shall have heaps of money to-morrow," he growled. "Never mind, I've had enough, for one!"

The feed came to an end, though if Bunter's cash had lasted it might have gone on indefinitely, for hungry fags who had heard the news were swarming in from all quarters. Billy Bunter rolled out of the tuckshop, feeling very fat and satisfied, with a slightly uncomfortable tightness about his ample waistcoat. For once Billy Bunter had stood a spread upon an unprecedented scale, and had not taken the lion's share for himself.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Sammy on the Track!

PETER TODD looked very oddly at Bunter, when the fat junior came into No. 7 Study to do his preparation that evening.

Billy Bunter sank down in the armchair with a satisfied grunt. Even Bunter's appetite was gone; he could hardly have eaten anything that evening if it had been offered to him. Tom Dutton and Alonzo Todd were at work, but Bunter suspended his preparation in order to stare at Bunter.

"Still rolling in money, fatty?" he asked.

Bunter sighed.

"No, I'm stony till to-morrow."

"More coming to-morrow—what?"

"The Magnet Library.—No. 371.

"Yes, rather."

"How much?"

"As much as I like!" said Bunter loftily.

"It's jolly queer," said Peter Todd, wrinkling his brows. "I dare say your pater is making money, but it's simply extraordinary that he should be sending you whacking remittances like this. I don't understand it."

"He's awfully rich, you see," said Bunter.

"H'm, yes!" said Peter. "But it's jolly odd."

"I don't see anything odd about it," said Bunter peevishly; "and it ain't your business, anyway, Todd."

"Perhaps not," agreed Peter thoughtfully. "But as you're in my study it's up to me to keep an eye on you, Bunter. I don't want you to land yourself into trouble, like a silly chump!"

"Look here——"

"I've heard a yarn about you that happened before I came to Greyfriars," said Peter coolly. "You found a banknote that belonged to Wingate, and spent it."

"I—I thought it was mine."

"Yes. I know you did; you'd think any money was yours, if it was once in your paws," said Peter. "The wish is father to the thought, as Shakespeare puts it. But other people call it stealing."

"Why, you rotter——"

"If your pater's ass enough to be sending you whacking sums of money, well and good," said Peter. "But——"

"My pater isn't a poverty-stricken solicitor, like yours, Toddy," said the Owl of the Remove disdainfully. "Why, four quid is nothing to me. I can have as much as I choose to ask for, like Mauly."

"Hum!" said Peter. "If that's so it's all right. But when did you get that whacking remittance? Tell me about it."

"I don't choose to," said Bunter.

Peter Todd rose from the table and selected a cricket-stump from the corner of the study. The Owl of the Remove eyed him apprehensively.

"Look here, Toddy, if you're going to be a beast, I shall change into Snoop's study. He'd be jolly glad to have me, I can tell you."

"When did you get that remittance?"

"Find out!"

Whack!

"That's what I'm going to do," said Peter cheerfully, as Bunter roared under the infliction of the cricket-stump. "Now, speak up!"

"Ow! Beast!" Billy Bunter bolted for the door. Peter's heavy hand dropped on his collar, and he was jerked back, and plumped into the armchair again, gasping like a landed fish.

"I'm waiting for information," said Peter grimly. "I sha'n't wait long."

"I—I—I had the remittance this afternoon," stammered Bunter.

"You haven't had a letter this afternoon," replied Peter.

"I—I called at the post-office for it."

"Oh!" Peter Todd lowered the stump, and regarded Bunter thoughtfully. "Whom was it from?"

"From one of my titled—— Yaroooh!" The cricket-stump descended.

"Now, whom was it from?"

"Yow-ow! From my pater, of course."

"Good!" said Peter. "I suppose you've got as near the truth as is possible for a rotter who ought to have been born in Berlin. I'll call in at the post-office to-morrow."

Bunter jumped.

"Wha-a-at for, Toddy?"

"To make sure that you haven't been telling me any Kaiserisms."

"I—I say, Toddy——"

"Shut up!" said Peter Todd autocratically; and he sat down to his preparation again, leaving Billy Bunter in a state of dismay.

Billy Bunter had no more scruples about departing from the straight line of truth than had the celebrated Ananias, or a Berlin journalist. But he was greatly worried at the idea of Peter Todd making inquiries at the village post-office, for Peter would learn at once

that Bunter had not called for a letter that afternoon, and then he would want to know where the money had come from.

It began to look a little difficult for the Owl of the Remove to keep the secret of the millionaire archaeologist.

"Look here, Toddy, you can mind your own business, you know!" said Bunter.

"Cheese it!"

"I'm not going to have you wedging into my affairs."

"Shut up!"

"I tell you, Toddy——"

Peter Todd reached for the stump, and Billy Bunter gave it up, and settled down sulkily to his preparation.

The next morning, when the Removites came down, Sammy Bunter of the Second Form bore down upon his major. Sammy Bunter was looking wrathful and indignant.

"Look here, what does this mean, Billy?" he demanded.

"What does what mean?" growled Bunter major.

"You've been getting whacking remittances, and I haven't," said Sammy, in a very injured tone. "The pater wrote to me that he wasn't going to send either of us any more money yet. He said we'd had too much lately, and he wasn't made of money. He said he'd told you the same."

"So he did," growled Bunter. "He's growing mean."

"But you had four quids yesterday afternoon!"

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position, and Bunter realised that Sammy would have to be let into the secret. Bunter minor was blinking at him suspiciously through his big spectacles.

"Look here, Sammy, it's a secret," whispered Bunter. "Come into the Cloisters."

He led his minor into that secluded spot, and proceeded to unfold the secret in cautious tones. Sammy Bunter listened in blank astonishment.

"My only aunt!" he gasped. "You must be spoofing. It can't be true!"

"It's true," growled Billy. "He's a millionaire, and he's taken a fancy to me because I remind him of his boy at Eton. And it's got to be kept dark, because if the County Council knew an archaeologist was at work in the ruins they'd come down on him—fine him, perhaps."

"I don't see why an archaeologist shouldn't be there if he likes," said Sammy.

"Well, that's what he told me."

"And he gave you four quid?"

"Yes."

"Then he can give me four quid, too," said Sammy.

"If I'm going to keep the blessed secret I'm going to have my whack."

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exclaimed Sammy. "I've heard all about it. I was out. I jolly well wish I'd been there. I'd jolly well have made you whack it out, I can tell you! How much have you got left?"

"Not a blessed tanner."

Sammy snorted.

"Well, I'll jolly well write to the pater. I can tell you!" he said. "Sending you four quid and keeping me without any! It's rotten!"

"I—I say, Sammy, d-d-don't write——"

"I'm jolly well going to! I don't call it fair."

"It wasn't from the pater."

"Rot!" said Sammy incredulously. "Who else would send you four quid? Gammon!"

"Honest Injun," said Bunter major.

"Then where did you get it?"

"From a—a—a friend of mine."

"Rats!"

"I tell you I did!" howled Billy Bunter.

"Gammon! It was the pater, of course, and I'm jolly well going to ask him to send me four quid, too."

Billy Bunter frowned over his glasses. If Mr. Bunter had become aware that a kind friend had presented Billy with four pounds he would certainly have wanted to know all the circumstances; and only so long as he kept the secret was Billy to regard the benevolent millionaire, Mr. Crawley, as his banker. It was a difficult

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 371.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE HUN HUNTERS!"

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

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Peter is Puzzled!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. came cheerfully out of the Remove Form-room, after lessons were over for the day. Peter Todd stopped them in the passage.

Billy Bunter was rolling away, anxious to get out of sight as quickly as possible. He did not want to be spotted on his way to the old priory, especially by his minor. If Sammy Bunter had suspected that the philanthropic millionaire was there that afternoon he would certainly not have deferred his visit till Saturday.

"Coming for a trot?" asked Peter Todd, as he stopped the Famous Five.

"Yes, if you like," said Harry Wharton. "Whither bound?"

"Friardale Post Office."

"Right-ho!" said Squiff. "But what's on? Wherefore that solemn and owl-like frown upon your beatific countenance?"

"The esteemed Toddy looks like a boilful owl," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, as the juniors took their caps and strolled out into the Close together.

"I'm rather worried about Bunter," confessed Peter Todd. "I've a strong suspicion that the young ass is getting himself into trouble somehow. You know he was stony yesterday, and then rolling in money at tea-time."

"He often gets good remittances now," said Nugent.

"Yes, but he didn't get a letter yesterday," explained Peter. "He's told me he called for one at the post-office. Now, why should he do that?"

"He never does," said Wharton, looking grave.

"And I don't believe he did this time, but I'm going to the post-office to make sure," said Peter. "I'm anxious about the young idiot. He hasn't sense enough to know the difference between honesty and dishonesty. You remember the story about Wingate's banknote that he collared once?"

"He thought it was his own because he wanted it," said Nugent, laughing.

"Exactly," said Peter. "And if it's something like that again, it may mean trouble for him this time. People who don't know him wouldn't take it as Wingate did."

"All I know is, that he went out stony, and came back with four quids, and told me a jolly unlikely yarn about it," said Peter. "He hasn't brains enough to look after himself, so I'm going to look after him. I'm going to take him along with me, and you fellows can help roll him along."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Peter Todd looked round the Close for Bunter. The Owl of the Remove was not in sight. Peter wrinkled his brows and hurried down to the porter's lodge.

"Have you seen Bunter go out, Gosling?" he asked.

"Bout five minutes ago," said Gosling.

"Come on, you chaps!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There he is!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as the juniors came out into the road.

Billy Bunter was in sight in the lane, hurrying towards Friardale. The chums of the Remove broke into a run after him. Billy Bunter looked round, and at the sight of Peter Todd and the Famous Five, he broke into as fast a run as his fat little legs were capable of.

"Stop!" shouted Peter.

But Bunter did not stop. He raced on, and the juniors, entering into the spirit of the chase, raced after him. It did not take them long to overtake the unwieldy Owl of the Remove.

"Yow!" gasped Bunter, as Bob Cherry's hand fell on his shoulder and brought him to a halt. "Leggo, you beast!"

"Where are you off to?" demanded Peter Todd.

"Find out!"

"Come to the village with us, Bunter."

"I won't!"

"What did you start running for?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Because I didn't want your company," said Bunter truculently. "You didn't want mine yesterday. Well, I don't want yours to-day. You can go and eat coke!"

"Are you going to meet somebody?" demanded Peter.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 371.

"Tain't your business!"

"Why, you cheeky, fat rotter——"

"You lemme alone," said Bunter, with dignity. "If I make friends 'tain't any business of yours. You're not the kind of chap that a millionaire would take a fancy to."

"Wha-a-at!" gasped Peter. "What millionaire?"

Bunter did not reply; he saw that he had said a little too much. The juniors were all regarding him with astonishment.

"Tell us all about it, Bunt," said Wharton.

"I won't!"

"Not your old pals?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"You ain't my pals. I wouldn't pal with you at any price!"

"My hat!"

"Come along with us, Bunter, and I'll stand you some tarts at Uncle Clegg's," said Peter—"tuppenny ones."

"Keep 'em!" said Bunter.

"You—you don't want me to stand you tarts!" ejaculated Peter-Todd.

"No, I don't! I'm not the kind of fellow to sponge on anybody."

"Great Scott!"

"I can buy all the tarts I want. Go and eat coke!" said Bunter. "Now, you may as well let me alone. I'm not coming along with you."

"Blessed if this doesn't beat the band!" said Bob Cherry, in great amazement. "Honour us with your company, Bunt, and I'll stand some ginger-pop."

"You can keep it!"

"But what's on?" demanded Peter. "Why can't you come?"

"Because I don't choose," said Bunter.

"Well, I do chose," said Peter Todd, linking his slim arm in Bunter's fat one. "You're jolly well coming with us, whether you like it or not!"

"Let me go!" howled Bunter furiously. "You've no right to interfere with me, you rotter, Todd!"

"Bless you, I'm not worrying about the rights of the matter," said Peter, marching Bunter along the road; "I'm simply taking you along because I've decided to!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter fairly snorted with wrath; but he had no choice about going. The Famous Five followed them, grinning. Peter Todd was convinced by this time that the fat junior was "up" to something extremely mysterious, and as there was evidently money in it, it was evidently "up" to Bunter's study-mate to look after him. Peter's methods were, perhaps, a little high-handed, but he was accustomed to ruling in No. 7 Study with a rod of iron.

They marched on towards the village, Bunter red with wrath, and making vain attempts to draw his imprisoned arm away. Unfortunately for Peter's kind intentions, the party met Mr. Lambe, the vicar, half-way to the village. They had to take their caps off to Mr. Lambe, and Peter was compelled to release Bunter. The fat junior made one jump to the hedge, and vanished through a gap, and sprinted away across the field as hard as he could go.

Mr. Lambe had paused to speak kindly to the juniors, and he viewed that proceeding of Bunter's with considerable surprise. Under the eyes of the reverend gentleman the juniors could not very well break into a hot chase after Bunter. Mr. Lambe kept them about five minutes, and when the worthy vicar trotted on, they looked for Bunter in vain.

On the other side of the field was a wood, and Bunter had vanished into the trees. It was not of much use seeking him there—it would have resembled hunting for a needle in a haystack.

"The fat bounder!" growled Peter Todd. "There's something awfully fishy about this, you chaps. He must be going to meet somebody. Let's get on to the post-office."

They arrived a few minutes later at the post-office. Peter Todd proceeded at once to make his inquiries.

"Did you give Bunter his letter yesterday afternoon, ma'am?" he asked the postmistress, who was also the wife of the village grocer, the village post-office being several establishments rolled into one.

The postmistress shook her head.

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"There was no letter for Master Bunter yesterday," she replied.

"Didn't he call for a letter?" asked Peter.

"No, Master Todd."

"Didn't he come here at all yesterday?"

"I didn't see him, if he did, and I was here all the time," said the postmistress, looking surprised. "Has a letter been lost?"

"Oh, no; only a mistake, I suppose," said Peter.

"Thank you very much, ma'am!"

The juniors left the post-office. In the street they stopped and looked at one another very queerly.

"What do you think of it?" demanded Peter.

"It's jolly queer," said Harry Wharton. "Of course, it's no business of ours; only Bunter is such a silly ass, that—"

"That I'm jolly well going to look into it," said Peter.

"He was stony yesterday; then he came in with four quids, and he told me he'd called at the post-office for a remittance. That was a whopper. He hadn't. Where did he get the money from, then? If he came by it in a way that would bear the light, why should he tell lies about it? Of course, he wouldn't do anything he knew to be dishonest; but he has a way of regarding money as his as soon as he can get his paws on it, that will get him into trouble some day. Don't you think it's fishy?"

"Jolly fishy," agreed the Famous Five with one voice; and Hurree Singh further remarked that the fishfulness was terrific.

"Well, I'm going to see into it," said Peter. "Where's he gone now, the fat duffer? Same place where he got the money yesterday, of course. That's clear enough. If he comes back with money in his pocket—"

"That will be jolly fishy, and no mistake," said Squiff. "Blessed if I can make head or tail of it."

"Neither can I," said Peter. "But I'm going to."

And the juniors walked back to Greyfriars very thoughtfully.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Horn of Plenty!

BILLY BUNTER arrived at the old priory in a breathless state. He had run all the way, fearful of hearing the pursuing footsteps of the Removites on his track. He blinked round nervously as he entered the ruins, but he was satisfied at last that he was not pursued. Having recovered his breath, he made his way to the entrance to the vaults, and rolled in.

Grim and dark lay the winding staircase at his feet. Bunter blinked down into the darkness. Were the archæologists there? The millionaire had told him that they were there nearly every day. How that dismal retreat could have any fascination even for an enthusiastic archæologist was a puzzle to Bunter. He gave a grunt of dissatisfaction.

"I suppose they ain't here," he growled. "I've got here too late, owing to those meddling beasts. Blow 'em! Hallo!"

He shouted down the winding stair, expecting to get a reply if the investigating gentlemen, who pursued the study of archæology in so strange a place, were present. Only the echo of his shout answered him.

"Hallo!" shouted Bunter again after a few minutes.

This time there came a reply.

There was a hurried footstep on the stair, and a heavily-bearded face came into view.

Bunter grinned at his millionaire friend. Mr. Crawley was breathing hard.

"I thought I recognised your voice, Master Bunter," he said.

"Still at work here?" asked Bunter.

"Yes, we are continuing our work," said Mr. Crawley.

"I am very glad to see you, though I did not expect you till Saturday."

"I found I could get here," said Bunter.

"Please come down."

"I'd rather not come down all those steps, if you don't mind," said Bunter. "The fact is, I only want to stop a few minutes; I've got to get back before calling-over, you know."

A peculiar glitter came into Mr. Crawley's eyes.

"Exactly," he assented. "You have kept the secret?"

Bunter was about to reply that he had; but he remembered that the first visit of Sammy to the ruins would give him away. He little dreamed what depended on his reply.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 371.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE HUN HUNTERS!"

"The fact is, I had to tell my young brother," he said. "He asked me about the money, you know. Wh-a-a-t—what did you say?"

Mr. Crawley had uttered something suspiciously like an oath. For a moment his look was so black that Bunter started back in sudden fear.

"You have told your brother?"

"I—I had to, you know; but he's promised to keep it dark," stammered Bunter. "He—he's coming here to see you himself on Saturday. Otherwise, I shouldn't have told you—I—I mean that I intended to tell you immediately, of course."

"You have told no one else?"

"No jolly fear!" said Bunter. "You rely on me! You see, Sammy's hard up, too, and he was on it like a bird. My young brother's a greedy beast—not at all like me. I—I shouldn't wonder if he comes here to ask you for a tip, you know."

Mr. Crawley's face cleared.

"You are quite sure that you have mentioned the matter to no one else?" he asked.

"Quite sure!"

"No one else knows you have come here?"

"I haven't said a word, of course, and I'm not going to give this away to all the fellows," said Bunter. "Why, if Skinner and Snoop knew they'd—ahem!—I—I say, I happen to be rather short of money."

"Already?" said Mr. Crawley, with a smile.

He was quite good-humoured and smiling again now.

"Yes, I've stood a bit of a feed, and it's gone, you know."

"That is all right—regard me as your banker," said Mr. Crawley. "You are so like my own dear boy at Eton—my handsome lad—that it almost seems as if I am speaking to him!"

Bunter felt considerably pleased at his close resemblance to a handsome Etonian.

"If you could make it four quid again—" he murmured.

"Certainly!"

Mr. Crawley produced four currency notes and handed them to Bunter. The Owl of the Remove almost gasped with joy. He wondered what the other fellows would have said if they had known that he had discovered this veritable gold-mine. Billy Bunter began to have a high opinion of millionaires.

"I—I say, will you be here to-morrow?" he gasped.

Mr. Crawley looked at him oddly.

"Will your brother be coming to-morrow?" he asked.

"I'll bring him, if you like," said Billy. "If you'd like to see him, Sammy will come like a shot. He means to come, anyway, on Saturday."

"I should very much like to see you together," said Mr. Crawley. "But you will be careful to let no one suspect where you are coming?"

"What-ho!"

"You will be very careful not to be seen coming here?"

"Trust me!" said Bunter.

"Perhaps you could come after dark?" suggested Mr. Crawley.

Bunter shook his head.

"The gates are locked at dark," he replied. "We'll start immediately after lessons, if you like, sir."

"Very well; that will do nicely. Mind, bring your brother with you—I particularly want to see him. Is he anything like you?"

"Just like me, only not so good-looking," said Bunter cheerfully. "I say, you must find it pretty cold down there, don't you?"

"I hardly notice it when I am busy making my notes of early English architecture," said Mr. Crawley.

"My hat! Rather you than me!" said Bunter.

"I am making notes to write a book on the subject of the antiquities of Kent, you see," explained Mr. Crawley. "Merely a hobby with me, as I am too rich to need to work in any way."

"I—I s-s-say—" murmured Bunter.

"Yes, my dear young friend?"

"P-p-perhaps you could make this a fiver?" suggested

Bunter. "I—I owe a chap a quid, and—and then I could settle—"

Mr. Crawley's judgment of Bunter, as a greedy and unscrupulous young rascal, was evidently not a mistaken one. But the kind gentleman did not seem to mind.

"Certainly!" he said, producing another currency note. "Now, you had better be off."

"Yes, rather! Thank you!"

Mr. Crawley shook hands cordially with Billy Bunter, and the fat junior scuttled away. The bearded gentleman gazed after him moodily as he scudded through the ruins and disappeared. He clenched his hands, and breathed hard through his nose.

The head of his companion came into view from the stairway.

"He hasn't gone?" exclaimed Crake.

"Yes!"

"But—but why?"

"He had told his brother of this. They are coming together to-morrow afternoon," said Crawley. "I think all is safe. If he had talked, there would have been trouble for us before this. We must keep on the alert—and there is always the way out if there should be trouble. But I think it is safe. And after to-morrow the secret will be secure enough."

Crake nodded, and Mr. Crawley followed him down the stairway into the vaults. If Billy Bunter could have overheard that brief dialogue, he might have changed his intention of paying the millionaire a visit on the morrow. But Billy Bunter was speeding away towards Greyfriars as fast as he could go—once more in funds,

and in a state of ecstatic contentment. Billy Bunter had found the horn of plenty, seemingly, and there seemed no reason why it should ever run dry.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Astonishes the Natives!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Here he is!" Harry Wharton & Co. caught sight of Bunter as they arrived at the gates of Greyfriars on their return from the village. The fat junior was just going in. He was walking on air, apparently, his fat face extremely joyful in its expression. He blinked at the Famous Five and Peter Todd as they joined him, and grinned.

"What did you bolt for, you fat bounder?" demanded Peter Todd.

"Because I didn't want your company," replied Bunter; "I told you so before. I don't want to have anything to do with fellows who keep me out of a picnic because they're jealous of a chap's good looks."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you can cackle!" said Bunter crossly. "Just you leave me alone, and keep off the grass, that's all! I've got plenty of pals, and I tell you plainly I don't want your company! That ought to be plain enough for you, I should think!"

The Owl of the Remove was on the high horse once more. There was only one possible explanation: he was in funds again!

"More remittances—what?" asked Squiff.

"That's my business!"

"Rolling in money?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Find out!"

Billy Bunter rolled away with a disdainful sniff. It was a great pleasure to him to tell the Famous Five what he thought of them. Peter Todd wrinkled his brows thoughtfully. Harry Wharton & Co. walked away grinning. Bunter in his independent state of mind struck them as funny. But Peter, who felt that it was up to him to keep a fatherly eye on the biggest duffer in the Remove, was worried. Billy Bunter made for the tuck-shop, and promptly changed a pound note for a supply of tuck. Todd followed him in.

"Have some tarts, Toddy," said Bunter. "I don't want to be down on you, you know, but I can't stand those fellows—I can't, really!"

"No; I won't have any tarts," said Peter. "But I'd like to know where you've been getting that tin."

"I've had a remittance."

"Don't tell whoppers," said Peter; "I've just been to the post-office, and they told me that you didn't call for a letter at all yesterday."

"Oh! I—I— Have some ginger-pop, Toddy?"

"Where did you get that money yesterday?"

"Don't I keep on telling you I had a remittance?" howled Bunter.

"But I know you hadn't," said Todd. "And where did you get this money now?"

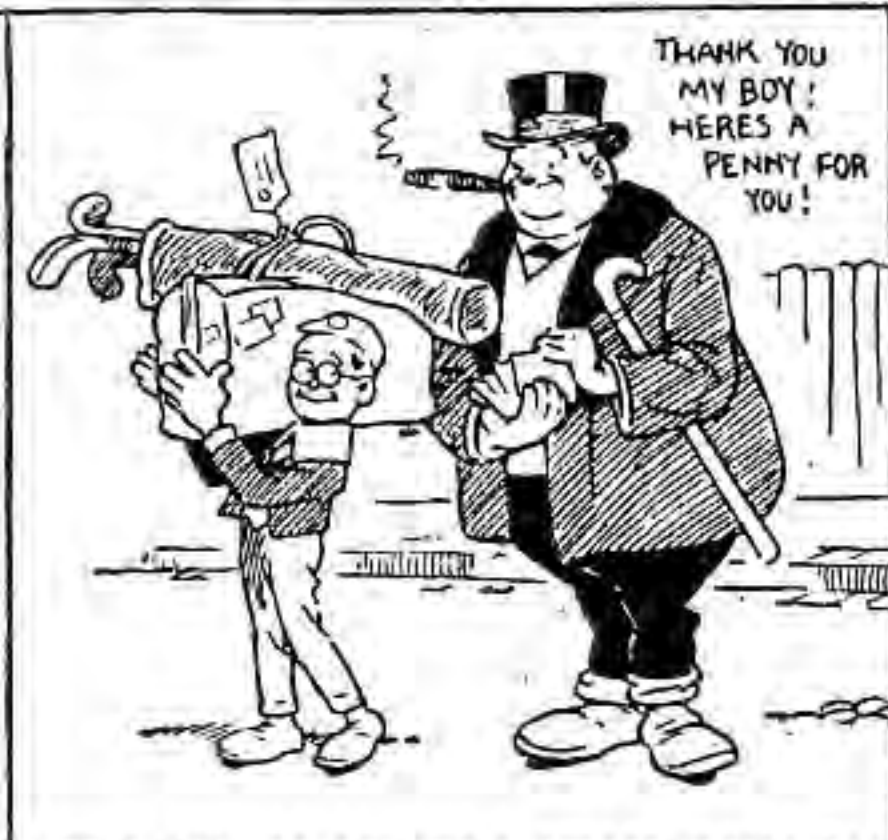
"Another remittance."

"Look here, Bunter," said Peter Todd seriously, "if you

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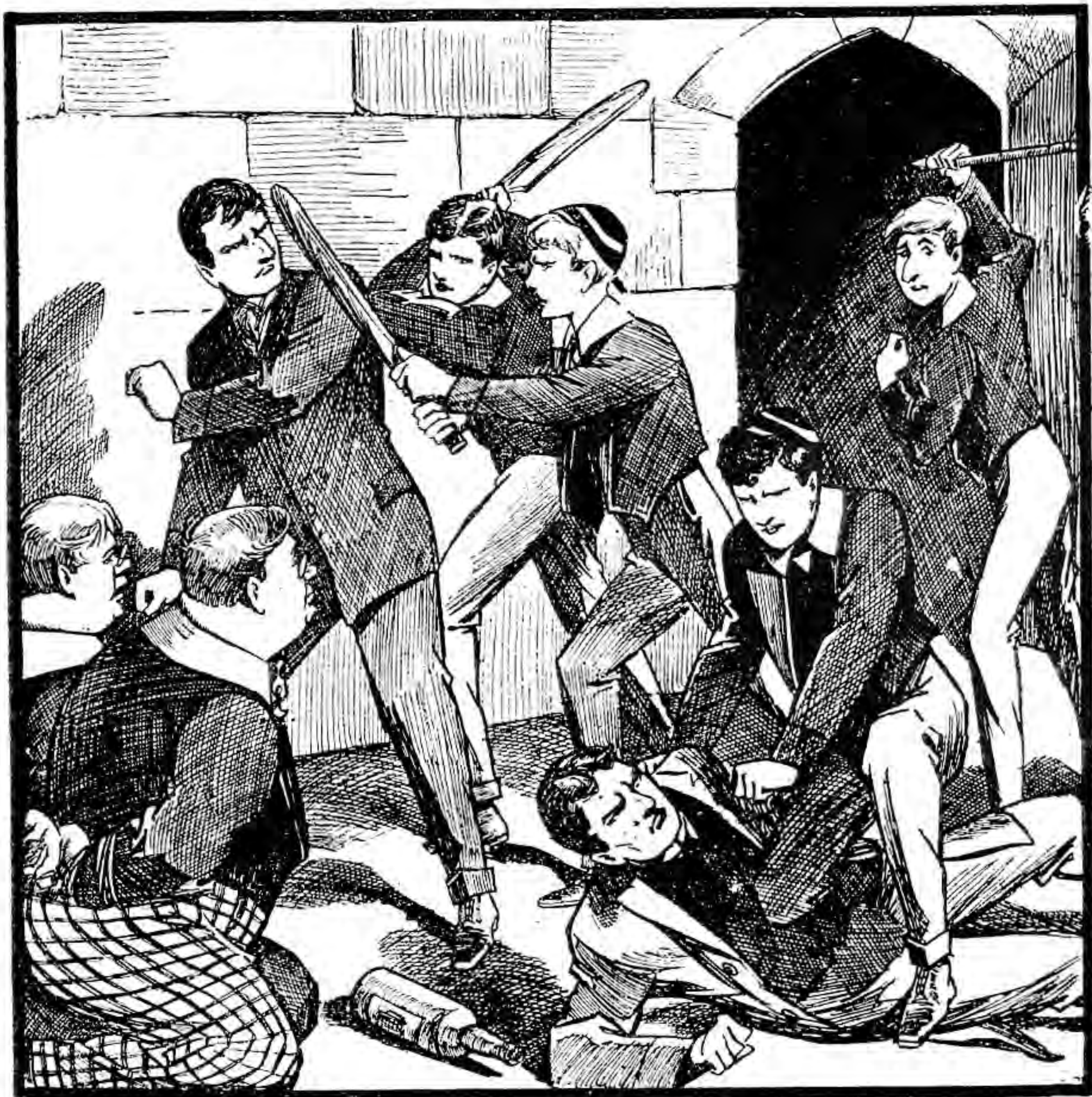


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The next instant Crake went down under Bob Cherry's bat, with a blow that would have felled an ox. "Collar them!" panted Squiff. Wharton was already springing on Crawley. His knee was jammed on the rascal's chest, and he was pinned down. (See Chapter 13.)

came by that money honestly, there's no need for you to tell lies about it. Don't tell me any more silly whoppers about remittances. Where did you get it?"

Billy Bunter devoted his attention to the tarts. Peter Todd regarded him very uneasily. He knew that the Owl of the Remove had not received any money by post. How, then, had he come into possession of four pounds the previous day, and a fresh sum of money to-day? Peter was getting really alarmed. There was evidently something very wrong somewhere.

"Where have you been this afternoon, Bunter?" he asked, in quite a subdued tone.

"For a walk."

"You met somebody."

"Find out!"

"You silly fat ass; it's plain enough! You had no money when you went out! You've met somebody who's given you money, or else you've bagged it somehow!"

"Perhaps I've got a friend who makes me little loans,"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 371.

said Bunter loftily. "Perhaps a millionaire might take a fancy to me."

"Wha-a-t!"

"But it isn't your business," said Bunter. "You can have a whack in these tarts if you like. But don't ask me a lot of questions, because I'm not going to jaw!"

"Why should a millionaire take a fancy to you?" asked Peter, more and more astonished by this extraordinary information.

"Perhaps it's because I remind him of his own boy at Eton," said Bunter, with a sniff. "Perhaps there are some people who think more of me than the fellows in my own study do. Gimme some of those cream puffs, Mrs. Mimble, please."

"I think you must be going dotty," said Peter Todd. "If a millionaire took a fancy to you, he'd have a jolly queer taste."

"Oh, really, Toddy——"

"So a millionaire has been giving you whacking big tips, because he's taken a fancy to you, and you are like his boy at Eton?" said Peter.

"Find out!"

Peter Todd drove his hands deep into his pockets, and strode out of the tuckshop, more puzzled than ever, and buried in thought. Bunter's story was so extraordinary that it was impossible to believe it. Yet it was clear that somebody had been giving Bunter money on a very liberal scale, or else—or else how had Bunter come into possession of it? There was a deep mystery somewhere, and, knowing as he did Bunter's free-and-easy ideas about money, and his dense obtuseness, it was no wonder that Todd was alarmed for him.

Sammy Bunter met his major as Billy came out of the tuckshop, looking very shiny and jammy. Sammy collared him at once.

"Halves!" he exclaimed.

Billy Bunter extracted a half-sovereign from his pocket, which he had received in change for one of his pound notes, and gave it to his minor with a lordly air. He could afford to be generous, having found the horn of plenty.

"There you are, young 'un!" said Bunter.

Sammy's fat fingers closed on the coin, and he blinked at it almost incredulously through his glasses.

"My hat!" ejaculated Sammy. "So—so you've seen that man again?"

"Yes. I just went to see if he was there," said Billy Bunter. "I happened to meet him."

"Beast not to take me!" growled Sammy.

"You can come with me to-morrow," said the Owl of the Remove. "In fact, he's asked me to bring you with me."

Sammy's plump face brightened up.

"Oh, good! I'll come like a shot. I say, Billy, the fellow must be dotty to be giving away money like this."

"He's a millionaire," said Bunter. "He's taken a fancy to me. He said so."

"Well, that proves he's dotty, if anything does," said his minor. "What the thunder is there about you for anybody to take a fancy to, unless he's off his rocker?"

"Don't be cheeky, you young sweep, or I won't take you with me to-morrow," said Billy Bunter, frowning.

"I shall jolly well go on my own, then," said Sammy. "I'm not being left out of this. I don't care whether he's dotty or not, so long as he stands a good tip."

"Mind, mum's the word," said Bunter. "If any of the fellows knew, they'd be on to it, and he would jolly soon get fed up with it. Besides, if it came out about his being there, he would get into trouble with the County Council, and he'd have to clear off; might be fined, perhaps, and then he'd be down on us."

"Not a giddy syllable, you bet!" said Sammy.

Sammy hurried into the tuckshop to dispose of the half-sovereign in refreshments liquid and solid. Gatty and Myers of the Second joined him, and helped him manfully to get rid of the unaccustomed cash. Billy Bunter strolled away to the School House in a very satisfied frame of mind. The news that Bunter was in great funds again was soon known all over the Remove, and the fat junior became an object of general interest. To fellows who asked him questions, he replied that he had had a whacking remittance, and as it was known that he had had a good many remittances of late, that answer satisfied the inquirers. Billy Bunter was now a person of some consequence, and Skinner, Snoop, and Company were exceedingly polite to him.

Fisher T. Fish confided in him that he had a great scheme for making no end of money, if the necessary capital could be raised; and proposed to Bunter to furnish the capital, undertaking on his side to furnish the brains. Perhaps Bunter had some doubts about the brains. At all events, he declined the offer without thanks. Then Fisher T. Fish had another idea.

"You owe me two bob," he said. "Now you're in funds you can pay up."

Bunter snorted contemptuously.

"I'd forgotten all about your measly two bob," he said. "Here you are."

Fish almost fainted as he received the two shillings. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 371.

Bunter must indeed have been rolling in money, if he had started to pay his debts.

"Waal, I swow!" said Fish. "I suppose I ain't dreaming!"

"Oh, rats!" said Bunter.

Fisher T. Fish hastened to spread the news that Bunter had started paying his debts. That news caused quite a commotion in the Remove. There was hardly a fellow in the Form to whom Bunter did not owe something. It was evidently a golden opportunity for collecting old debts. Vernon-Smith looked into No. 1 Study, where the Famous Five were at tea.

"Have you heard?" asked the Bounder.

"What's the news? Germans licked?" asked Wharton.

"Blow the Germans! More surprising than that. Bunter's started settling up."

"Gammon!" said Bob Cherry.

"Honest Injun! He's paid Fishy! Paid him two bob he's owed him for dog's ages."

"Wonders will never cease," said Squiff. "Must have been a miracle, getting a loan out of Fishy! But paying him—that takes the cake."

"We're all going to get our little loans back," said the Bounder, with a chuckle. "He owes all you chaps money, so I looked in to tell you. Now's the chance of a lifetime."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Vernon-Smith hurried away, to join the crowd of fellows who were looking for Bunter. But the Famous Five did not rise from the tea-table.

"Not going?" asked Bob Cherry.

Wharton shook his head.

"I'd rather know where he got the tin, first," he said. "Toddy thinks he's been up to something shady. And I think it looks like it."

And the Famous Five allowed the opportunity to pass. But nearly all the rest of the Remove were looking for Bunter.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Settling Day!

BILLY BUNTER was reclining at ease in an armchair in the junior common-room, when his creditors found him. The fat junior sat upright, and blinked at them in surprise, as the crowd of Removites surrounded him. His first impression was that it was a rag, and he looked alarmed.

"I say, you fellows——" he began.

"Pay up!" said Ogilvy.

"What!"

"It's settling-day, I guess," chuckled Fisher T. Fish.

"Now you're in funds, Bunter, you've got to shell out."

"I've paid you, you blessed Yankee——"

"And now you can pay us, look you," said Morgan.

"You owe me half-a-crown."

"Oh, really, Morgan——"

"Faith, you owe me eighteenpence, Bunter," said Micky Desmond.

"You owe me fifteen bob," chuckled the Bounder.

"Five bob here."

"Half-a-crown, please."

"Six-and-six!"

"Fifteenpence."

"Tuppence!"

"Oh, really, you fellows," protested Bunter, "I—I stood you a jolly good feed yesterday, you know, and—and I'm going——"

"Be just before you are generous," grinned Skinner.

"You owe me ninepence, Bunter."

"Square up!"

"Shell out!"

And the whole crowd chorussed:

"Pay up, Bunter!"

"Look here, you fellows——"

"Pay up!" roared the juniors. "You've got plenty of dibs. We'll jolly well rag you if you don't! Square up!"

Billy Bunter sniffed. After all, he reflected, there was a fresh supply awaiting him on the morrow. It would certainly create a record in the Remove if he paid

his debts. His fame would be at the top notch. Billy Bunter decided to pay up—especially as there was no way of getting out of it.

"Oh, all right!" he said. "Of course, I meant to settle up—"

"Of course you did—I don't think," said the Bounder. "But you're going to, anyway. Fifteen bob, please."

"Change that," said Bunter, throwing a pound note on the table.

"Hurrah!"

The Bounder handed Bunter five shillings, which were immediately distributed among the smaller creditors. But others remained to be satisfied, and Bunter had to ask for change for all his banknotes. The Bounder, who had plenty of cash, kindly obliged him, and Bunter had to hand out shillings, florins, and half-crowns, and half-sovereigns on all sides.

It was an exciting moment.

All Bunter's supply of cash, liberal as it was, was not enough to go round, and there was a good deal of shoving for front places among the creditors. Fellows raked up the memory of loans two or three terms old, which they had never expected to gather in. Billy Bunter paid, and paid, and paid, till the last sixpence was gone. Then half a dozen fellows still remained to be settled with.

"Where's my half-crown, look you?" demanded Morgan.

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ONE
PENNY.

I was bound to settle up as soon as I was in funds. That was my very first thought, of course."

"I don't think!" said Peter.

"I owe you a few bob," said Bunter, with a sniff. "I'll settle up with you to-morrow, Todd. I don't care to be under any obligation to you."

"Oh," said Peter, "you'll settle up with me to-morrow, will you? So you're going to have some more money to-morrow?"

"A tenner," said Bunter carelessly.

"From the same source, I suppose?" asked Peter.

"That's my business!"

"Mine, too!" said Peter. "I don't know what you've been up to, Bunter. You haven't sense enough to be a burglar!"

"Oh, really, Toddy——"

"You can't have been betting; you're rotter enough, but you wouldn't have sense enough to win. It can't be that."

"Isn't it my business?" howled Bunter angrily.

"I'm not going to see you arrested, and sacked from the school, and sent to a reformatory, if I can help it," said Peter. "That's the way you're going. It's utterly impossible that you can have come by that money

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"Where's my eighteenpence, bedad?"

"I'm stony!" growled Bunter. "I'll settle up with the rest of you to-morrow."

"Another remittance to-morrow—what?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"Yes, rather!" said Bunter. "My—my pater is simply rolling in money, you know. I can have as much as I like."

"Well, I'm blowed!" said Bolsover major. "Blessed if it doesn't seem to be true, too! I'll wait for my three bob till to-morrow. If you don't settle up then I'll wring your neck!"

"I say, you fellows, I'm stony now," said Bunter dismally. "The least you can do is to stand me a tea."

"You come with me, Bunter," said Skinner, quite affectionately. "You're going to have tea with me."

Skinner was not given to standing anybody anything, but Bunter was a person to be made much of now. He confided to Skinner that he was expecting a "tenner" on the morrow, and after what had happened Skinner was quite prepared to believe it. It was worth a tea in the study to be Bunter's best pal, in these days of plenty.

Billy Bunter came into No. 7 Study to do his preparation, in quite a cheerful frame of mind. Peter Todd stared at him.

"So you've been settling up all round, fatty?" he inquired.

"Certainly," said Bunter; "as an honourable chap, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 371.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE HUN HUNTERS!"

honestly. As for your yarn that a millionaire has taken a fancy to you, that's all rot. You can tell that to the marines; it's no use in this study. And I'll tell you what I'm going to do, Bunter. I'm going to speak to Mr. Quelch about it!"

Bunter's jaw dropped.

"Toddy, you beast! You're not going to sneak!"

"Where does the sneaking come in?" demanded Peter. "If the money is your own there's no harm in Mr. Quelch knowing about it, I suppose."

"He—he would ask me a lot of questions——" stammered Bunter.

"Well, why not? You can answer them, I suppose?"

"I—I can't!"

"You can if you've come by that money honestly," said Peter grimly. "I don't know what you've been doing, Bunter, but it's something shady, that's plain enough."

"It's not shady!" roared Bunter. "Do you think I've been stealing, you idiot?"

"You must have been."

"Why, you—you rotter——"

Peter rose to his feet.

"You can either explain to me or you can explain to Mr. Quelch," he said. "And you can take your choice. I give you one minute!"

"Hold on!" gasped Bunter.

"Well?"

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Bunter blinked at him furiously. If he were questioned by his Form-master, as he certainly would be if Mr. Quelch heard about his recent riches, he knew it must all come out. And then the millionaire archaeologist would find himself in trouble with the County Council, and Bunter's horn of plenty would run dry.

"I—I say, Toddy, I give you my word, honest Injun, that it's all right!"

"You've told me too many whoppers already," said Peter Todd, with a shake of the head. "I'm going to have this out for your own sake, you fat duffer!"

"But it's all right. I—I told you the truth!" stammered Bunter. "He's—he's a millionaire—really and truly!"

"Who is?"

"The—the chap who tipped me," said Bunter desperately. "Mind, I—I'm telling you this in confidence, Toddy. It's really true. His name's Jackson, and he's a millionaire. And—and he's taken a fancy to me because I'm like his boy at Eton."

Peter Todd stared blankly at the Owl of the Remove. Bunter looked as if he were telling the truth. But that such an astounding statement could be true did not seem possible to Peter.

"You mean to say that a Mr. Jackson has given you no end of quids, because he's taken a fancy to you?" he ejaculated.

"Yes; honour bright!"

"Then why shouldn't you tell the truth about it instead of trying to gammon me with yarns about remittances?" demanded Peter.

"Because—because—well, it was a bit of swank!" said Bunter feebly. "I—I don't want to tell all the fellows that I'm letting a stranger give me tips. But he's a millionaire, you know, and—and he doesn't miss it."

"And you're going to get that tenner from him to-morrow?"

"Yes, I am."

Peter shook his head.

"It can't be straight, Bunter. You're being taken in somehow. Has he asked you to do anything for him in return?"

"N-n-no!"

"The truth, you fat rotter!" roared Peter.

"Well, I—I'm to keep it dark!" stuttered Bunter. "That's all. Nothing else. He—he doesn't want me to mention that I've met him!"

"Why not?"

"I've promised not to mention it!" groaned Bunter. "You're making me break a promise, Toddy!"

"I don't want to do that," said Peter, relenting a little. "But this is all so jolly fishy, I know there's something shady in it. When did you meet him first?"

"Wednesday afternoon," mumbled Bunter.

"That was the time you went after the picnickers?"

"Yes."

"Where did you find him?"

"At—at the old priory."

"What was he doing there?"

"N-n-nothing."

"Didn't he tell you what he was doing?"

"He—he said he was interested in archaeology, and was—was looking over the beastly ruins!"

"Well, that's likely enough," assented Peter. "Lots of archaeologists come down to look at the ruins, I know. But—"

"There, you see it's all right," said Bunter, brightening up. "He's an old crank, really, and he's told me he's writing a book about Early English Architecture, or something. Some silly rot. I don't see why I shouldn't let him tip me, as he's a millionaire, and—and he said I was just like his boy at Eton."

"Well, it beats me," said Peter, sitting down again. "I can't understand it. If he'd given you a half-quid—but pounds and pounds—"

"I—I asked him, you know, as he was a millionaire. I—I told him I was hard up."

"Well, I'd back you to squeeze money out of anybody," said Peter. "Still, it's jolly odd. He must have wanted you to do something for the money. He must. You haven't told me all, Bunter. Tell me the rest."

"That's all," grunted Bunter; "and, mind, it's in

confidence. You made me tell you, and I promised not to."

"You can tell me the rest in confidence, then," said Peter. "If it's above board I won't say a word about it."

"Well, he hasn't got permission from the County Council to be there," said Bunter reluctantly. "That's all."

Peter stared.

"But it isn't necessary. Anybody can go there; it's public ground."

"Yes, but—but he says he isn't allowed to investigate, and—and write his book about it without permission from the County Council, and so he wants it to be kept dark for a few weeks," said Bunter.

Peter wrinkled his brows in deep thought. He was by no means so obtuse as Bunter, and that story did not satisfy him.

"And if you jaw about it, it will get out that he goes there, and he will be stopped, and I sha'n't get any more tips," said Bunter plaintively.

"It can't be that," said Peter. "He must be up to something else—something shady."

"Fathead! What could he be up to in those ruins?" snapped Bunter. "He just potters about, poring over the stones and things; you've seen the old duffers doing the same when they came down to see our old tower."

"Yes, I know. But"—Peter rubbed his forehead hard—"no reason why he shouldn't potter about the ruins if he likes. But it's jolly odd."

"Mind, I've told you in confidence," said Bunter. "I promised not to say a word. You've made me break a promise."

"Oh, rot!" said Peter; and he dropped the subject, and started his preparation. Bunter had evidently told him all now, or nearly all, and Bunter's part in the matter was clearly innocent enough. But Peter could not help thinking that there was something very odd about the whole affair. And he made up his mind that the very next half-holiday he would spend exploring the old priory, to ascertain whether anything of a "shady" character was going on there. Yet how anything of a shady nature could be carried on in that secluded spot was a puzzle, and Peter was almost driven to the conclusion that Bunter's mysterious friend was indeed a harmless and eccentric millionaire, who found a harmless pleasure in tipping schoolboys.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Secret!

THE next day Billy Bunter was very anxious for lessons to be over.

He was looking forward to his visit to the old priory, and his interview with "Mr. Jackson." Now that Peter Todd knew that that unknown gentleman was merely a harmless crank, he seemed satisfied, and had asked no more questions, and Bunter was left in peace on that subject.

Peter Todd had agreed to keep his secret if there was no harm in it, and Bunter had satisfied him that there was no harm in it—at least, Bunter believed he had. And Peter Todd was not the kind of fellow to "wedge" in and seek to get some of the tips for himself. So Bunter dismissed the matter from his mind; only resolving that he would be careful not to let the millionaire suspect that he had spoken a word to a third party.

There was no harm done, and as Peter would not betray the secret, there was no danger of Mr. Jackson getting into trouble with the County Council. Bunter was thinking so much of his coming interview with the millionaire that he brought down Mr. Quelch's wrath upon him several times that day for inattention to lessons.

But even lines did not matter much to Bunter now. He was thinking of the forthcoming ten-pound note, and that was a consolation for everything.

Lessons were over at last, and Billy Bunter joined his minor in the Close. Sammy Bunter was also in a state of great eagerness and anticipation.

"Come on!" said Bunter. "Don't let the fellows see you hanging about; some of the rotters might follow us. Get a move on!"

Peter Todd was the only fellow who noticed the two

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Bunters scuttling out of the gates. He looked after them thoughtfully. They were going to the old priory to meet Bunter's millionaire friend, evidently.

Peter remained in a very thoughtful mood. He was not satisfied; but it seemed that he had done all that he could in the matter. But on the morrow it was his intention to go with the Famous Five, and spend the afternoon exploring the priory, above and under ground. That exploration would reveal whether there was anything "shady" going on there. If no discovery was made, Peter would have to be satisfied that Bunter's yarn, astounding as it was, was correct.

The two Bunters scudded away down the lane, and took the footpath through the wood, and arrived breathlessly at the old priory.

The setting sun glimmered on the thickets and the mossy old masses of masonry. Silent and lonely the ruins looked as the two juniors entered by the shattered old doorway.

"Nobody here," said Sammy, with a sniff.

"Down below, very likely," said his major. "He was down there when I came yesterday. We'll give a yell down the stairs."

"Right-ho!"

Billy Bunter led the way into the opening above the vaults. The winding stone stair in the floor of the shadowy chamber was dark and forbidding to the view. Billy Bunter called down, his voice awakening a thousand echoes in the hollows.

"Hallo! Are you there, Mr. Jackson?"

There was a footstep below.

"Come down!" called back the voice of Crawley.

"H'm! All right. Come on, Sammy!"

Billy Bunter would have preferred Mr. Jackson to come up; but as he did not appear to choose to do so, there was nothing for it but for the two Bunters to descend. Billy Bunter led the way, groping down the winding steps in the darkness, followed by Sammy. A glimmer of light struck upon their eyes.

A lantern was burning in the vault, and Billy Bunter recognised the two archaeologists. Crawley and Crake looked at them curiously. Crake had a coil of cord in his hand. Mr. Crawley had his hands in his pockets.

"Oh, here you are!" said Crawley.

"Yes, here we are," said Bunter.

"Anybody with you?"

"No fear!"

"So this is your brother, my young friend?"

"Yes; Sammy, my minor," said Billy Bunter. "This is Mr. Jackson, Sammy!"

"Very glad to see you, Sammy," said Mr. Crawley, with a peculiar smile. "You will be able to see us making our—our archaeological investigations, if you like."

"It's rather c-c-cold down here," said Sammy shivering.

"The—the fact is, we've got to be back for calling-over," said Billy Bunter, who was not in the least interested in archaeology, or any other ology, and was only anxious to secure his tip, and get out of the damp vaults.

"Very good," said Mr. Crawley. "By the way, I suppose you've been keeping the little secret—what?"

"Oh, yes; rather!"

"Of course, there's no harm in it, you understand that," explained the millionaire. "Not the slightest harm. It's only a question of trouble with the—the County Council."

"Of course," said Bunter.

"You haven't mentioned the matter?"

"Not a word," said Sammy.

Billy Bunter thought of his confidences to Peter Todd. But his great abilities as an amateur Ananias came to his aid.

"You rely on us, sir," he said; "we know how to keep mum, don't we, Sammy?"

"Oh, rather!" said Sammy, whose teeth were beginning to chatter. "I—I say, we can't stay much longer, Billy."

"You didn't mention to anybody you were coming here, then?"

"Not a word."

"The other boys don't know anything about it?"

"Nothing at all," said Billy Bunter, beginning to get a little impatient.

Mr. Jackson seemed absurdly particular.

"Oh, I only wanted to know whether you can keep a little secret, you know!" explained the kindly gentleman.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 371.

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ONE
PENNY.

"A lot of curious boys coming here would interrupt our work—and then there's the County Council, too. But if you've kept mum, it's all right." Mr. Jackson laughed pleasantly. "Only if you should happen to fall into any of the pits in the floor here, it would be rather rough on you, as nobody would know where to look for you, would they?"

"But we shan't," said Bunter.

"No—no, of course not; but if you did, nobody at the school would have the faintest idea where to look for you," said Mr. Jackson, with another laugh.

"Nobody," agreed Bunter. "But we shall be jolly careful not to do anything of the sort. I—I say, Mr. Jackson, if you could make it a tenner this time—"

"I'm afraid I haven't got any more banknotes to give away," said Mr. Crawley, still smiling, but with a strange smile that made Bunter a little uneasy.

"Oh, I say!" murmured Sammy.

"In fact, you are a pair of young rascals, and I am not going to give you anything," went on Mr. Jackson cheerfully. "You've been getting money out of me simply to keep this little secret. You are a pair of young scoundrels!"

"Oh, I say!" stuttered Sammy again.

Bunter blinked wrathfully at the archaeologist.

"Well, I like that!" he exclaimed. "I'll jolly well tell the whole school, I know that!"

"Will you, indeed?"

"That I will," said Bunter warmly. "I'll jolly well let the County Council know about your being here, too!"

Mr. Crawley and his companion burst into a laugh. Bunter's statement seemed to amuse them highly. Perhaps it was not the County Council that they were afraid of, after all.

Bunter blinked at them in great anger. The horn of plenty had suddenly run dry, and he had been called some very unpleasant names. It was more than enough to exasperate the Owl of the Remove.

"Come on, Sammy!" he growled. "I think you're a rotter, Mr. Jackson! And I'll jolly well take care there isn't any blessed secret about this, when I get back!"

"You have decided on that, my young friend?"

"Well, perhaps I might keep mum," said Bunter relenting. "But I should want—"

"A tenner!" said Mr. Crawley smiling.

"Yes; and one for Sammy, too. I don't see why I should keep your rotten secrets for nothing," said Bunter loftily. "I daresay you'd be fined if the County Council found you out, pottering about here."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The two archaeologists burst into another roar of laughter.

"Oh, come on, Sammy!" said Bunter savagely. "Let's get out of this!"

Mr. Crawley stepped quickly between them and the stair.

"Not so fast," he said coolly.

"Let us pass!" shouted Bunter.

"Hardly. Collar them, Crake!"

"Why, what—what—Leggo!"

Billy Bunter struggled as the younger man seized him. He ceased to struggle as Crawley's right hand came out of his pocket. For in that right hand glimmered a Browning automatic pistol.

Bunter blinked at the pistol, and seemed frozen all of a sudden.

"Do you see this?" said Crawley quietly. "Well, a slight pressure here—look!—and you will be a dead young rascal the next second."

"P-p-put it away!" stuttered Bunter.

"Do you know that I'm in two minds about blowing your brains out, and pitching you into one of the gaps here," said Crawley.

"Ow, ow!" gasped Bunter.

"But at present I shall keep you here."

"K-k-keep us here?"

ANSWERS

19

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

NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE HUN HUNTERS!"

"Yes. You are prisoners."

"Pip-pip-pip-prisoners?" stuttered Bunter.

"Exactly! Tie their hands, Crake, and if they make the slightest resistance, I will blow their brains out!"

The unfortunate Bunters did not make the slightest resistance. The sight of the Browning was enough for them. They were chalky with terror, and their fat knees were knocking together. They hardly needed telling now that they were in the hands of a pair of desperadoes.

"You—you—you were stuffing me," gasped Bunter.

"You—you're not archæologists at all."

Crawley grinned.

"Not exactly," he assented.

"Wha-a-at are you?" stammered Bunter. "Wha-a-at are you doing here?"

Mr. Crawley did not reply to that question. Bunter blinked at him wildly. His philanthropic millionaire had been suddenly transformed into a dangerous criminal, and Bunter realised that something of a criminal nature must be going on in the vaults under the ruined priory. What it was he had not the faintest idea.

"You will be kept prisoners for the present," said Crawley. "You will be fed on bread and water, and you will be lucky to get it."

"Oh, my hat!"

"And you may be thankful that you have kept the secret, for if you should be searched for we shall have to disappear—and you will disappear first. Do you see?"

"Ow!"

"We shall not leave you behind to tell tales," said Mr. Crawley. "What have you done with the banknotes I gave you?"

"Spent them!" gasped Bunter.

"All of them?"

"Yes."

"Did nobody ask you where you got so much money?" demanded Mr. Crawley, looking a little uneasy for a moment.

"I—I told 'em they were remittances from my pater," groaned Bunter.

Crawley's face cleared again.

"Good! Nobody was dissatisfied with the notes, I suppose?"

"Why should they be?" asked Bunter.

Crawley laughed, and a dreadful suspicion flashed into Bunter's mind. Light was dawning upon his obtuse brain at last.

"I—I say, weren't they good notes?" he stammered, in a scared voice. The consequences of having passed bad money struck him with a spasm of terror.

"You fat fool!" said Crawley. "Do you think that I should give you nine pounds for nothing?"

"Oh, dear!" groaned Bunter.

"Spoof banknotes!" murmured Sammy. "Oh, you silly idiot, Billy! You ought to have guessed they were no good! Now you've passed them!"

"Ow! Oh, dear. Oh, crumbs!"

"The police will be looking for you soon, probably," said Mr. Crawley, in a cheerful tone. "You're really safer here than at the school."

"Ow!"

"Take them away, Crake."

The two juniors' hands were bound behind their backs now. Crake led them away through the long series of vaults. In the last of the vaults an electric light was burning, fed by an accumulator. A table of boards nailed on trestles stood there, and it was covered with instruments of which Bunter did not know the use, but the use of which he could guess now. He remembered having read in the newspapers that since the issue of the new currency notes forgers had been at work counterfeiting them. He had little dreamed that he would ever visit the den of the counterfeiters. But he realised it now. He understood now what was the secret he had been keeping. The two archæologists who had professed to be in fear of interference from the County Council—they were two counterfeiters of currency notes, and their real dread was of being discovered by the police.

No wonder Mr. Crawley had been willing to tip Bunter liberally to keep his little secret, especially as the notes he had given him cost him no more than the trouble of manufacturing them.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 371.

Indeed, Bunter could see, on the table, a pile of the pound notes, and another pile of red ten-shilling notes. The two rascals were well supplied with money—of that kind. The two juniors were thrown on a heap of sacking in a corner. Crake fastened a rope round their waists and tied the end of it to a projection in the wall. Billy Bunter and his minor were helpless prisoners—to stay in the grim vault so long as the forgers were at work there. And the careful keeping of the secret—they understood now why "Mr. Jackson" had questioned them so carefully—that shut off all hope of discovery and rescue.

Billy Bunter thought of Toddy. What would Peter think when the two juniors did not return to Greyfriars? Surely he would guess something—that was the only hope. Then Bunter remembered Mr. Jackson's threats, and shuddered. If they were searched for it might be worse for them than if they were left to their fate.

Taking no notice of the two unhappy juniors, Mr. Crawley and his companion went back along the vaults. Bunter heard a crash, and he knew that the steps leading down into the vault were being pulled away. There was no chance of stray explorers coming down into the vaults now. Doubtless the counterfeiters had discovered some other way out of the place. Billy and Sammy blinked at one another. They were too utterly dispirited even to indulge in recrimination. In silence and misery they sat on the sacking, blinking at the two counterfeiters as they came back into the end vault, and resumed their nefarious work at the table.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER. To the Rescue!

BUNTER!"

No reply.

"Bunter minor!"

No reply.

Mr. Prout, who was taking the roll that evening, frowned, and marked down Billy Bunter and Sammy as absent from calling-over.

"Where is that fat rotter?" said Vernon-Smith, as the juniors came out of Big Hall. "I want to see him."

"Looking for a loan?" grinned Skinner.

"No; I'm looking for the four quids I gave him yesterday afternoon in change for his rotten banknotes!" growled the Bounder.

Skinner stared.

"What's the matter with the notes?" he asked.

"They're no good."

"What!"

"Spoof!" growled the Bounder. "Somebody has been planting forged notes on him, and he's passed them on to me."

"Oh, my hat!" said Skinner. "That's where the giddy wealth came from! Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothing to cackle at, you ass! It means four quids to me," said the Bounder crossly. "But if he can't cash up, I'll take it out of his fat carcase."

"He jolly well won't cash up," said Skinner. "You'll have to go round asking the fellows to hand over the debts Bunter paid up—with your money! Ha, ha, ha!"

The Bounder's statement had caught many ears, and the Remove fellows were interested at once. Peter Todd was most keenly interested of all.

"Spoof banknotes?" said Bob Cherry. "Are you sure, Smithy?"

The Bounder grunted.

"I offered one of them in the post-office this afternoon," he said. "They told me it was no good. It's awfully cleverly done, but the watermark's wrong—so the postmaster said. I made him look at all four, and he said all four are wrong 'uns."

"Great Scott!" Bob Cherry whistled. "Bunter's pater must be a careless ass to send him bad notes."

"He can send him some good ones next, to square me, or there'll be a row," said the Bounder.

The Famous Five, discussing the startling discovery, went up to do their prep; but there was no prep for them just then. Peter Todd followed them up to the Remove passage, and called them into No. 1 Study. Todd's face was so grave that the Famous Five regarded him in astonishment.

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"What's the row, Toddy?" asked Harry Wharton.
 "Something jolly serious," said Peter Todd grimly.
 "Bunter's given Smithy four bad pound notes. There's no doubt that those he passed with Mrs. Mimble yesterday were the same sort. I knew there was something wrong, but I couldn't guess a thing like that. I want you chaps to help me."

"Any old thing," said Nugent. "But what are we to do?"

"I'll tell you what I got out of Bunter yesterday."

The Famous Five listened in blank amazement as Peter told the story of the millionaire archaeologist, and his liberal tips to Billy Bunter.

"Well, my hat!" said Bob Cherry. "That beats it! The spoofer has been giving Bunter spoof banknotes."

"Exactly. I knew there must be something shady on there—at least, I was pretty sure of it. It's pretty clear now what it is."

Bob Cherry whistled.

"You don't think they're making them there?" he exclaimed.

"What else would they want the secret to be kept for?"

"My hat!"

"The rotter could afford to tip Bunter, as he was giving him notes that weren't worth anything," said Peter Todd. "Of course, I never thought of that. Mrs. Mimble hasn't found it out yet—I suppose she hasn't tried to pass the notes. But it's certain that they're

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priory, and perhapsfully they have knocked him on his esteemed head."

"Oh, cheese it, Inky!" said Harry Wharton uneasily.

"It's quite possible," said Todd. "But it's more likely that they've shut him up, to keep him from blabbing. Very likely a gang of them there—though Bunter only mentioned one to me."

Harry Wharton started.

"My hat! I remember on Wednesday. There were two strangers in the priory—one of them in slippers, and the other in his shirtsleeves. I wondered how on earth they were there in that rig."

"By Jove!" said Nugent. "That's it! You remember they picked a row with us to get us out of the place. They didn't want us to picnic there."

"Two regular villainous-looking blighters," agreed Squiff.

"And they've got hold of Bunter now," said Peter Todd. "Sammy, too! Goodness knows what's happened to them."

"But I don't quite see. If Bunter found them there on Wednesday, they could have collared him then if they'd wanted to," said Squiff.

"I've thought that out. No end of fellows knew that

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all the same sort. But that isn't the worst. Bunter went to the priory again after lessons to-day, and took his minor—both of them on the make, of course. They haven't come back."

The chums of the Remove looked very grave. They understood now the trouble in Peter's face.

"You don't think——" began Nugent.

"Look at it," said Peter. "Bunter found the man there, and he tipped him to keep it a secret. Well, he must have known that sooner or later it would leak out—he'd told his minor already. Besides, sooner or later it must have come out about the notes being bad. Well, he wanted the secret kept. He made that fat idiot think he was afraid of being fined by the County Council, or some such rot. Of course, what he was afraid of was the police. He couldn't have any motive for hanging about the ruins, unless that's the place where they're making them."

"Looks like it," said Wharton.

"Well, then, the only way to keep the secret was to collar Bunter, wasn't it, before he let it out, and before it came out that the notes were spoof?"

"Phew!"

"And Bunter's gone there, and hasn't come back," said Peter.

"It looks badfully," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Bunter has been collarfully seized in the old

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 371.

Bunter was there that day; and so he'd have been looked for there. That wouldn't have suited them."

"Hardfully," agreed Hurree Singh. "The esteemed duffer was ass enough to tell them anything they asked him, so they must have known. So they tipfully gave him money to hold his tongue, and asked him to come again."

"Then they could have nailed him yesterday," said Nugent.

"Sammy went with him to-day. Perhaps he told them yesterday that he'd told Sammy," said Peter. "Anyway, the fact is that he's gone there to-day, and hasn't come back. He had lots of time to get in before calling-over. We know now that they're a gang of forgers, and it's clear that they're carrying on their business in those old vaults. They don't know, of course, that Bunter's told me anything. He wouldn't have said a word, only I threatened to go to Quelch."

"Jolly lucky for him," remarked Wharton. "If you hadn't screwed that out of him, we shouldn't know where to look for him now."

"I knew it was fishy," said Todd, compressing his lips. "You see how cunningly they've worked it. They made him keep the secret, by pitching that yarn about archaeology and the rest of it, and tipping him. But they simply had to shut him up for good before it came

21

NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE HUN HUNTERS!"

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

out about the notes being spoof. They've shut him up now, and goodness only knows what's happened."

"I suppose you're right, Toddy," said Wharton slowly. "Those two fellows we saw there looked rotters enough for anything. I suppose they'd come up for some fresh air when we came on them, and we surprised them. No wonder they didn't want us to stay in the priory. I dare say that fathead went into the vaults, and found out that they were up to something, and they had to make up a yarn for him. We hadn't any idea that they were living there, of course. But if Bunter found them underground, they had to satisfy him somehow, or he'd have spread the news——"

"And somebody with more sense than Bunter would have tumbled to it that there was something shady going on," said Bob, with a nod. "But—but——"

"But what?" growled Peter.

"Well, it looks as if you're right, Toddy," said Bob. "But—but if we make a sensation with a yarn like this, and then Bunter walks in, we shall look pretty asses. The two duffers may be feeding at Uncle Clegg's, and forgotten all about calling-over. They may be in by bedtime."

"And suppose they're not?"

"Well, that will be pretty serious."

"And then we shall be blamed for not having spoken out at once," said Harry Wharton. "I suppose we ought to chance it. Only we should look asses if we started a story of kidnapping, and then the fat duffers came rolling in."

"I'm not thinking of that," said Todd. "My idea is to go and look for Bunter."

"Gates are locked now."

"There's another way. If those two rascals are criminals, and they've got a banknote forging plant there, and they've kidnapped Bunter, we don't want to walk in on them and let them see us coming. We don't want to join Bunter, or to get knocked on the head," said Peter. "If they're forgers, it means penal servitude, and if they're armed, we should be in a bad box if we dropped in on them. But there's another way—the passage from the old crypt."

"And take 'em by surprise," said Bob Cherry. "Good egg!"

"It's no joke going through that passage," said Nugent. "I've done it once. It's miles long, and dark, and as cold as a giddy tomb."

"Well, I'm going," said Peter. "You fellows can back me up if you like."

"Oh, we'll come!" said Wharton, at once. "It means cutting our prep. But if Bunter's in danger, it's up to us. Better take along our bats, in case there's a scrap."

"Good idea!" agreed Nugent. "Well, if we're going, the sooner the quicker."

The chums of the Remove lost no time.

They slipped quietly out of the School House, taking their cricket-bats with them, and Wharton fetched a couple of lanterns from the bike-shed.

Then they made their way to the crypt under the old chapel. The crypt was out of bounds for the juniors, but they could not afford to think about that, under the circumstances.

From the last vault, the passage opened, narrow, dark, and slimy, winding away apparently into the very heart of the earth.

Wharton and Todd carried the lighted lanterns, and they started.

Dark and damp the stone-walled passage unrolled before them, seemingly interminable. Most of the juniors had explored it before, and so they knew the way well enough, though there were several branch passages leading they knew not whither.

The icy cold struck to their very bones, and as they advanced, the air grew heavier and heavier, more and more "mephitic." But it was evident that there was some kind of ventilation, by hidden pipes, or they could hardly have breathed at all. In ancient days the passages had probably been used frequently enough, but for many centuries they had lain dark and deserted. The damp reeked on the old slimy stone.

The juniors tramped on in silence.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 371.

Ahead of them the light gleamed on the glimmering walls of damp stone. Their hearts were beating with excitement now.

Harry Wharton paused at last.

"We're pretty close to the priory now," he said, in a low voice. "Better put out the lights. They'll see us coming."

"My hat!" murmured Squiff. "Can you find your way here in the dark?"

"Yes; it runs straight on from here to the priory."

"All serene, then."

The bike lanterns were extinguished. The darkness that fell upon the juniors seemed almost palpable in its intensity.

They kept close to one another as they trod on, silently and cautiously now. They were near the end of their journey.

A fresher air about them told them that the vaults under the priory were close at hand. Still intense darkness reigned.

Wharton, groping about him with his hands, felt no longer the enclosing walls of the subterranean passage.

They were in the priory vaults at last.

From the distance, a gleam of light struck upon their eyes in the dense darkness.

"Hold on!" whispered Wharton.

The juniors halted, breathing hard. They stared away towards the glimmer of light, at the end of the series of gloomy vaults. Someone was there, and the juniors felt their hearts thumping.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Laid by the Heels!

"QUIET!" whispered Wharton.

"What-ho!"

"Follow on! Got your bats ready?"

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Singh. "The esteemed rascals are there. I can hear them speakfully."

A faint murmur, as of distant voices, came along the gloomy vaults.

With beating hearts, the Greyfriars juniors stole away towards the light, treading on tiptoe, and making no sound.

They were certain now that Peter Todd's surmise was correct, and they knew that there was danger ahead. But they did not falter.

Closer and closer they crept along the vaults, till they reached the last archway of brick, and could see into the end vault.

There they paused.

It was a startling scene that met their gaze.

Electric light gleamed in the vault, and on a heap of sacking in a corner they beheld Bunter major and minor. They were sitting with their hands bound behind them, and with lugubrious expressions on their fat faces, which were chalky white. They were evidently prisoners; but Harry Wharton & Co. were glad to see that they were alive and safe.

At the table of trestles two men sat, smoking and drinking. The instruments on the table showed pretty plainly what their occupation had been.

The juniors recognised Crawley and Crake, the two rascals they had encountered on the afternoon of the picnic. They had removed the false beards they had worn during their interviews with Bunter, and the Owl of the Remove could see them as they were, now that it did not matter what he saw. The two rascals had a bottle on the table before them, and were filling their glasses, and the remains of a meal lay on the table. Billy and Sammy Bunter were watching them with hungry eyes. As the juniors, keeping in cover in the next vault, looked in on the strange scene, the voice of Billy Bunter was heard.

"I—I say, you fellows——"

Wharton started. For a moment he thought that Bunter had seen the party. But the Owl of the Remove was evidently addressing the two counterfeiters.

"I—I say, you might give a fellow something to eat,"

Bunter went on plaintively; "I sha'n't be able to sleep, you know!"

Neither of the counterfeiters troubled to reply to Bunter.

"I can't sleep without any supper, you know," went on Bunter. "What's the good of a crust to a fellow like me? I say, you know—"

"I'm awfully hungry, Mr. Jackson," mumbled Sammy. Crawley looked round at them at last.

"Will you hold your tongues?" he growled.

"But I—I say—"

"Think yourselves lucky that you're still alive!" growled Crawley. "I'm not sure yet that I sha'n't throw you into a pit, and have done with you. It would be less trouble!"

"Ow!"

The unhappy prisoners relapsed into silence. They had watched the counterfeiters at their supper, and it was like the tortures of Tantalus to them. But there was no help for it. Bunter groaned dismally, and Sammy mumbled in sympathy. The two counterfeiters went on with their whisky and their talk. The sufferings of the two Bunters did not seem to touch their hearts in the least.

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged glances.

They could not speak without revealing their presence to the two criminals; but Wharton made a sign.

On the table before Crawley lay a Browning pistol, and it was only too probable that he would use it if he were given a chance. The ruffians had to be taken by surprise. It did not even occur to the juniors, at the moment, to return the way they had come, and obtain help to capture the rascals. They were there to rescue the Bunters, and they were ready to take the risk.

Wharton drew a deep breath. He grasped his bat by the cane handle and stepped through the arch into the vault.

There was a sudden rush of footsteps.

Crawley uttered a cry, and leaped to his feet. Crake started up, his face going pale. The elder rascal made a grasp at the Browning pistol.

But he had no time.

Harry Wharton was close to him—not close enough to strike—and the ruffian's hand was on the Browning; but the captain of the Remove hurled his bat with all the strength of his arm. The bat struck Crawley on the side of the head, and he gave a shriek and pitched over, and the Browning dropped on the stone floor.

The next instant Crake went down under Bob Cherry's bat with a swipe that would have felled an ox.

"Collar them!" panted Squiff.

Wharton was already springing on Crawley. His knee was jammed on the rascal's chest, and he was pinned down.

He struggled madly under the junior; but Nugent and Hurree Singh were upon him in a second, and he was held fast.

Peter Toad and Squiff and Bob Cherry were on the other rascal, and Todd's knee on his ribs pinned him down.

"Looks like a win for the Remove!" panted Squiff.

"Help!" roared Bunter.

But they had no time to waste on Bunter just then. Crawley and Crake were resisting furiously, hard as they had been hit. But they had no chance against half-a-dozen sturdy juniors.

They were pinned down helplessly and held fast while Inky cut the rope that held the prisoners to the wall and used it to bind their wrists together, and then their ankles. Then the juniors rose breathlessly, leaving the counterfeiters bound on the floor. A torrent of furious curses came from Crawley, while his companion maintained a sullen silence. But Crawley's lurid remarks were soon cut short by Bob Cherry jamming his own handkerchief into his mouth. Then the counterfeiter lay spluttering and glaring.

"I say, you fellows, you might help a fellow loose!" roared Billy Bunter.

Having secured their prisoners, the juniors hastened to release the two Bunters. Billy and Sammy rubbed their wrists and grunted. Then they made a rush for the table, and started operations on what was left of the meal there. It did not seem to occur to either of the fat youths that it was a time to testify gratitude. As Bob Cherry remarked, it might have been the special

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NEXT
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"THE HUN HUNTERS!"

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business of the Famous Five to get Bunter out of scrapes from the way he took it.

But Billy Bunter was not worrying about what the juniors thought of him. He was busy attending to the imperative wants of his inner man.

Billy Bunter, having cleared the table with the able assistance of his minor, made a rush for a large bag from which he had seen the counterfeiters take their supper. His eyes gleamed behind his glasses at the sight of ham and beef and pickles and other good things.

Harry Wharton & Co. stared at the two fat juniors. They did not know whether to laugh or be angry.

"Well, you fat rotters," exclaimed Bob Cherry at last, "haven't you ever heard tell of such words as 'Thank you!'?"

"Oh, really, Cherry!" said Bunter, with his mouth full. "I'm frightfully hungry, you know! Those disgusting villains only gave me a crust to eat—me, you know! What was the good of a crust to me? The beasts! I say, they're counterfeiters—they've been making spoof notes, and I've found them out! I shall expect a reward for this!"

"What!"

"I found them out, didn't I?" demanded Bunter. "There ought to be a reward—why, there's bound to be a reward for capturing a pair of scoundrels like that!"

"Shut up!" roared Todd. "We must get along out of this. Light those lanterns, Bunter!"

"I say, I'm hungry—"

"Light those lanterns!" thundered Peter.

And Bunter jumped, and hastened to obey.

"Those brutes are safe enough till the police come," said Wharton. "They can stay here till then. Come on!"

Bunter major and minor grabbed handfuls of the provisions, and followed the juniors out of the vault. Harry Wharton & Co. would have preferred to return to Greyfriars above ground, but they found the stone stair shattered, and so they were compelled to retrace their steps by the subterranean passage.

They arrived at the crypt at last, and came out into the old Close of Greyfriars, and presented themselves at once in Mr. Quelch's study to tell their strange story.

The adventure of the Famous Five made a sensation in the school. They had to relate their adventures a dozen times over that evening. Meanwhile, Mr. Quelch had telephoned to Courtfield, and Inspector Grimes and his men proceeded to the vaults under the priory to take charge of the malefactors and their plant. It was a great occasion for Mr. Grimes, and he called at Greyfriars the next day to report that the two counterfeiters—recognised as well-known London criminals, who had narrowly escaped arrest a few weeks before in London—were safe under lock and key. Billy Bunter's part in passing the forged notes was explained, and as the Owl of the Remove had acted in innocence—or rather in stupidity—he was relieved to hear that there were no unpleasant consequences for him to fear.

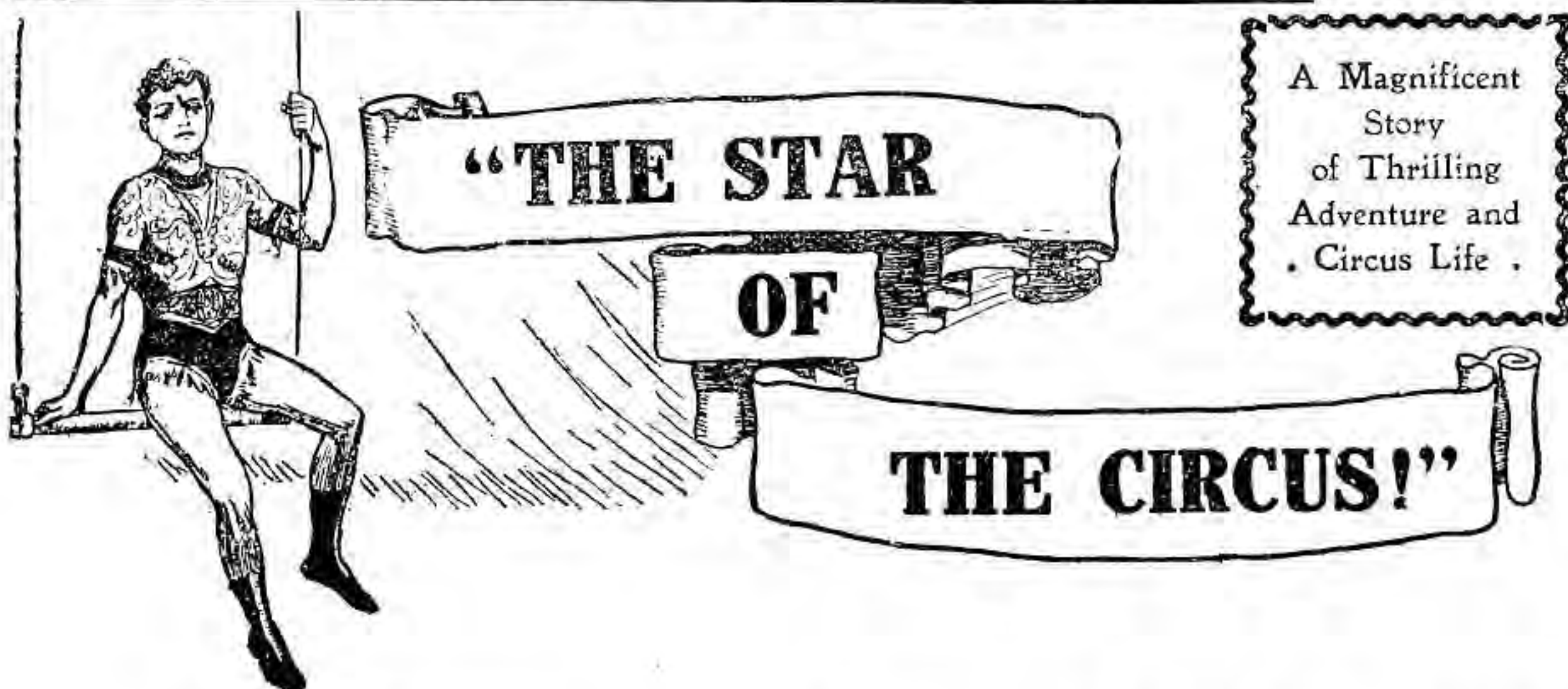
He was far from satisfied, however. He considered himself fully entitled to a munificent reward, but no reward was forthcoming, and Bunter did not leave off grumbling for several days. Meanwhile, his pater had had the pleasure of paying Mrs. Mimble's account—that good dame not being satisfied with the banknotes Bunter had given her, now that she knew their value.

As for Vernon-Smith, Bunter promised to settle his four pounds out of his very next postal order—a promise that did not seem to afford the Bouncer very much satisfaction. And the next time Billy Bunter received a remittance, and rushed off to the tuckshop, Mrs. Mimble steadily declined to accept his pound-note. It was in vain that the fat junior assured her that he had just received it from his pater. Mrs. Mimble had had enough of Bunter's Banknotes.

THE END.

Another fine Greyfriars yarn, entitled "The Hun Hunters," by Frank Richards, will appear next Monday. You should not miss this on any account. Take the precaution of ordering in advance, or you may be disappointed.

THE FIRST INSTALMENT OF OUR NEW SERIAL.



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Two Villains Strike a Bargain.

"I'd give a thousand—ay, two thousand—pounds willingly to know that this fellow, Clive Clare, was dead and buried!"

The man who gave utterance to this startling outburst was Sir Richard Battingley, Baronet. As he paced the spacious and sumptuously-appointed library of Battingley Hall, the ancient Berkshire seat of the Battingleys, he presented to his solitary listener a face that would have been handsome but for the evil expression which periodically crept into his almost coal-black eyes, and pulled down the corners of his thin, mobile lips beneath the heavy, dark moustache into an unfailing suggestion of the vindictive and revengeful spirit of the man.

His companion, who sat in a luxurious armchair, smoking one of the baronet's choice cigars, and occasionally helping himself from a decanter of the baronet's choice whisky, eyed Sir Richard intently for a moment.

He was a peculiar type, was Paul Murdway. One of those impassive faces was his—a face which, as an index to the man's passing thoughts or emotions, furnished no clue whatever, and baffled all scrutiny. Pleasure or rage, affection or hatred, if any of these passions were aroused within his soul, never found expression on his beardless face, which might have been a mask of wax for all the animation it betrayed. The look with which he regarded the baronet now might have been of admiration, or it might have been one of contempt, of good-will or of anger, of well-meaning interest or of selfish cunning. His steady, penetrating grey eyes gave no confirmation or denial to any supposition whatever.

And if his face furnished no indication of his thoughts, his attire was equally effective in disguising his circumstances. The plain black cloth of which his suit was made was worn enough to suggest the needy parson, while the quality was sufficiently good to betoken the wealthy man somewhat regardless of appearances. To strangers, then, Paul Murdway was an enigma; to his acquaintances something only a little less of a riddle.

He blew out a cloud of tobacco smoke as he eyed the baronet.

"You were always pretty generous with your money, Battingley," he observed, "especially if you had anything to gain by it. Even when you were known out in the bush as Dare-Devil Dick, you would have cheerfully given away your last fiver to anybody helping you to get quits with an enemy."

Sir Richard Battingley darted a quick look at Paul Murdway.

"Oh, I don't mean to suggest," went on the latter drily, "that you are trying to get quits with an enemy now, or that you are likely to give away your last fiver. The Battingley estates are a bit too rich to require that—eh? But what I was driving at, is, that since you've offered a thousand—or even two thousand—pounds to get this Clive Clare out of the way, I haven't the smallest doubt in my own mind that, provided you were satisfied the thing would be properly done, you would even spring five thousand pounds. Now, isn't that so?"

The baronet paused in his walk, and turned round quickly.

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"Yes, you are right, Murdway," he said. "I would give five thousand pounds. And, while we are on the subject," he pursued, "I should like you to understand that my motive for this is—well, a peculiar one. The boy, of course, is nothing to me. I have nothing to fear from him. He is an absolute stranger. I've only seen him once, and yet—well, I want him out of the way. He haunts me. I have an antipathy to him, just as Napoleon had an antipathy to cats."

"H'm!" murmured the other. "So that's your motive, Battingley, is it? And to get rid of your antipathy you have stated your willingness to give one, two, or even five thousand pounds."

"That is so."

"Five thousand pounds," ruminated Paul Murdway. "It's just a little bit of a pity that it isn't ten thousand."

"Why?"

"Because, you see," Murdway said, taking another puff at his cigar, "if it had been ten thousand I might have helped you. Ten thousand would have been worth my taking a personal interest in the matter. As it is, of course, being an old friend, I'll look about, and if I can find a man to undertake the business for five thousand I'll let you know."

The baronet stared, amazed at the other's coolness.

"Would ten thousand ensure the better carrying out of the business?" he inquired.

Paul Murdway looked up, scarcely moving a muscle.

"Ten thousand pounds," he said, "would absolutely guarantee the job."

"Then I will make it ten thousand."

"Battingley," remarked Murdway, rising abruptly and holding out his hand, "I wish you a very good-day!"

"Why, Murdway," asked the other in surprise, "are you going already?"

"Yes. I have important business."

"Business! What business?"

Paul Murdway raised his eyes, and met those of his questioner.

"I am going," he said quietly, "to earn ten thousand pounds!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Cyrano's Circus—In Grievous Peril—Clive Clare to the Rescue—Sando and Dando Prove Their Mighty Strength.

The little town of Abbeyford was in a state of unusual excitement. Ordinarily, the old-fashioned place was dull, quiet, and imbued with that spirit of serenity which always pervades places fifty years behind the times. To-day, however, the whole town had about it the real holiday air. Men, women, and children of the town, as well as from many of the neighbouring villages, lined the streets in unmistakable holiday garb, and with unmistakable expressions of pleasurable expectancy on their rosy faces.

"It'll be along presently," observed one burly-looking farmer in the High Street. "The procession's due to start from the bridge at one o'clock. There's a performance at half-past two, and another to-night at seven. They won't be many minutes now."

Even as he spoke the sound of a distant fanfare of trumpets, broke on the ears of the populace, and a moment later the blare of a powerful brass band, playing a jubilant march, was plainly to be heard.

There was no mistake about it. Cyrano's Royal Circus and Imperial Hippodrome, as patronised by the Royal Family of Great Britain, and all the principal crowned heads of Europe, was in Abbeyford! For many days past its early coming had been proclaimed far and wide by glaring posters as big as sides of houses; and now that it had indeed come, all Abbeyford had turned out to give it hearty welcome.

To the rousing strains of "The Soldiers of the King" the procession turned out of River Street towards the centre of the town, headed by the band. As the picturesque cavalcade passed along, the groups of sightseers gazed admiringly at the many huge gilded triumphal cars, at the beautiful teams of ponies and horses, at the great lumbering elephants, at the awkward shambling camels, and the hundred other delights which the procession afforded.

Through the crowd there ran whispered explanations as to who was who, and each star in the procession got special glances of curiosity or admiration directed on him or her. There was "Pintoli, the Wonderful Wire-Walker"; there was the bronzed Professor Durnette, with his heavy moustache and goatee of almost jet-black, "King of Lion-tamers," who, according to the bills, would "at each performance enter a den of forest-bred lions." Then there was "Lieutenant Phil Tremaine, the Marvellous Ventriloquist"; whilst upon the back of a sturdy mustang one could see the sallow, scowling visage of "Senor Miguel Gurez, the Mexican Dead-Shot, and Champion of the World with Rifle and Revolver." Seated amid the mystic environment of mirrors and gauze curtains was Cymeli, billed as the "Lady Snake-Charmer and Clairvoyante." Following her came Yamka, the Dervish, at the head of his troupe of performing dromedaries; and behind him came the comic clown band, making hideous noises on all sorts of discordant instruments, under the joint conductorship of "Bononi and Roly-Poly, the two funniest clowns on earth," according to the aforementioned bills. Gravely seated between Bononi and Roly-Poly was "Bimbo, the Educated Ape," who for some time past had played an important part in the clowns' turn.

Each of the star performers enumerated drew upon himself loud expressions of admiration. But a far greater burst of applause was drawn forth by the sight of Sando and Dando, as they stood in statuesque attitudes upon a gilded car. The bills proclaimed the pair as the Herculean Twins; and truly magnificent specimens of men they were. With limbs of unsurpassed development, they made their biceps and the other muscles of their arms dance to the time of the music as they rode. It seemed, indeed, as if the reception accorded Sando and Dando could not be equalled. And yet, a minute later, it was not only equalled, but excelled by that accorded to the two quiet, unobtrusive figures who rode side by side in the procession. The one, a youth of about seventeen, was Clive Clare; the other, a girl of exquisite beauty and about the same age, was May Ellis.

These two, respectively advertised as the "King of Equestrians" and the "Queen of Equestriennes," called forth by their appearance a veritable shower of applause and admiration. It was not that their surroundings were more sumptuous or striking than those of others in the procession. On the contrary, they were almost bereft of ornamental adjuncts. It was the mere triumph of manliness and womanly beauty that did it. Clive Clare sat his horse like a prince, manly and upright; his somewhat large, good-natured eyes looked out at the world frank and unflinching, while May Ellis, discarding the spangles and flummery of the ring, appeared in a plain but superbly-fitting habit of black. That was all. But the sight of the handsome youth and the entrancing vision of loveliness by his side drew forth the maximum of admiration.

So the procession passed down the High Street. While yet Clive Clare and May Ellis remained the cynosure of all eyes, a sudden and unexpected sound claimed the general attention, and a moment later struck terror into the hearts of all those who saw the cause of the disturbance.

One of the huge elephants had broken away from its keeper, and, half turning, was making its way towards one of the shops in the street. The animal's flaming eyes, its uplifted trunk, its gaping mouth, from which issued a series of loud trumpeting, showed plainly that the beast was angry.

Instantly the crowd of people stampeded, women shrieking, and men shouting aloud in their terrified excitement. Straight towards the shop entrance lumbered the enraged elephant. The foremost part of the procession, unaware of the incident as yet, was still moving on. The elephant keeper, busy in pacifying the other beasts of the troupe, was powerless to interfere with the one that had mutinied. The participants in that part of the cavalcade which was behind were well-nigh as terrified as the onlookers. Horror-stricken, they sat or stood where they were, incapable of rendering assistance, their wits forsaking them.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 371.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE HUN HUNTERS!"

EVERY
MONDAY,

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ONE
PENNY.

Then, to add to the general terror, there came to the step of the shop for which the elephant was making a tiny child. Oblivious of her mortal peril, she stood there in her childish innocence, gazing only with wonderment in her eyes. The elephant saw her, and, with some mad desire to wreak its fury on this defenceless little thing, switched its tail, swept the air furiously with its trunk, and blundered forward.

Was there nobody to snatch this babe from certain death? No one in the shop to pluck the little one from its position of danger? No, none, apparently.

But there was one in that procession. Clive Clare alone had kept his wits. At some distance from the spot where the danger first threatened, he had at once sprung from his horse, elbowed and jostled his way through the surging, terrorised mass of people, and, reaching the clear space before the shop, rushed towards the child.

The elephant's trunk was lowered, was within three feet of the little girl. In another moment it would be around the small body and would be crushing the victim's fragile form.

But Heaven, in its mercy, gave to Clive Clare the agility of a greyhound. Just a second before the animal could consummate its purpose the brave youth had snatched up from the pavement the wondering child, and in another moment had literally thrown it into the arms of a man who now rushed towards him from the shop.

Clive Clare was about to turn when he felt something encircling his own waist—something heavy, ponderous, flexible, and of fearful strength. Instantly he realised his position. Baulked of the child, the huge brute had seized him.

Clive felt himself swung high into the air, encircled by the trunk of the beast. Immediately beneath his ears sounded the snorting of the enraged captor. With a flourish of malignant triumph, the elephant—to whom the weight of Clive seemed as a feather—swept him through the air, preliminary to that downward sweep which assuredly would break every bone in Clive Clare's body and crush every spark of life out of his heart.

But even as this was about to happen something else occurred to frustrate what seemed to be inevitable. Two men, so much alike in face and form as to defy distinction, sprang simultaneously forward. Attired in all the athletic glory of fleshings, Sando and Dando, the Herculean Twins, lost not a moment. With a celerity born of their acrobatic training, Sando swung Dando, his brother, on to his shoulders.

From this point of vantage Dando took a flying leap astride the elephant's head; then, stretching out his mighty arms, and gripping the base of the creature's trunk between his steel-like hands, he pressed with every ounce of strength he possessed down—down.

Surprised by the pressure, the elephant lowered its trunk, whereupon Sando, waiting for the event, leapt up and seized the end of the animal's trunk, and, in his turn, tugged with all his tremendous strength. The double power by which it was now assailed caused the elephant to yield its pressure on the body of Clive Clare. In another few seconds Clive was free—dazed and half suffocated—but free upon the pavement, pale, and gasping for breath.

While all this had been happening the elephant keepers, from the rearmost part of the procession, had come up with ropes and chains. With a quickness which came of practice they fastened the animal's trunk to its hind leg, rendering it practically helpless in movement. Then, having secured its body with other chains and cords, they led it back to the field in which the circus tent was pitched.

The crowd, now relieved of all danger, proceeded to let loose their pent-up feelings. Cheer upon cheer rent the High Street of old Abbeyford. A score of people had rushed away for water and brandy, and now many eager hands were attending to Clive Clare.

And then again the cheers rang out—cheers for Clive Clare, who had saved the child, and cheers for Sando and Dando, who, by their bravery and marvellous muscles, had, in their turn, saved Clive Clare.

As a rehearsed thing, the procession was over. But in its place came an impromptu procession—a procession that required no band to herald it on its triumphant course—a



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AFTER

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

procession that was inspired by the cheers and bravos of those who carried Clive Clare and Sando shoulder-high through the town, and the crowds who walked on either side of them.

A brief examination by a doctor was sufficient to show that Clive Clare escaped without any broken bones. Bruised indeed he was by the fearful pressure to which he had been subjected, but from such hurts a youth of his constitution and physical fitness would rapidly recover.

Mr. Adolph Cyrano, the circus proprietor, might have given orders for the withdrawal of every poster and handbill in the neighbourhood without jeopardising one whit the financial success of his show in that town. For the afternoon performance such a crowd besieged the circus entrance as would have filled a tent of four times the seating capacity of the one they sought to enter. The public came not for entertainment, excellent and varied though it undoubtedly was; they had come to look once more upon brave young Clive Clare and the equally brave Sando and Dando.

When as many of the vast concourse of people as was possible had squeezed themselves through the turnstiles into the seats surrounding the arena it was to meet with what, to an ordinary audience, might have been a disappointment. Barely had the last strains of the overture by the band died away when Mr. Adolph Cyrano, resplendent in silk-faced evening-dress, and a huge, scintillating diamond-stud in his shirt-front, stepped into the arena.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began, with a graceful sweep of his opera-hat—"I have, I am sorry to say, an announcement to make which may cause some little disappointment. I regret to inform you that Mr. Clive Clare"—tremendous cheering followed the mention of the name—"I regret to inform you that Mr. Clive Clare, acting under medical advice, is unable to perform this afternoon. Of the cause of his indisposition, which, I am happy to tell you, promises to be of the most temporary description, many of you have this day been witnesses." (Loud and prolonged cheers.) "At a critical moment in the rare—I may say unprecedented—misbehaviour of one of my elephants, Mr. Clive Clare performed what I may term the bravest deed I myself have ever witnessed. Fortunately, two other brave members of my company went to his rescue just in time, and, compared to what he might have received, Mr. Clare's injuries are slight. Nevertheless, they are, I regret to say, sufficient to incapacitate him for this afternoon's performance. To-night, however, I think I may promise for a certainty that Mr. Clive Clare will positively appear, in co-operation with Miss May Ellis, in their daring and unique feats of horsemanship which have justly earned for them, to quote the words of our immortal bard, 'golden opinions from all sorts of people,' and the proud titles respectively of King and Queen of Equestrians."

Another graceful sweep of his hat amid the great volume of cheers which followed this speech seemed to indicate that Mr. Adolph Cyrano had finished. But with the abatement of the applause the circus proprietor added a kind of verbal post-script.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he proceeded, "before the performance begins, I have just one other brief announcement to make. Messieurs Sando and Dando, the world-famous Herculean Twins, who have to-day so greatly distinguished themselves in connection with the incident already referred to, will appear as usual this afternoon in their marvellous acrobatic, weight-lifting, and general exhibition of physical strength."

There was another prolonged outburst of cheering and calls for the Herculean Twins and for Clive Clare. The two strong men came into the arena blushing to the colour of their fleshings at the unusual ovation they received. For these two, mighty of muscle as they were, and used to applause in connection with their performance, were as modest and bashful as young children in connection with the brave deed they had performed that day.

After them, limping a little, and still pale, came Clive Clare. Attired in ordinary dark plain clothes, he smiled and bowed his acknowledgments to the great audience that cheered him to the echo. Then he withdrew to get the afternoon's rest which the doctor had ordered him.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Murdway and Gurez Become Acquainted—The White Powder—Bimbo the Ape does Clive a Great Service—The Mexican Dead-Shot's Plan.

It was a few minutes before the commencement of the evening show at Cyrano's Circus. The artistes' dressing-tent presented its usual motley appearance. That half of it which was nearer to the ring, and was divided off from the dressing

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 371.

apartments by long ringed curtains, stretched across poles, showed seven or eight of the performers who made their appearance early in the programme all ready dressed and made-up for their "turns."

There was the ringmaster—Mr. Patross—in fanciful evening-dress and elaborate waistcoat, stroking his big, silky, blonde moustache with one hand, and gently flicking his whip with the other. There was Pintoli, the wonderful wire-walker, who, from his name, was generally supposed to be an Italian, but who was really, as was unmistakably apparent from his accent, a Londoner bred and born, chatting with Lieutenant Phil Tremaine, who was at the moment prudently testing the strings by which his ventriloquial figures were worked.

Near by sat the two chief clowns, Bononi and Roly-Poly, who enjoyed, by virtue of their difference in physical stature, the joint cognomen of the "Long and the short of it."

Bononi was a lank, thin man, with a most melancholy cast of countenance, quite out of keeping with his calling as a jester; while the short, dumpy Roly-Poly, with his round, jovial face, stamped him at once as a man who had laughed much, and grown fat on it. On this evening Bononi—who, as his colleague Roly-Poly put it, was never happy unless he was miserable—was airing one of his many grievances.

"What can I do with 'business' like mine?" he remarked sadly, as he stroked the head of Bimbo, the most intelligent and highly-trained ape in the world—vide Cyrano's posters. "What chance have I got, Joe. I go into the ring, I give off a few of the most over-baked chestnuts that anybody could find, and I come out again. You get all the plums, Joe."

"Well, roly-poly's the proper place for plums, ain't it, Bill?" (The two clowns were Joe and Bill to one another.) "Besides, if I do get all the plums you get all the nuts—chestnuts. You've just owned it yourself."

The skin over the high cheek-bones and round about the mouth of the melancholy Bononi twitched for a moment. It was the nearest approach to a laugh at which he had ever been known to arrive.

"Well, well," observed the dismal one, taking unto himself the full jester's licence, "let's drop plums and change the current of our conversation. How's young Clive to-night, Joe?"

"Better," responded Roly-Poly cheerfully—"very much better. I left him at his lodgings a little while ago, and he'll be here soon to dress. It was a nasty shock he had to-day, and it'll take a day or two to get over it; but the doctor's given him some physic for his nerves, and he'll pull through his turn to-night all serene."

While the two chief clowns were thus discussing their mutual friend, and exchanging small jests with one another, one member of the company sat apart, brooding. It was Senor Miguel Gurez, the Mexican dead-shot. Of all the praise which Clive Clare had received for his brave deed that day, Gurez was perhaps the only one of Cyrano's company who begrudged it him.

"Hang him!" muttered the Spaniard, half aloud, as he sat apart from the rest in a corner of the tent. He was one of the genuine foreigners of the company, although he spoke English very well. "Hang this Clare! Why does he win May for all this cheering, and not I? Why does he win May Ellis's love and not I? Hang him, I say! Is the saving of a brat worth all this praise? Pah! And was it so great a thing to do as to justify May Ellis inquiring after his welfare every few minutes since? I wish he were dead!"

The Spaniard's dark, treacherous-looking eyes glistened as he gave utterance to his wicked wish. At the same moment he became conscious that somebody was within a few yards of him—somebody who did not appear to have been listening, it is true, but who was within hearing distance. As Gurez rose to change his place, the stranger turned and wished him good-evening.

"I am waiting," the stranger went on to explain, "for Mr. Clive Clare. As one who witnessed his action to-day, I have called, with Mr. Cyrano's permission, to congratulate him on his escape. I am not a native of Abbeyford; I am merely staying here for a time. My name is Mr. Adrian Deering. You don't happen to know where Mr. Clare is, I suppose?"

"No, I don't know," returned Senor Gurez surlily.

"Ah, you don't know," repeated the other impassively, as he took the arm of the Mexican dead-shot. Then he added in a whisper: "And you don't care, either, do you?"

Gurez turned round quickly, his eyes blazing, as if he felt he had been betrayed by his own thoughts.

"Caramba!" he exclaimed hoarsely. "What mean—"

"Hush! Don't get excited, senor!" interrupted Adrian Deering suavely. "As it happens, I chanced to hear what

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you were saying to yourself just now. Oh, don't get alarmed! I sha'n't give you away. If you hate this fellow Clare, I—well, I don't like him."

Miguel Gurez looked up suspiciously.

"I mean what I say," went on Adrian Deering—"only, senor, we can't very well discuss the business at this moment. When do you go into the ring?"

"In about an hour."

"And when does Clive Clare perform?"

"About a quarter of an hour after I have finished."

"Good! Ah, this is Clare, I believe, coming into the tent now. Wait here, senor," whispered Deering. "After I have finished with this youth I want to have a comfortable talk with you."

So saying, Paul Murdway—for it was he, masquerading under the name of Adrian Deering—advanced with outstretched hands to congratulate Clive Clare, who had just entered.

Clive did not like the look of the visitor very much. The stranger's impassive countenance puzzled him, and he somehow instinctively disliked people whose character did not in some way show itself on the face. But he thanked the man politely enough. As he did so, Clive took out from his pocket a bottle of medicine, which, a dose being shortly due, he had brought to the circus with him. Having placed it on a bench near by, and shaken hands with his visitor, he retired to dress for his performance.

"Now's my chance!" murmured Paul Murdway, as he glanced quickly round, and saw that nobody was looking. "Well, I'm in luck, anyway, so far."

He took from his pocket a tiny paper packet, and, opening it, disclosed a small quantity of white powder. Stealthily he uncorked Clive's bottle of medicine, and in a twinkling had deftly poured the powder into it. Then, having replaced the cork, he strode nonchalantly back to where he had left Senor Miguel Gurez.

"I have congratulated the hero," he observed drily.

The Mexican looked up with a cunning leer in his glittering eyes.

"I saw you," he replied. "I also saw you dose the hero's medicine. What was that powder?"

Paul Murdway placed his lips close to the other's ear.

"Something to make him sleep," he murmured.

"Sleep! Ah, I see! Sleep for ever—eh?"

The eyes of the two men met, and they both grinned an evil grin.

"But look here, senor," pursued Murdway, "all this has got to be secret between us. Mum's the word, remember, and when this business is all over there will be a hundred pounds for you for keeping confidence."

The Mexican's eyes blazed with something like indignation.

"Pah!" he sneered. "Your hundred pounds! Yes, I shall take it, because I am poor; but I would gladly pay a hundred pounds, if I possessed it, to have that fellow Clare under the turf!"

The impassive Murdway looked up, surprised at the other's vehemence.

"By George!" he remarked. "When you hate, senor, you don't hate in a half-hearted way!"

"Mexicans never do," retorted Gurez. "Hate! I hate every hair of this fellow's head! Often have I thought of getting him out of my path myself. I had even thought out a plan."

Gurez glanced round the tent suspiciously.

"I was going to kill him," he went on in a whisper, "so that it would look like an accident. Have you seen his act? No? Well, his greatest feat is to turn a double somersault from a swinging trapeze, falling astride of a horse as it gallops round the track. The trapeze is over twenty feet up, and before taking off he swings upon it for a few seconds. Now, what I intended to do was"—Gurez glanced round the tent once more—"what I intended to do was to conceal myself in the entrance to the arena, and, with my silent rifle, fire at and cut through one of the ropes of the trapeze. I am a dead shot, you know, and I could not miss. I've thought of doing it time after time; sometimes I have even gone so far as to conceal the rifle, and when Clare has been performing my fingers have itched to pull the trigger."

At that moment the subject of their sinister discussion emerged from his dressing-room. Clive Clare walked straight across to the bench where he had left his medicine-bottle. Paul Murdway and Miguel Gurez, from their dark corner, eyed his every movement keenly.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Clive, looking here, there, and everywhere as he spoke. "Where's my physic? I'm certain I left it here just now. Any of you fellows seen my physic?" he called out to Bononi, Roly-Poly, and the others, who were in a group at the opposite side of the tent.

Roly-Poly turned, and laughingly pointed a fat forefinger up to the tent-pole. There, seated upon a knot of rope, was Bimbo, the highly-educated ape, grinning and chattering, and holding out the uncorked bottle of medicine in his right hand.

Even as Roly-Poly pointed to him, Bimbo applied the bottle

EVERY
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to his nose, and made an excruciating grimace in indication of its unpleasant odour.

"Come down, Bimbo!" ordered Roly-Poly peremptorily.

But Bimbo showed no signs of descending.

"I'll have to come up and fetch you, then," observed Roly-Poly. And, suiting the action to the word, he put his arms and legs around the tent-pole, and began swarming up.

Bimbo the ape watched him intently as he approached; then, suddenly, when Roly-Poly was within four feet of him, he stretched out his hairy paw, turned the bottle upside-down, and poured the whole of its contents over the white-powdered head and face of the chagrined clown. Then ere Roly-Poly could recover from his surprise, the ape swarmed nimbly down a rope, and was on the ground in a jiffy. There was a roar of laughter at Roly-Poly's plight from the little group below, Bononi alone not joining in the mirth.

The performance had now begun, and the time for Roly-Poly's first entrance was drawing very near. The repairs necessary to his make-up after the drenching of the medicine rendered it impossible for the clown to waste any time in correcting the mischievous Bimbo; consequently, the ape escaped scot-free for the time being.

Had Clive Clare, Roly-Poly, and the others present known that that very mischievous action of the animal in pouring away the contents of the physic-bottle had been instrumental in saving Clive's life, how truly grateful they would have been for the possession of such a creature in their midst! As it was, two of those present, who had witnessed the incident from the dark end of the dressing-tent, scowled, and gnashed their teeth with vexation.

"Hang it!" snarled Paul Murdway. "That's just like my infernal luck!"

Gurez uttered a savage exclamation beneath his breath.

"To-night," he said, moving towards his dressing compartment—"to-night I will try my plan!"

The performance had been in full swing for an hour. The crowded audience, remembering the events of the day, had cheered every "turn" as the turns had never been cheered before. The wire-walker, the lion-tamer, the acrobats, the trapeze artistes, the trick-cyclists—everybody, in fact, had received sufficient applause to last a lifetime.

Then into the arena rode he who, at any rate, for this night, was the star of stars.

Gracefully astride a cream-coloured horse, Clive Clare entered. Immediately the house rose. Cheer upon cheer rent the air, and for some minutes, as Clive stood side by side with May Ellis, it seemed as if it would never subside. At length, however, silence was with difficulty restored, and through their many feats of wonderful horsemanship Clive and the beautiful May progressed.

The dual performance was finished. May Ellis retired, and Clive Clare, swarming in graceful and lissom fashion up the rope, took his stand upon the bar of a specially-fixed trapeze that was erected over the ring track, and from which, at every performance, he was wont to take his daring double somersault on to the back of a galloping horse. This formed the culminating point of his remarkable display.

The orchestra, boxed up at the other side of the ring, started a low, sweet, melodious waltz. Clive swung steadily on the trapeze, keeping time with the music. A beautiful light chestnut horse was now brought into the arena, and sent riderless round the track. First at a trot the animal went, then he quickened to a steady canter. A trifle louder the music grew, a little harder the trapeze swung, a little faster the horse cantered.

Presently Clive Clare, swinging fast now, threw a sidelong glance over his left shoulder, his invariable signal for the band to stop playing, and for the drummer only to accompany him in his descent.

The music ceased abruptly; all was dead silence save for the ploughing of the horse's hoofs through the mingled mould and sawdust.

All in that vast audience were absorbed by the sight of the one slight, swinging figure. Not even a stray eye was there for that dusky figure in the canvas passageway leading from the arena to the dressing-tent. But there, crouching in a shadowed corner, behind some rolls of canvas, knelt on one knee Senor Miguel Gurez, the Mexican dead-shot. Against the Spaniard's shoulder was resting the stock of a short rifle. His left eye was closed, his right scanning along the glinting barrel, straight up to one of the ropes of the trapeze, about six inches above the part clasped by Clive Clare's left hand.

Faster and faster Clive swings. In another two seconds he will take his daring spring. Senor Gurez's finger falls on the trigger!

(Do the two villains succeed in their foul plot? Make quite sure of getting next week's copy of the "Magnet," and read the continuation of this enthralling yarn.)

27

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

NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE HUN HUNTERS!"



YOUR EDITOR.

MY READERS' PAGE

The Editor is always pleased to hear from his chums, at home or abroad, and is only too willing to give his best advice to them if they are in difficulty or in trouble. . . . Whom to write to: Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

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the paper in every way possible.

But I often think, when time permits of such meditations, that our little journal can become even more widely known than it is at present, and this fact has prompted me to offer



A PRIZE OF ONE POUND

to the reader who sends in the best suggestion for increasing the circulation of the paper.

I am aware that in many schools and homes an absurd prejudice prevails against the "Magnet" on the grounds that it is a "penny dreadful." Cases repeatedly crop up when, according to the evidence of my readers, headmasters of schools, parents, or others in authority confuse our grand little story-paper with the lurid, highly-coloured fiction so freely offered on all sides, and whose influence for evil it is our special aim to stamp out.

In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, where the persons in authority mentioned have *actually* read the "Magnet" Library for themselves, they have to admit—and do so cheerfully as a rule—that our bright little paper contains nothing that even the most carping critic can take exception to.

At a certain well-known school in Surrey the "Magnet" Library and its companion papers were for several years strictly "taboo," until the headmaster—a gentleman whose judgment and discrimination are beyond reproach—carefully read one of the stories of Harry Wharton and his chums, and was surprised to find that, so far from containing allusions to bloodshed and crime, the "Magnet" was a paper calculated to have a wholesome and beneficial effect upon all who read it. He thereupon issued a public announcement to the effect that our papers could circulate freely among his scholars.

It may or may not have been the result of that gentleman's example, but in several other schools in the neighbourhood an investigation was made into the true nature of the "Magnet's" contents, and in every case the scholars were at once permitted to read the paper, which had hitherto been "barred."

But there are other schools in our country where the barriers of prejudice have not yet been swept away; and it is at this juncture that my readers can step in and suggest ways and means of bringing the paper into public and universal favour.

If you are possessed of an idea for increasing the circulation of your favourite journal send it along to "The Editor, the 'Magnet' Library, the Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.," not later than Wednesday, April 7th. A sovereign will be awarded to the sender of what I consider to be the best suggestion, and the result of the competition will be published on this page in due course.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

M. T. (Newport, Mon.).—I am glad to acknowledge your first letter to me. Bob Cherry is the best junior boxer at Greyfriars, but Wharton and several others run him very close. Many thanks for your praise of the "Dreadnought."

W. H. C. (Oldham).—I do not know of a MAGNET League in your town. Why not form one yourself?

"Shamrock" (Marple).—Wharton's best chum is Frank Nugent, who was the only boy to befriend Harry when the latter came to Greyfriars.

M. M. M. (Streatham).—Even Bunter is not all bad. I will bear your suggestion in mind.

The Editor

FOR NEXT MONDAY:

"THE HUN HUNTERS!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.

Excitement of quite an unusual variety is provided in next Monday's magnificent, long, complete story of the chums of Greyfriars. The news that one of the German prisoners in a local concentration camp has made good his escape, thrills the whole countryside, and several search-parties are organised with a view to capturing the fugitive. The fact that a substantial reward is offered to the successful searchers lends additional lustre to the proceedings. Of course, the Greyfriars fellows are soon hot upon the scent, and great is the competition between the rival Forms. Success at length crowns the persistent efforts of

"THE HUN HUNTERS!"

though which Form has the honour of roping in the desperate alien will be fully recounted next week.

RALLY ROUND YOUR EDITOR!

As most of my readers are aware, "The Boys' Friend" is now under my control, and after consorting with the best authors of the day, I decided to place upon the market the

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which has ever been offered to British boys. This was, of course, a herculean task, but I am proud to say it has now been accomplished.

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