

"CARRIED AWAY!"

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



No. 373. Vol. 9. April 3rd, 1915



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(The Great Cellar Scene in the Magnificent Long Complete School Tale Contained in this Issue.)

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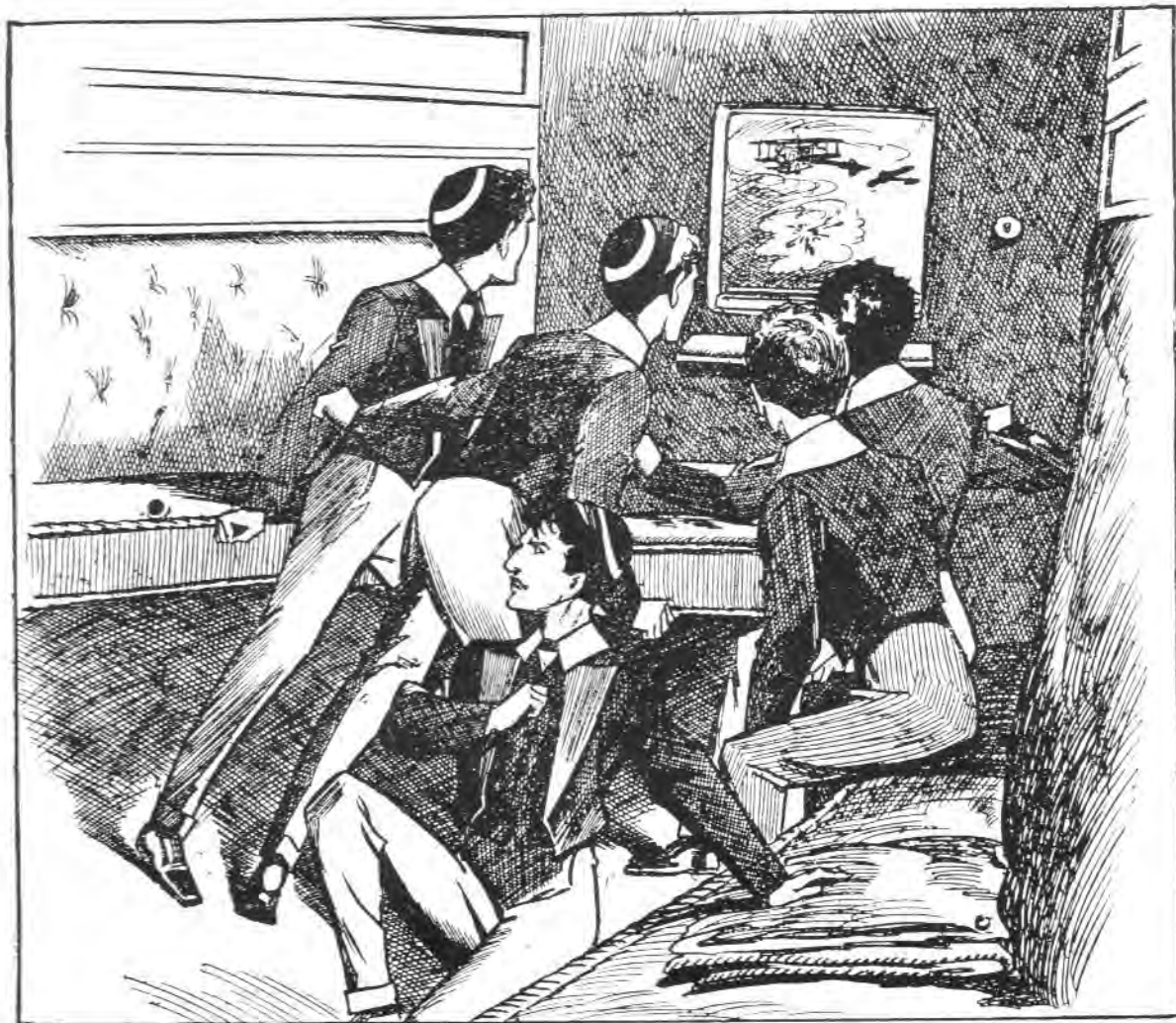


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CARRIED AWAY!

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

By FRANK RICHARDS.



Boom! boom! Crash! Shells were bursting round the Zeppelin. In the distance the Juniors caught sight of a circling aeroplane, evidently preparing to attack. "It's a case of 'save us from our friends,'" groaned Squiff. "We've got to take our chance," said Harry quietly. "It's their business to bring this brute down, even if it were crammed with prisoners!" (See Chapter 11.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Lights Out!

"WHY—what—"
"What the dickens—"
"Great Scott!"
Harry Wharton & Co. were surprised, and they had reason to be.
The Famous Five of the Greyfriars Remove were

having late tea in No. 1 Study. It was an unusually plentiful spread, and the chums of the Remove were doing it full justice, while they discussed cheerfully the prospects of the coming cricket season. And all of a sudden, without the slightest warning, the gas went out.

Sudden darkness rushed upon No. 1 Study and its inmates.

Night had fallen on Greyfriars—a dark, moonless evening. From the Close there came not the glimmer of a star. The fire had gone out in the grate to the last spark. When the gas was suddenly extinguished, the darkness in No. 1 Study was like the inside of a black hat.

The result was disastrous. Frank Nugent was pouring out tea. He jumped, naturally, as the study was plunged into darkness, and there was a wild roar from Bob Cherry as the tea, no longer aimed at the teacup, shot over his knees.

Bob Cherry jumped up in anguish, his voice rising to its very top note. His knees caught violently against the study table, and it rocked. The startled Nugent was still pouring out tea, and the stream of hot liquid splashed right and left. The juniors scrambled away, and there was a crash of crockery in the dark.

"Yow-ow! I'm scalded!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"The scaldfulness is terrific!" groaned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"My hat!" gasped Nugent, setting down the teapot. Unfortunately he set it down past the edge of the table, and there was another crash. "Oh, crumbs!"

"What blithering idiot is playing tricks with the gas?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Yow!" mumbled Bob Cherry, as he rubbed his knees. "Ow! I'll scalp the silly ass who's turned the gas off! I'll slaughter him! I'll—I'll—"

Harry Wharton hurried to the door of the study. As the gas could not have gone out of its own accord, it was evident that it must have been turned off at the meter. The practical joker who had played that little trick was in danger of being lynched. There was a grind of crockery under Wharton's boots as he made for the door, and a yell from Squiff as he bumped into him.

"Yow! Who's that ramming a silly elbow into my eye?" howled Squiff.

"Sorry!"

"Oh, you duffer!"

Wharton dragged open the door. Not a glimmer of light came from the passage. The gas was extinguished there, too. But there was a babel of voices—the startled Remove fellows were pouring out of their studies, bumping into one another in the dark, and uttering loud exclamations.

"What's the matter?"

"Who's done that?"

"My hat!"

"Somebody's turned the gas off at the meter!" roared Bolsover major. "Where is he? I'll pulverise him! That's one of Peter Todd's rotten jokes, I suppose?"

"Tain't," said the voice of Peter Todd. The practical joker of the Remove was innocent for once. "I was in my study. I've just trodden on something."

"Groooh!" came the agonised voice of Billy Bunter. "Oh, you beast, Todd, you've trodden on me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

From the direction of the Fifth-Form passage came the thunderous voice of Horace Coker:

"What's the matter with the light? What blithering idiot has turned it off? Oh, I'll slaughter him!"

"Hallo, there's Quelch!" exclaimed Wharton, as the sharp voice of the Remove-master called up the stairs.

"Shut up! What's he saying?"

"Boys, quiet, please! Keep order!"

"Somebody's turned the light off!" roared Coker. "Some blithering idiot, sir, has turned the gas off at the meter!"

"I am aware of that, Coker. I—"

"Some blithering, chortling idiot, sir—"

"It was I turned the gas off, Coker," said Mr. Quelch, in a grinding voice.

"Oh!" gasped Coker.

Some of the juniors chuckled. But they were all amazed. What the Remove-master had turned the gas off for was a mystery. They had never suspected Mr. Quelch of being a practical joker.

"Is anything the matter, sir?" called out Harry Wharton.

"Yes. Pray keep calm! Let there be no panic."

"But—but what—"

"There is no danger. It is simply a precautionary measure."

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measure," came Mr. Quelch's voice through the darkness. "No one is to strike a light. All fires in the studies are to be extinguished immediately."

"Ye-es, sir. But—but why—"

"Dr. Locke has just received a telephone call from Courtfield that a Zeppelin has been seen making for the coast. All lights are ordered to be extinguished instantly. In order to lose no time, I have turned the gas off at the meter. Let there be no panic, please. I expect you to show that British boys have too much courage to be frightened, even if there should be danger."

"What—ho, sir—I—I mean, you can rely on us!" said Harry Wharton.

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific!" exclaimed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "We shall pluckfully refuse to be panicked by the esteemed and disgusting Prussians, sir!"

"I rely upon you," said Mr. Quelch. "Kindly go round extinguishing all fires as quickly as possible."

"Yes, sir."

The Remove fellows were in a buzz of excitement now. They had heard, read, and talked about the Zeppelin raiders for weeks. Greyfriars School, close to the coast of Kent, was well within the possible radius of a Zeppelin raid—and a school was not likely to escape the bombs of the raiders any more than any other building. Indeed, it was probable that the destruction of an historic building like Greyfriars would cause great joy among the amiable Huns in Berlin. As for the possible destruction of a crowd of schoolboys, that would not affect the Huns in the least. The "bully-killers" were not particular.

Mr. Quelch had hurried away, and some of the Removes went into the studies where there were fires and proceeded to extinguish them. Upon the whole, they were pretty cool. Indeed, the chief feeling was an excited desire to "see" the Zeppelin, if it came. At the same time, it was not comfortable to think that at any moment a bomb might come crashing down through the roof.

"I say, you fellows!" howled Billy Bunter. "I say, gerroff of the way! I'm going down into the cellars! Lemme pass! Yow-ow-ow! What utter beast is that holding my ear? Leggo! Yah! Help!"

"I'm holding your ear, Bunter," said Peter Todd, compressing his grip on the fat appendage. "Didn't you hear Quelch say we were to keep cool? Where's your pluck?"

"Yow-ow-ow! I—I can hear the Zeppelin!" shrieked Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Can't you hear it?" yelled Bunter. "Fizzing like anything!"

"You silly owl!" roared Bob Cherry. "Zeppelins don't fizz like ginger-beer!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's Bulstrode pouring water on the fire, you blithering duffer!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lemme go, Todd! I'm not going to be killed by their beastly bombs!" wailed Bunter. "M-m-my life is valuable! Ow!"

"Rot!" said Todd. "Blessed if I can see the value!"

"Oh, you beast!" Bunter made a great effort and tore his ear away, and rushed down the passage. There was a roar from the fellows he encountered in his wild career. Billy Bunter was a heavy weight, and when he was fairly going he was like a charging elephant. He cleared a path down the passage as a wild bull might have done, and sulphurous voices behind him were heard demanding his blood. But Bunter did not heed them. He reached the stairs and rolled down them. There was some consolation in hearing the fat junior bump from stair to stair, letting out a yelp at every bump. At the bottom of the stairs a grip was laid on Bunter in the dark, and the Owl of the Remove shrieked:

"Help! The Germans have got me! Ow! Help!"

"You silly, fat-headed funk!" came the voice of Wingate of the Sixth, as he shook Billy Bunter till his teeth rattled. "What are you yelling about? What's the matter with you?"

"Groooh!" gasped Bunter, much relieved to find that it

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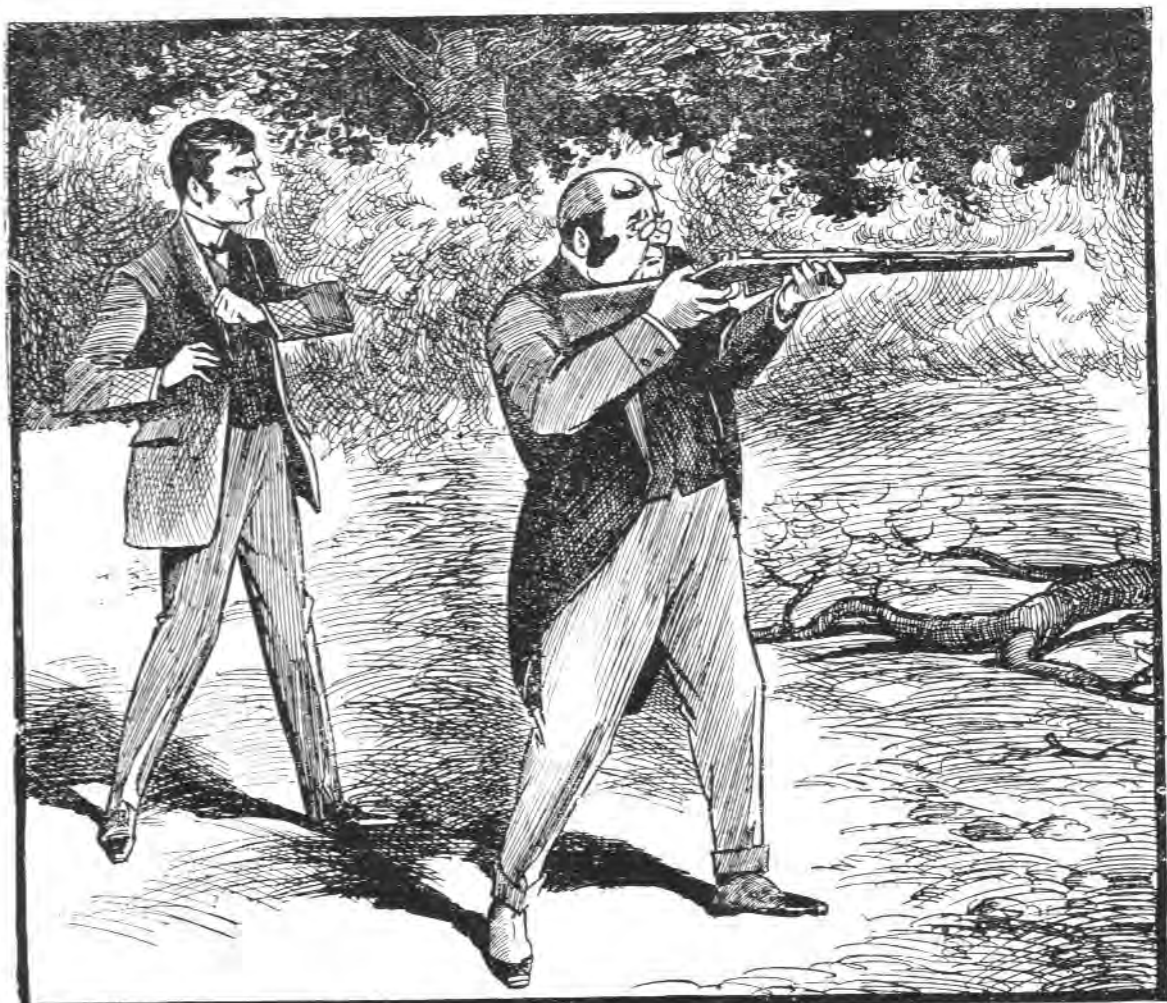
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"For the last time!" hissed Mr. Prout. "Surrender, or I fire!" Silence! Mr. Prout pulled the trigger. Click! There was no report. The Fifth-form master uttered an exclamation of annoyance. The rifle was not loaded, after all! (See Chapter 4.)

was not a German who had seized him. "Leggo! I'm g-g-going to the c-c-cellars! I'm not g-g-going to be k-k-killed. D-d-don't shake me like that, you b-b-beast!"

But Wingate shook him till his teeth rattled.

"Now, if you make another sound, I'll lick you till you haven't a yell left!" said Wingate.

Bunter did not heed. The moment Wingate released him, Bunter bolted for the kitchen. He knew the way in the dark—he was not an infrequent visitor to the kitchen. He bundled down the lower stairs, and rushed into the kitchen gasping. A frightened shriek greeted him as he bumped into somebody.

"Oh, dear, they're coming! Mercy—mercy!"

"It's only mum-mum-me, c-c-cook!" stammered Bunter.

"Only you!" ejaculated the cook. And she gave Billy Bunter a box on the ear that made him see stars, dark as it was.

"Ow!" roared Bunter, as he staggered away. "Oh, dear! Where's the cellar, cook? Let's get into the cellar! Oh, dear! We shall all be kik-kik-killed!"

"I'll show you the cellar, Bunter," said the voice of Peter Todd, who had followed the fat junior down. "This way!"

"T-t-thank you, Todd," gasped Bunter. "Here, I say, what—Yow—ow!"

Peter Todd bundled him headlong into the coal-cellar, THE MAGNET LIBRARY—No. 373.

and Bunter sprawled over the coal with a wild yell. Coal was not soft to fall upon, and Bunter had fallen hard. Todd slammed the door of the coal-cellar, and locked it. Then he cheerfully returned to the upper regions, leaving Billy Bunter squirming among the coal, half suffocated by coal-dust, and getting into a state of coaliness that could not be described in words.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Attack From the Sky!

EXCITEMENT reigned in Greyfriars, but the masters and the prefects had the younger boys well in hand. It did not take the Greyfriars fellows long to get used to the darkness, and they knew their way about the School House blindfolded. Not a gleam of light showed from a single window of the old school. Harry Wharton & Co. had returned to No. 1 Study, and were looking from the window. There was no gleam of a star from the black heavens. Only dimly they could make out the great elms in the Close. They listened intently at the open window. The Zeppelin was not likely to be seen, but it would be heard if it came near. The warning telephoned from Courtfield to the Head showed that the enemy was not distant. Like a thief in the night the raider was coming. Would he pass over Greyfriars?

NEXT MONDAY—OUR GRAND EASTER DOUBLE NUMBER! ORDER TO-DAY.

"The villains!" said Harry Wharton, in a low voice. "There oughtn't to be the slightest danger to a school. What good will it do them to blow up a place like this? Even the German newspapers couldn't make out that Greyfriars is a fortified place."

"They don't care much so long as they kill somebody," said Squiff. "It's sickening to have to wait for the beasts like rats in a trap! If a fellow could only get at them—"

"Hark!"

From the silence of the night came a buzzing noise.

"That's an engine," said Nugent, in a low voice.

Wharton clicked his teeth.

"The Zeppelin!" he said.

Other ears had heard the sound. The voices of the masters were heard in the gloom.

"All boys to descend to the cellars! Order, please!"

"Oh, rotten!" murmured Sampson Quincy Ifley Field. "I'd rather stay here and have a look at the beast!"

"Must obey orders," said Wharton. "Anyway, it's no good getting a bomb on one's napper. No good letting a rotter hit you when you can't hit back."

The Greyfriars fellows marched downstairs. If there had been a panic and a rush there would have been accidents, and probably broken limbs and necks. Fortunately, they kept their heads.

In a few minutes the cellars below the old school were crowded with fellows.

There were vaults under the School House, deep and extensive, seldom or never entered, and no one had supposed that they would ever be used. Owing to the peculiar, warlike methods of the Huns, a use was found for them at last. As no light could escape from the cellars to the upper air, several lamps were lighted there, and the light glimmered over the startled faces, some of them pale and strained.

The Head himself, and Mrs. Locke and little Molly, had come down into the vaults. The Head was looking very grim.

Even in the deep vaults there was not certain safety if a bomb should fall upon the school. The terrible explosives used by the air-raiders were capable of penetrating through the mass of building above. But the danger was slight, and certainly the cellars were the only place where safety was to be found. For, if a bomb fell upon the school, studies and Form-rooms would be smashed right and left, and nothing in them that was alive could have escaped with life.

It was a strange, eerie situation—in the dim light in the old vaults, waiting, with thumping hearts for the sound of destruction.

Would the Zeppelin pass over the school? If it passed, would the raiders perceive the building in the deep darkness? Would they be brutal enough, inhuman enough, to hurl their bombs upon a harmless building? There was little doubt that they would. The brutes who had shelled an old abbey, who had dropped bombs upon sleeping Norfolk villages, were not likely to spare Greyfriars if they saw it. But would they see it in the dark? Had the warning not come, had the school been ablaze with lights, there would have been no doubt about it.

In the vaults all sounds were shut off. The engines of the air-monster could no longer be heard? Was it coming? Had it passed? The strain of anxiety was keen. But every fellow felt that he was on his honour to keep a stiff upper lip, and not a word of fear was heard. Even Billy Bunter was silent. Peter Todd had dragged him out of the coal-cellar, looking like a Christy minstrel, and dragged him down into the vaults.

Billy Bunter sat on the stone flags, quivering like a jelly. He even forgot that he had not finished his tea.

"How long's this going to last, I wonder?" murmured Squiff.

Harry Wharton was frowning, his hands clenched. It went very much against the grain with him to hide like this, and yet it was evidently the only thing to be done. The raiders from the sky could not be reached; they were able to hail down destruction with impunity. When they attacked military works the aircraft guns could deal with them, and British aeroplanes could ascend to the attack. But when they attacked private dwellings there was no defence possible.

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The silence was suddenly broken.

A deafening roar penetrated to the vaults below the old school. It was followed by crash on crash.

Crash! Crash! Crash!

Falling brickwork, hurled right and left by the force of the explosion. Where had the bomb fallen? Was Greyfriars itself crashing down in ruins above their heads? The crowd in the vaults were pale with anxiety now.

Crash! Crash! Crash!

Then another deafening roar of an explosion.

Crash! Crash! Crash!

Then dead silence.

Silence as of the grave, broken only by the hurried breathing of the boys penned in the crowded vaults.

The minutes seemed to crawl.

Two bombs had fallen upon Greyfriars as the Zeppelin raider swept by overhead. Was there more to come, or had the raider gone?

"Oh, the rotters!" murmured Wharton. "They couldn't see the school in the dark, but they knew where it was. They know everything on the coast from their spies, of course. They've chucked a couple of bombs on spec. There'll be worse than this in the town."

Mr. Quelch was seen speaking to the Head. A little later the Remove master went up the stone stairs and disappeared.

"Gone to see if the coast is clear," remarked Nugent.

That was evidently Mr. Quelch's object. It was pretty certain that the raider was gone by this time, but the Head was naturally anxious to run no risks with the boys under his charge. It was some time before the Remove master returned.

The fellows waited anxiously for him to come back, and they listened eagerly when he appeared and spoke to the Head.

"I have rung up Courtfield, sir. The Zeppelin has passed over the town, dropping three bombs there, and disappeared towards the sea."

"And—and what—"

"The damage done is not yet known, but Inspector Grimes has informed me that lives have been lost."

"It is terrible," said the Head, with a shiver.

The Greyfriars fellows looked up at one another. While they had been sheltering there the airship had passed on to the market town. Courtfield was an easier target than the school, and the bombs had doubtless been hurled at random in the streets of the old town. There the assassins from the sky could not be balked entirely of their prey. Lives had been lost. In that terrible hour lives had been blotted out—inoffensive civilians had been destroyed in the ruin of their homes. They clenched their hands with helpless rage as they thought of it.

"We'll make them squirm for it when our fellows get to Berlin!" muttered Squiff.

The Greyfriars fellows were anxious to get out of the vaults, but they were not allowed to move yet. The Head did not mean to run any risks with them. He left the vaults with Mr. Quelch, bidding the boys remain where they were. Another long hour passed.

"Past bedtime," remarked Squiff.

"And I haven't finished my tea!" said Billy Bunter plaintively.

"They're jolly well not going to keep us here all night!" growled Vernon-Smith. "The blessed's airship's gone now. It won't come back."

"Ow! It might!" mumbled Billy Bunter. "I'm jolly well going to stay down here all night! Ow!"

"You'll find it rather cold," grinned Bob Cherry. "Fathead! They won't come back now the alarm's given. There will be aeroplanes looking for them before this; and the Huns are not looking for a fight. The beastly Anarchists believe in dropping bombs on a chap's napper and running away before they can be caught. I wonder how much damage has been done?"

"No prep to-night, I guess," said Fisher T. Fish. "There's a giddy silver lining to every cloud. I wonder whether the Form-room's gone?"

Billy Bunter brightened up a little.

"My hat! If the Form-room's blown up there won't be any lessons to-morrow!" he said, quite cheerfully.

THE DREAMBOUGHT, THE PENNY POPULAR, CHUCKLES, 1d. Every Thursday. Every Friday. Every Saturday. 2

"You may come up," said Mr. Quelch's voice from the stairs.

Glad enough to get out of the heavy air of the vaults, the Greyfriars fellows ascended the stairs. To the general relief, they found the building above just as they had left it. Their imaginations had pictured the School House tumbling into ruins. So far as they could see in the dark, no damage had been done to the main building. But they were not allowed to investigate. All Forms were ordered off to their dormitories at once, with a strict injunction to remain in the dark. It was not likely that the Zeppelin would return, but no lights were to be shown in Greyfriars that night. Mr. Quelch had been on the telephone again, and he had had news that the raider had been sighted, making at full speed for the sea.

As the Remove fellows undressed in the dark, there came a heavy booming sound through the night. Wharton clambered up to the window. But he could see nothing in the darkness without. The booming came, fast and heavy, from the direction of Pegg. He knew what it was—the anti-aircraft guns at the coastguard station. They were firing at the raider of the clouds. The firing was almost incessant for twenty minutes or so, and then it ceased, and silence reigned.

"Oh, if they've only hit the beast!" said Bob Cherry, rubbing his hands with gleeful anticipation. "What a lark to find a stranded Zeppelin lying round loose in the morning—what?"

"I—I wonder," said Wharton, turning pale as a dark thought flashed into his mind—"I wonder whether anything's happened at Cliff House?"

Bob Cherry's jaw dropped.

"Marjorie!" he muttered. "Good heavens! Suppose the utter villains have dropped a bomb on Cliff House School?"

"I'm not going to bed till I know," said Wharton determinedly.

He hurried to the door. He stopped just in time to avoid running into Mr. Quelch.

"Who is that? What—where are you going?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, peering into the room in the darkness.

"It is I, sir."

"Wharton, you are to go to bed at once!"

"I—I'm anxious about our friends at Cliff House, sir," said Harry. "The villains may have been dropping bombs there."

"I hope not, Wharton. All the lights would be out there, the same as here. Here only the gymnasium has suffered. Miss Primrose would certainly have sent all the pupils down into the cellars at the first alarm."

"But—but, sir—"

"As a matter of fact, Wharton, I have tried to telephone, but the wires are broken between here and Pegg, and I cannot get through. I am sure, however, that Miss Primrose took every precaution, and there is no cause for anxiety."

"Might I run over on my bike, sir, and ask?"

"Certainly not, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch testily. "How can you ask such a thing? I am hardly likely to allow you out at this time of night, with the whole countryside in a state of excitement. Are you not aware that it is necessary to keep under cover? If there is more firing at the sky, the bullets will be dropping on all sides, and if one should strike you by chance, you would be killed."

"I wouldn't mind risking that, sir—"

"But I mind for you," said Mr. Quelch grimly. "I do not intend to allow any of my boys to run such risks. Kindly go to bed at once."

Mr. Quelch's tone was final, and there was no room for argument.

The Remove fellows turned in; some of them were in their clothes, in case there should be another alarm. But the Famous Five, at least, though they had obediently gone to bed, had not gone there to sleep that night.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 375.

EVERY
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. A Nocturnal Expedition!

HARRY WHARTON did not close his eyes. He was feeling a deep anxiety, which was shared by his chums. That the Zeppelin had dropped bombs on Courtfield, and that lives had been lost, was certain. And it was only too likely that further explosives had been dropped on the fishing-village of Pegg, as the Zeppelin swept seaward—and Cliff House School was a prominent building near the village. What might have happened to Marjorie and Clara? If the girl pupils of Cliff House had been shepherd down into the cellars in time, as at Greyfriars, doubtless they were safe, but otherwise—

Wharton could not sleep.

He waited only till ten o'clock was past, to be sure that the Form-master would not return, and then he slipped out of bed.

"You fellows asleep?" he asked.

"I'm not," said Bob Cherry.

"Same here," said Nugent and Squiff together. And Hurree Jamset Ram Singh chimed in with the remark that the same-herefulness was terrific.

"I'm going out," said Harry determinedly. "I'm going to know whether anything has happened at Cliff House. The place may have been blown to bits, for all we know. Quelch himself said the telephone was broken off. Something's happened, anyway. I'm going to see."

"And we're jolly well coming with you," said Bob Cherry, jumping out of bed. "I was only waiting for you to speak. We shall have to be jolly careful, though. Quelch would be frightfully rattled if he spotted us. And, worse than that, we should have to come back."

The Famous Five dressed quietly in the darkness. It did not take them long. There was little danger of being "spotted" as they left the dormitory, for in the passages there was not a glimmer of light, above or below stairs.

From a back window they slipped quickly out, and reached the ground, and scudded away across the dark Close.

Not a gleam of light from a single window, or from the porter's lodge, or Mrs. Mumble's little house. When

they had scaled the school wall, and were in the road, they found equal darkness there—not a road-lamp was lighted. The countryside lay in darkness, offering no sign to the Zeppelin raiders.

The chums of the Remove hurried down the road, and took the shortest cut towards Pegg. The deep, shadowy lane wound round the base of the Black Pike—the abrupt hill that rose black against the darkness. Once, long ago, Harry Wharton & Co. had scaled the almost inaccessible higher slopes of the pike, but it had been a feat to be remembered, and it was seldom attempted. The clefts and crevices of the great hill, on the upper slopes, were still thick with half-melted snow. From the thick trees that covered the slopes of the pike came the deep sigh of the wind. But for the wind, there was silence around them. But the silence was suddenly broken from the direction of the coastguard station.

Boom!

It was the report of a heavy gun.

"My hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

Wharton drew a quick breath.

"That means that the brute isn't gone!" he exclaimed. "They wouldn't be firing at nothing."

"Might be firing on spec," said Squiff. "There goes the searchlight!"

From the distant coastguard station over the cliffs a bar of white light shot upward, spreading like a fan and searching the blackness of the sky. It moved in a circle, showing up eerily the strange forms of the clouds. But the monster airship was not to be seen in the radius of the light.

NEXT MONDAY—OUR GRAND EASTER DOUBLE NUMBER!

Boom!

"There goes another!"

The juniors had halted in the lane, and were straining their eyes upward. Was it possible that the Zeppelin, which had fled seaward, had returned? The raid had been accomplished, the damage had been done, and safety lay for the raiders across the dark waters, now that the alarm was given.

"They must be gone," said Nugent, with a shake of the head. "They would be mad to stop, and chance being seen after dawn. They'd hardly get away alive after daylight."

"Might have been hit," said Squiff.

"What!"

"Suppose they've been hit and damaged, they might have to come back to land, or go to the bottom of the sea."

"My hat! If they're winged, they'd run for land," said Wharton, his eyes glinting. "I hope so. It would be ripping for the rascals to be caught. Hark!"

Buzzzzzz!

The juniors looked quickly up and down the lane, for a moment thinking that a motor-car was rushing down upon them. But the sound throbbing through the night did not come from the road. It came from the air, as they ascertained the next moment.

"The Zeppelin!" muttered Harry.

"But where—where is it?"

"Might run right into the pike, in the dark," said Nugent. "My hat! That would be a collision!"

The juniors listened intently. The buzzing sound from the dark heavens died away into silence.

Boom!

A last report echoed over the cliffs from the direction of the coastguard station. Then silence reigned unbroken.

For a good half-hour the juniors stood and listened. But there came no sound from the black night.

"Gone!" said Squiff, at last.

"Must be," said Harry. "Cleared off over the sea again, I suppose. Anyway, they've cleared off from here. Let's get on."

The Famous Five resumed their way. As they came down the road to the sea, they could hear a distant murmur of voices in the fishing-village, and see the ruddy glimmer of flames. A building was on fire there, and the fishermen were labouring to subdue the flames. The Zeppelin bombs had evidently fallen in the narrow old street of Pegg.

They stopped at the gate of Cliff House. The girls' school lay in darkness, and so far as they could make out, it presented its usual aspect. But Wharton meant to be sure, and he rang the porter's bell.

The old, wooden-legged porter of Cliff House was not in bed. He came hobbling down to the gate, and peered through the bars suspiciously.

"Who's there?"

"It's all right, Stumpy," said Harry Wharton; "we've come over to see if there's any damage done."

"Master Wharton!"

"Yes. Anything happened here?"

"Nobody hurt, Master Wharton," said the porter. "Miss Primrose made all the young ladies go down into the cellars, and such a shriekin' you never 'eard. But there wasn't nobody hurt. Only one bomb dropped 'ere, and that fell in the garden. All the glass-ouses smashed to smithereens, and a 'ole you could put a cab into; but that's all. Nobody hurt, thank goodness! Which my opinion is that them murderers ought to be caught and hung."

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry.

"Tell Miss Hazeldene in the morning that we're all safe at Greyfriars," said Harry. "Good-night, Stumpy!"

"Good-night, sir!"

The juniors returned towards Greyfriars, greatly relieved in their minds. They had been keenly anxious about their girl-chums of Cliff House School. As they tramped back to Greyfriars, they kept their eyes and their ears open, but there was no sound of alarm.

When they had climbed the school wall and dropped into the Close, they were a little anxious about themselves. They knew only too well that the vials of wrath

would be poured out on their devoted heads if their nocturnal expedition was suspected.

With cautious steps they crossed the Close towards the School House, and Squiff suddenly drew his companions to a halt.

"Cave!" he whispered.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Prout on the Warpath!

FOOTSTEPS sounded in the darkness of the Close.

But for the prompt action of the Australian junior, the Famous Five would infallibly have run right upon the unknown and unseen personage who was walking in the Close in the deep shadows.

The juniors quickly backed away among the elms and listened intently. The footsteps sounded regularly on the gravel path. A voice came to their ears, and they recognised the tones of Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth.

"I am sorry they have gone, Mr. Quelch; I am very sorry. It is a disappointment."

"Indeed!" came Mr. Quelch's voice, very dryly. "I cannot say I am displeased, Mr. Prout. They have done enough damage, I think."

"Had they remained longer I should have winged them," said Mr. Prout. "Unfortunately, having to look after the boys of my Form, I had no opportunity. Indeed, I may admit that it was rather late when the thought occurred to me. I still have the trusty rifle which served me when I was in the Rockies, in '85, and I have no doubt—not the slightest doubt—that I could have winged them."

The juniors grinned silently. Mr. Prout had been a great sportsman in his younger days, and there was not a master of Greyfriars who had not been bored almost to tears by Mr. Prout's accounts of his exploits in the Rocky Mountains in the dim and distant year 1885.

In Mr. Prout's study there was a fearsome collection of firearms, with a thrilling story belonging to each, and Mr. Prout's listeners had observed that, as the years passed, the stories grew more and more thrilling. Mr. Prout was a great shot, and all Greyfriars had chuckled over the way he had, on a celebrated occasion, "winged" a kite belonging to Wun Lung, the Chinese boy, which, from its peculiar shape, he had taken to be a dangerous bird of prey.

Mr. Prout was evidently mourning over his lost opportunities. The chance of winging a Zeppelin was not likely to occur twice.

But it is not allowed for civilians to fire upon the enemy," remarked Mr. Quelch, whose private opinion was that if Mr. Prout started firing, there would be terrible danger for everybody outside the Zeppelin.

Mr. Prout snorted.

"Do they not fire upon us?" he demanded. "Every man has a right to defend his life, I suppose. The rules of war provide that civilians shall not shoot, but they also provide that civilians shall not be attacked. Besides, I am not a civilian; you are aware, Mr. Quelch, that I have been enrolled as a special constable. I may, therefore, regard myself as an officer of his Majesty's Special Forces. I should not have the slightest hesitation in blowing the Zeppelin and its crew into atoms, Mr. Quelch. I am only sorry I did not get a chance at them with this rifle."

"That—that rifle, Mr. Prout," murmured the Remove-master.

He had come out for a stroll in the Close with the master of the Fifth, but, in the intense dark, he had not observed that the warlike Form-master was armed.

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Prout. "This is my largest-bore rifle; it is the one I used when I killed the buffalo that was charging me. I think I have told you that story."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Quelch hurriedly.

"I am not without hopes," said Mr. Prout, "that they may come back. If they do, woe betide them! I repeat woe betide them! Dear me! Did you hear something?"

"The wind, I think."

"It sounded like someone laughing, or coughing," said Mr. Prout, peering round into the gloom. "I suppose I was mistaken. Ah, if those scoundrels would only come back! They should not find us so defenceless as they imagine, the cowards!"

"But really——"
"A bullet through their gas-reservoirs might bring them to the ground," said Mr. Prout. "Then I should open fire with my magazine-rifle——"

"Is that rifle loaded, Mr. Prout?"
"Loaded! Of course! I should hardly be looking for the sky-pirates with an unloaded rifle, Mr. Quelch!"

"Dear me! I—I trust you are not pointing it in my direction," said the Remove-master uneasily.

"Not at all! It is true that it is a little difficult to see you in the dark; but do not be alarmed, though my finger is on the trigger, I——"

"Your—your finger is on the trigger!" said Mr. Quelch faintly.

"Undoubtedly! I am hoping every moment to hear the Zeppelin! I am ready! Where are you going, Mr. Quelch?"

"I—I think I have walked long enough. I think I will go to bed."

"Do not hurry in. It is early for bed, and there is no light indoors. I intend to keep watch for some time yet. I am still in hopes. However, I will walk with you to the door."

"Which way are you carrying that rifle, Mr. Prout?"

"In my hands, sir."

"Is the muzzle pointing forward?"

"Naturally!"

"Then I beg you not to follow me a single step, sir. In fact, I insist upon your turning the muzzle of that rifle in some other direction!" said Mr. Quelch excitedly.

"Pooh, pooh! You are unaccustomed to firearms."

"I do not wish to grow better acquainted with them, sir, by having my brains blown out. Kindly point your rifle to the sky, or to the ground." Mr. Quelch gave a sort of yelp. "Ow! What is that knocking against my chest?"

"Dear me! It must be the muzzle of my rifle; I did not know you were so close."

There was no reply from the Remove-master, but there was a sudden pattering of feet. Mr. Quelch had fled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors could not help it. The idea of Mr. Prout, with his finger on the trigger, bumping his rifle-muzzle on the Remove-master's chest was a little too much for them. They burst into a yell of laughter as Mr. Quelch fled frantically towards the School House.

Mr. Prout spun round.

"Bless my soul! What is that? Some of the boys must be out of the house."

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "We're caught. Oh, crumbs!"

Mr. Prout came groping his way towards the dim elms.

"You young rascals! I heard you! Show yourselves at once, and I will take you to the Head immediately! Mr. Quelch, pray come here! There are some boys——"

Squiff's keen wits came to the rescue. In a deep, gruff voice he rapped out in German:

"Wer da? Das Feind!"

Mr. Prout jumped. He knew German, of course, and to hear a German exclaim, "Who is there? The enemy!" naturally made him jump. He could only conclude that some members of the Zeppelin crew had landed.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Prout. "The enemy! The Huns! We are attacked! Villains, surrender! I am a special constable, and I shall take you into custody! Surrender at once, or I shall fire!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

The Famous Five flung themselves on the ground instantly. If Mr. Prout fired, they did not want to stop his bullet. Squiff had not thought of that when he spoke in German for the purpose of pulling the Fifth Form-master's leg.

"Come forth!" roared Mr. Prout. "I shall fire if you do not surrender!"

"Goodness gracious, what is the matter, Mr. Prout?" called out Mr. Quelch from the direction of the house.

"Some of the Prussians have descended here, sir. Probably the Zeppelin is not far away. I shall take these scoundrels prisoners."

"Do not fire!" shrieked Mr. Quelch. "It is impossible—it is a mistake! I forbid you to use that dangerous firearm! You will kill somebody——"

"If the whole population of the German Empire, sir, were in front of my rifle, I would pull the trigger without compunction!" said Mr. Prout ferociously. "Unless these dastardly villains surrender at once, I shall shoot!"

The Famous Five, on their hands and knees, were

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scrambling away out of the danger zone. Mr. Prout, with heroic courage, came nosing under the elms, looking for the Germans. He did not find any.

A moving shadow caught his eyes—it was only a trailing branch, but in the darkness Mr. Prout could not see that. His rifle leaped to his shoulder.

"Surrender!" he roared.

There was no reply from the branch waving in the wind.

"For the last time," hissed Mr. Prout, "surrender, or I fire!"

Silence!

Mr. Prout pulled the trigger.

Click!

There was no report. The Fifth Form master uttered an exclamation of annoyance. The rifle was not loaded, after all!

But Mr. Prout was not beaten. He clubbed the rifle, and rushed forward and smote like a Paladin. If some unfortunate German had been there, he would have been felled like an ox. But as it was, Mr. Prout's rifle-butt swept on the trailing branch, and crashed through it, sending it swinging away. Naturally, it swung back, and caught Mr. Prout in the face. He gave a gasp.

"Bless my soul! It—it is a branch—merely a branch! How exceedingly annoying that I forgot to load my rifle. Mr. Quelch—pray get a light."

"I shall do nothing of the kind!" roared Mr. Quelch, quite angrily. "Pray do not be absurd, Mr. Prout. There are no Germans here!"

"I distinctly heard someone laugh, and then speak in German!"

"It is some boy out of his dormitory, playing a practical joke on you," rapped out the Remove master acidly.

"Dear me—it is possible—yes, certainly, that is barely possible. Perhaps it is just as well that, in the excitement of the moment, I omitted to load my rifle. I certainly supposed that I had loaded it. I will proceed to do so—dear me, I have left my ammunition in my study—how very unfortunate!"

Mr. Quelch drew a breath of relief. He considered the Fifth Form master a much safer neighbour with his ammunition in his study.

"Please help me look for that young rascal who is breaking bounds, Mr. Prout. That is the best thing we can do."

"Oh, very well, very well."

Mr. Prout would have preferred to look for Germans; but as it seemed clear that there weren't any Germans about, he helped Mr. Quelch to look for the juniors. Meanwhile, Harry Wharton & Co., having crawled to a safe distance from Mr. Prout, had taken to their heels, and they were clambering in at the back window at express speed. They bolted for their dormitory in the dark.

As they reached it they heard the footsteps of the two Form masters on the stairs. They were only just in time.

Wharton closed the door silently.

"Bed, quick!" gasped Squiff.

Kicking off their boots, and throwing off their jackets, the juniors plunged into bed. They had no time to remove anything else. However, as many of the fellows had gone to bed in their clothes, in case of a fresh alarm, that did not matter. The Famous Five had barely drawn sheets and blankets over them, when the dormitory door opened, and two dim figures peered in. Somehow or other, Mr. Quelch seemed to guess that the practical joker had probably come from the Remove dormitory. He knew his Form very well.

"Are you all asleep here?" asked Mr. Quelch.

Only deep breathing, and the sonorous snore of Billy Bunter, answered the question.

"I must strike a match to ascertain whether any of the boys are absent," said Mr. Quelch. "They could hardly have had time to return already, if they have been out."

A match flickered in the dormitory. Every bed was occupied, and all the Remove seemed to be sleeping the sleep of the just. The match went out, and so did Mr.

Quelch. He was satisfied, as far as the Remove was concerned.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry, when the door had closed. "What a giddy, narrow escape! Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors chuckled themselves to sleep, while Mr. Quelch, in a very suspicious frame of mind, proceeded to visit the other dormitories. But nobody was found "out"—and Mr. Prout was far from convinced, then, that there had been no Germans in the Close after all. He returned to his study and loaded his rifle very carefully, and sat at the open window keeping watch. He invited Mr. Quelch to keep watch with him—an invitation the Remove master declined with thanks. He had no desire whatever to be anywhere near Mr. Prout's rifle.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Squiff Does Some Thinking!

MOST of the Greyfriars fellows were down before rising-bell the next morning. They were anxious to see what damage had been done by the Zeppelin bombs overnight. A crowd of excited fellows swarmed out of the house to view the wreckage. The damage was very considerable. The gymnasium was a heap of ruins, and there was a yawning gap in the ground near it, where another bomb had exploded. Half the windows in the whole of the buildings of Greyfriars had been shattered, and broken glass lay in every direction. Two of the old elms had been smashed, and lay on the ground, and the branches of others had been torn and rent.

Splinters and fragments had been hurled in every direction, and there was no doubt that if the fellows had been in their studies or in the dormitories at the time, there would have been a heavy death-roll. And some of the boys, who had been called out of the gym when the alarm was given the previous evening, shuddered as they looked at the ruins of the building. If there had been no warning, if the bombs had fallen while they were still in the gym, it would have been instant death for every fellow there.

"By gad!" said Temple, of the Fourth. "We were there, Dab, old man, when Capper came and marched us off to the vaults. If we'd stayed——"

"Ow!" said Dabney.

The Greyfriars fellows were very anxious to see the morning papers. There was news in them—exciting news. They learned that several bombs had exploded in Courtfield—four houses had been blown to pieces, there were three dead and a dozen injured among the inhabitants. In the village of Pegg, a fisherman's cottage had been set on fire by the explosion, and half-a-dozen injured had been taken to the hospital. And from places further afield, over which the raider had passed, there came the same tale of wanton destruction and death.

News of the Zeppelin itself was scanty. It had been seen, in the searchlight on the coast, making for the North Sea, and a coastguard declared that he had seen it turning landward again. It was supposed to have been hit by some of the projectiles sent up at it; but no sign was discovered on the sea or the shore, so far, so it was concluded that it had escaped. If it was severely damaged, it was probable that it would sink to a grave in the waters of the North Sea—which was a consummation devoutly to be wished.

Morning lessons began as usual that morning: the Zeppelin "scare" made no difference on that score. Billy Bunter was heard to remark that it was a thousand pities that the Form-rooms hadn't been "busted" instead of the gym. The Owl of the Remove would have waited very contentedly for Greyfriars to be rebuilt, before he did any lessons.

Sampson Quincey Ilfrey Field was observed to wear a thoughtful expression when the Remove came out after lessons. It was a half-holiday that afternoon, and a crowd of the Greyfriars fellows intended to visit Courtfield and Pegg, and witness the damage that had been done by the bombs. Harry Wharton & Co. had the same intention; but Squiff had been doing some hard thinking. After the juniors were in the Close, waiting for

the dinner-bell, he proceeded to impart to his comrades the result of his cogitations.

"You fellows are thinking of going to look at the wreck—what?" he asked.

"That's the idea," said Harry. "Might be of some use, too, helping to get things right."

"Oh, good. But I've been thinking. Instead of going to look for the damage the Zeppelin has done, suppose we go and look for——" Squiff paused.

"For what?"

"The Zeppelin?" said Sampson Quincey Ilfrey Field.

His chums stared at him. Bob Cherry shook his head solemnly.

"The North Sea's too deep," he replied. "I should get my feet wet."

"Fathead!" said Squiff. "If the rotters have gone home, or sunk at sea, we shall never see anything more of them, of course. But—how do we know they've gone? The last seen of them, according to the paper, they had turned landward, after being hit, as the gunners supposed. Then they disappeared into the dark. It's supposed that the airship rose higher to get out of the gunfire, and cleared off up the coast, or over the sea. But—what did she turn back for, after buzzing off once?"

"Hit, perhaps. But——"

"Exactly," said Squiff. "One of the shells had hit the beast, and they were afraid to get out over the water. They may have found that it was all right, and cleared off. On the other hand, they mayn't."

"What the dickens are you driving at?" exclaimed Wharton. "If they hadn't cleared off, they'd have landed, and the Zeppelin would have been spotted at daybreak. We should have heard the news if that had happened."

"Quite so. That hasn't happened."

"Well, ass, you don't think they could land without being seen, after Jawn, do you?" said Nugent.

"Why not?"

"Well, a Zeppelin's big enough to be seen—two hundred feet long——"

"But in some lonely spot——"

"Every blessed lonely spot within miles of the coast is patrolled, and has been searched long before this."

"Not every one," said Squiff quietly. "There's one lonely spot, quite near here, that is out of sight, and certainly hasn't been searched, and won't be searched."

"And where the dickens is that?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"The top of the pike."

"My hat!"

The juniors looked at one another with startled glances. Squiff's suggestion almost took their breath away.

"You—you think they may have landed on the pike?" said Wharton, after a long pause.

Squiff nodded.

"I think it's possible," he replied. "Look here. The Black Pike is the highest point in this part of Kent. I've never been up it, but I've heard about it a lot. It's as steep nearly as the wall of a house, and the top is flat, and covered with trees in parts, but where the rock crops up through the soil it's bare as a billiard-ball. Isn't that so?"

"That's it," said Harry. "I've been over it."

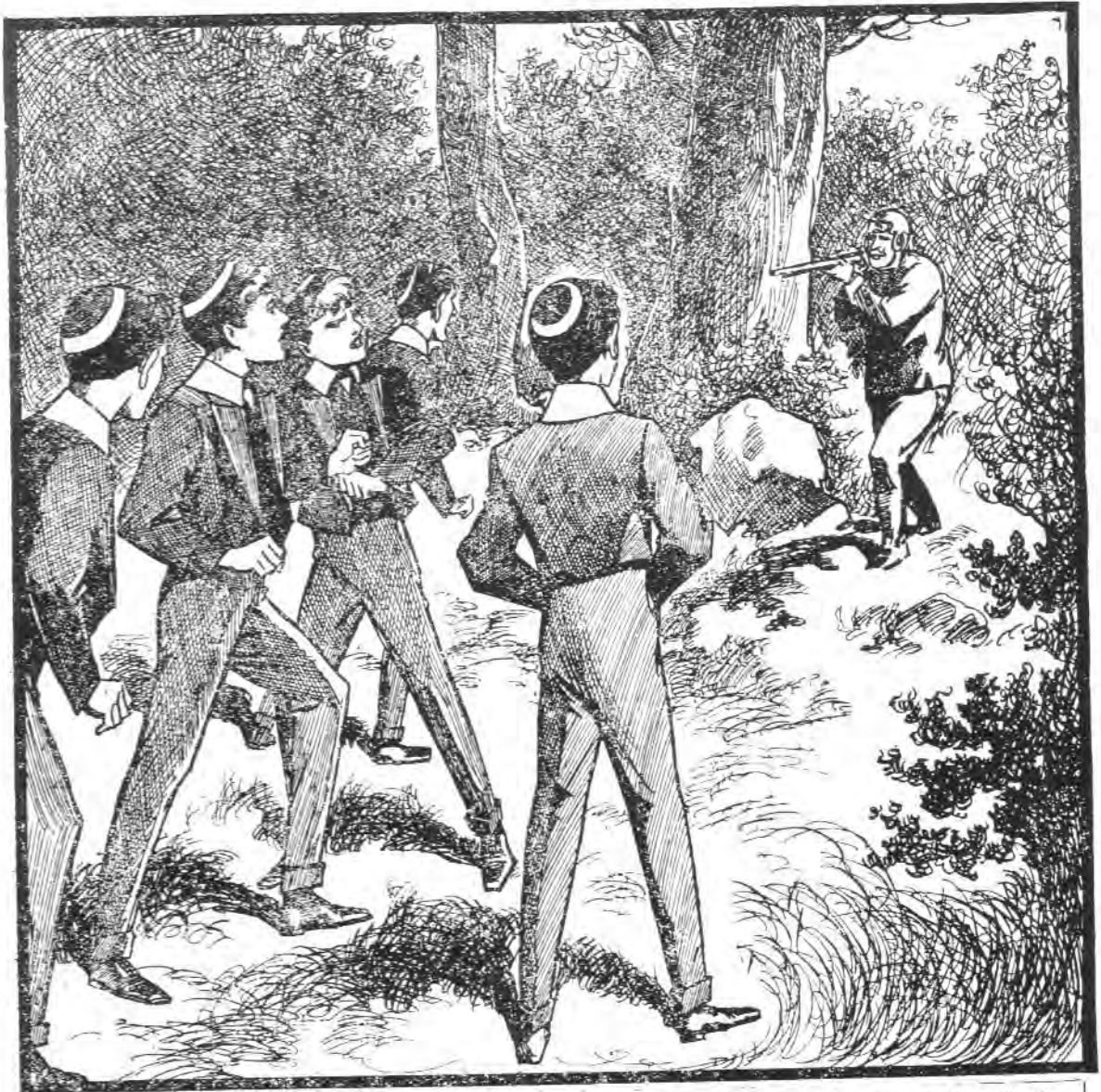
"Nobody ever goes there, except parties of climbers in the summer; and it needs jolly good climbers."

"Not once in a year," said Harry. "People go up the first slopes, but it's a long pull to the top, and dangerous, too, especially if a sea-mist comes on. And they sometimes come on very suddenly here. You might easily get lost up there, and starve or freeze to death. It has happened."

"Well, then, it's a high and lonely place, certain not to be searched, and close at hand to the rotters," said Squiff. "If they were winged, and had to repair their machinery or their wind-bags, it would suit them down to the ground. They might stay up there stranded for weeks without being seen or suspected, if they kept quiet."

"They might," agreed Wharton.

"You remember we heard them close, as we were passing the Black Pike last night," went on Squiff. "That



The juniors gazed at the stranger with starting eyes. For he was a man of powerful frame, with a blonde, bearded face, in the garb of a German airman, and in his hands he held a rifle, which came up to his shoulders as he sprang out of the trees. And the levelled rifle bore full upon the group of juniors. (See Chapter 7.)

was what put it into my head. I didn't say anything then as I wanted to think it out. I've thought it out. And my idea is that, if they were winged and needed repairs, that's the very spot they would make for. They could lie low all day, and get off again the next night; perhaps dropping some more bombs before they went."

"By Jove!"

"The place would suit them all right," said Nugent. "But how the deuce would they know anything about the place, and how to find it?"

Squiff laughed.

"They know more about this coast than you do," he said. "Haven't they fairly populated it with spies for the last ten years?"

"That's true enough," said Whiston. "There isn't a yard of it they don't know all about, that's certain. And if they could locate Greyfriars near enough in the dark to drop a bomb on the gym, it shows they've got the country hereabouts marked down pretty thoroughly."

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They couldn't see the school, in the dark, but their bomb only missed the School House by fifty yards, and hit the gym. And they didn't miss Pogg—a little village. It's right enough, they know all about the Black Pike. The only thing is, those Zeppelins are clumsy things to handle, and they have to have special landing-grounds. It would be frightfully difficult landing there in the dark, on the rough ground, and if they ran into the trees they'd be fairly wrecked. Would they take the risk?"

"What if they had no choice? Suppose a propeller was broken, or something or other that made it too risky to fly back over the sea? They would have the choice of coming down and surrendering, or chancing it on the top of the pike. And they'd chance it. They could always surrender afterwards, if they had had luck in landing, and made a hopeless wreck of it."

"True, O King!" said Bob Cherry. "But they might break their beastly necks, as well as their beastly Zeppelin!"

"They would risk that rather than surrender. They're beasts, but they're plucky beasts," said Squiff. "The Germans have plenty of pluck—heaps of it. It's cowardly to drop bombs on defenceless villages, I know, but they're not cowards at taking risks. They know how to face the music."

"You talk like a giddy picture-book," said Bob Cherry. "If the rotters have landed, they're on the Black Pike; and I suppose there's nearly a chance in a thousand that they have landed."

"Half a chance," suggested Nugent.

"The half-fullness of the esteemed chance is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The honourable and egregious Squiff wishfully desires to drag us up the pike. He has no mercy on our unfortunate legs."

"It's a jolly stiff climb, on half a chance in a thousand of finding a Zeppelin there," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Still, it's possible they're there; quite possible. And to spot the beasts and get them collared before they can bunk—that would be a top-hole cinch, as Fishy calls it. Let's go!"

"But if we find them, they won't let us come back and spread the news," remarked Nugent. "More likely to blow our heads off. They murder civilians, you know. They've been killing kids in Belgium, and they'd like to do the same in Kent."

"What's the good of being Boy Scouts if we can't dodge 'em?" said Squiff.

"Oh, I'm game!" said Nugent.

"By Jove, we could send Fishy!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "As he's only a neutral, it wouldn't matter if they killed him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blow Fishy!" said Squiff. "He can't climb. Let's get on the pike this afternoon, anyway. It's a ripping climb, and we're not soft. The weather's good, and it's a jolly good afternoon's outing. And even if there's only half a chance in a thousand of spotting a Zeppelin, that's worth the trouble."

"Hear, hear!"

"Think how the Fourth Form would be green with envy if we bagged a Zeppelin," said Squiff eagerly. "And Coker of the Fifth would be willing to kick himself for not thinking of it. Just fancy cutting off to the camp at Wapshot, and bringing a crowd of Tommies to jump on the rascals—what?"

"Hurrah!"

"Advance, Australia!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Squiffy, old man, if there are any more at home like you, New South Wales must be simply bursting with good ideas. It's a go!"

The chums of the Remove decided on it at once. Squiff evidently believed that the Zeppelin might have taken refuge on the summit of the pike, and the others admitted that it was possible. And the bare chance of bagging the air-raider was worth a big effort. The effort would be a big one, for the pike was high and steep, and seldom attempted save by first-class climbers. But the Famous Five were tough. As for Squiff himself, he was as hard as nails.

"And, anyway, we'll have a feed on the top of the pike," added Squiff.

"If we get there!" murmured Nugent.

"We're going to get there, fathead. We'll take sandwiches and some ginger-beer, and a cake, and have an al-fresco feed, instead of tea in the study."

"Ripping!"

"I say, you fellows—" Billy Bunter had come along in time to hear the last remarks, and Bunter was "on," at once.

But the Famous Five had no time to waste on Bunter. They hurried away to the school shop to make their purchases. Mrs. Mimble's windows had been smashed by the explosions of the previous night, and her "show" cakes and bottles of sweets had suffered grievous damage, which led Mrs. Mimble to remark that she hoped the Baiser would be given three months' hard labour when he was caught. Fortunately most of the stock was intact, however, and the juniors made extensive purchases for consumption on the top of the pike. They were certain to have very keen appetites by the time they reached their destination. Billy Bunter haunted the door of the

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tuckshop while they were laying out their cash. But a well-aimed dog-biscuit drove Bunter away with a yell, and the purchases were finished, and packed into wallets, without being sampled by the Owl of the Remove.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Climbing the Pike!

"I GUESS you're looking down in the mouth—what?" Fisher T. Fish, the American junior, made that remark, as he spotted Billy Bunter outside the tuckshop. The Owl of the Remove blinked at him.

"I say, Fishy, I've been disappointed about a postal order—"

"Go hon!"

"If you could lend me two bob—"

"I guess you'll be disappointed about that, too," said Fisher T. Fish.

"Those rotters are going to have a feed," said Bunter. "Leaving me out of it—after all I've done for them!"

Fisher T. Fish chuckled.

"What have you done for them, Bunter?" he inquired.

"Oh, rats! Here they come."

The Famous Five emerged from the school shop. Billy Bunter planted himself in their path.

"I say, you fellows, I'll come, you know. I'll carry some of those bags for you."

"Certainly," said Bob Cherry, with a wink at his comrades. "You're right welcome, my fat tulip."

Bunter's fat face lighted up.

"Oh, good! I thought you were going to be beasts, as usual," he said quite cheerfully. "I'll come, with pleasure, as you're so pressing. Where are you going?"

"Up the Black Pike."

Bunter's face fell.

"The—the pike! You—you can't climb it, you know. I'll tell you what. That picnic at the priory was mucked up the other day. Let's go there."

"Bow-wow!"

"Have a feed in my study instead," urged Bunter.

"Rats!"

"I—I say, you fellows, I—I really don't think I could climb the pike," said Bunter feebly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "I know you couldn't, you oyster! You could climb it about as much as Fishy could."

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Fisher T. Fish. "I guess I could go one better than any climber you've got in this old country. In the Yewnited States, sir, we climb. I guess I've clumb summits in the Catskill Mountains, sir, that would make your head swim. I reckon, sir, that I could hop over your old pike on one leg."

"Come and hop over it, then," said Squiff, laughing.

"I'll do it," said Fisher T. Fish, at once. It was a peculiarity of the Yankee junior that he was always ready to accept any challenge, of any sort, on any subject. He had a truly benevolent desire to show Greyfriars fellows how things were done "over there," in the great United States.

"Come on, then, both of you," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Mind, we're not going to stop for any lame ducks. If you don't keep up, you'll be left behind."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"I guess I'll keep up with any Britisher that ever went on two legs," said Fisher T. Fish disdainfully. "But what about the feed? I don't happen to be in funds, and I can't stand my whack."

"Stony!"

"If Buckingham Palace, sir, were being sold for three-pence, I couldn't raise enough to buy the door-knob!" said Fisher T. Fish sadly.

"We'll, if you get to the top of the pike, we'll stand the feed," said Harry.

"I guess I'm on."

"Come on, then!"

The Famous Five started, and Fisher T. Fish hurried along with them. Billy Bunter rolled after them, too. He had about as much chance of climbing the pike as of scaling the mountains in the moon; but the prospect of a feed at the top inspired him to the effort. Seven juniors strode off down the road at a good rate of speed, Bunter's fat legs whisking like machinery to keep pace.

Fisher T. Fish walked in an airy manner, quite confident in his powers to equal the climbing prowess of any inhabitant of an old island. The Famous Five looked forward with grim amusement to Fish's climb. They did not expect him to get halfway up the pike, and they wondered what wonderful excuse his fertile brain would invent for giving in when he was tired.

On the first slopes of the pike, where a track ran among the trees, Billy Bunter came to a halt. He was breathing already like very old bellows.

"I say, you fellows—"

But the fellows did not stop to listen. They marched on. Billy Bunter made another effort, and trotted after them, panting.

"Bob, old chap—"

"Rats!"

"I say! Harry, old fellow—"

"Shut up!"

"Franky, dear boy—"

"Save your breath, porpoise," said Nugent. "You'll need it before we get to the top."

"I—I'm afraid we can't get to the top—at least, I can't!" gasped Bunter. "I'll tell you what, you know—you give me my whack in the feed now. I—I can always climb better after eating. Then I—I'll overtake you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at. Look here, you urged me to come, and in common decency you ought to whack out," said Bunter indignantly.

"Oh, give him a bun, and kick him out!" said Wharton.

"Well, he ought to have something for coming a mile," grinned Bob Cherry. "Is there a very stale bun? Good! Here's a bun, Bunter. There's a currant in it, I believe."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Bob Cherry tossed a paper bag on the ground, and the juniors marched on. Billy Bunter blinked after them through his big glasses, and shook a fat fist.

"Beasts!" he roared. "What's the good of a bun to me? I'm hungry. You pressed me to come, you rotters, though I've got a lot of engagements for the afternoon. Beasts!" howled Bunter finally, as the six juniors vanished round a turn in the path.

With a discontented growl, Bunter picked up the paper bag. A stale bun was better than nothing. But, as he opened the bag, his expression changed. There were six jam-tarts in it. A beatific smile overspread Billy Bunter's fat face, and he turned homeward contentedly munching jam-tarts.

Harry Wharton & Co. tramped on steadily. The slope was growing steeper and the path wound round the pike, deeply shadowed by trees, which were showing thickly the green of spring. Winding as the path was, the slope was very steep, and the juniors dropped into silence as they tramped on. They needed their breath for tramping. Higher and higher they rose, and through the trees the sea suddenly burst on their sight.

"Waal, I swear!" ejaculated Fisher T. Fish, as he caught sight of the shining waters of the North Sea in the spring sunshine. "We've come right round the blessed hill."

"Did you want to go straight up?" grinned Bob Cherry. "You'd have to borrow an aeroplane for that."

"My word!" said Fish, in dismay. "Does this blessed path wind round like a blessed corkscrew?"

"Exactly."

"Ow! How far have we come?"

"About a quarter of the way."

"Oh, Jerusalem crickets!"

"Like to turn back?" grinned Squiff.

Fisher T. Fish shook his head and gasped.

"Nope!"

And he kept on. The path wound up higher and steeper amid great rocks that cropped out of the stony soil, and in places the juniors had to use their hands to help on the ascent.

They came out at last upon a rocky flat, where half-melted snow still filled the crevices, and made the ground slushy to the tread. Fisher T. Fish sank down upon a rock and gasped with relief and triumph.

"Jever get left?" he panted. "Didn't I tell you I could do it—what?"

"Eh? What have you done?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"I guess I've climbed the pike."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at, you galoots?"

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EVERY
MONDAY,

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ONE
PENNY.

"Ha, ha, ha! This is half-way."

"Oh, thunder!"

The expression on the Yankee junior's face made the Removites shriek. Fisher T. Fish had been under the impression that he had arrived at the top. The news that he was only half-way made him look quite sickly.

"Halt here for ginger-pop," said Squiff. "We can chuck the bottles away and lighten the load. You'd better have a drink, Fishy, and get back. You've reached your limit."

"I guess there ain't any limit for an American when he's once on the go!" gasped Fisher T. Fish. "I'll reach the top of this pike or bust!"

"Then the bustfulness will be terrific, my esteemed Fish."

"Gimme a lick-up. I guess I'm keeping on."

"Oh, don't be a duffer, Fishy!" said Harry Wharton. "You can't do it. You've got a good five miles back to Greyfriars now. After this bit it's jolly steep, and we have to use our hands. Better go back."

"Nope."

"But if you're pumped half-way up, how are you going to get home again, even if you reach the top?" demanded Nugent.

"I reckon I'm not pumped."

"Appearances are deceptive, then," grinned Squiff. "I'm blessed if I ever saw a chap who looked more pumped than you do. Guzzle that ginger-pop and hook it."

"Nope."

"Look here, fathead!" said Bob Cherry. "We only brought you and Bunter along for a joke, and so that you could tell them at the school where we are if anything goes wrong. See? You buzz off! If we don't turn up for calling-over, you can tell them we're on the pike, see?"

"I guess I'm not a lame duck. I'll walk any Britisher in this island off his legs. F. T. Fish never gets left, sir."

The chums of the Remove chuckled. But they were really concerned about Fish. They had expected him to own up, and make one of his usual excuses for "chucking" the task he had undertaken. As a matter of fact, considering their real errand, Fisher T. Fish was likely to be in the way if he climbed further. And it was quite certain that his legs would never support him for the walk home afterwards. They did not relish the prospect of carrying Fisher T. Fish back to Greyfriars.

But all arguments were wasted on the Yankee junior. Fisher T. Fish had made up his mind, and he was determined.

"Look here," said Squiff at last. "I'll tell you what we're going up for, Fishy. We think the Zeppelin may have landed up there."

Fisher T. Fish grinned.

"Pile it on!" he said.

"I mean it, you fathead!"

"Keep it up," said Fisher T. Fish. "Tell me fifteen times, and then I won't swallow it. You'd have to get up very early in the morning to take a rise out of a galoot that cut his eye-teeth in Noo York."

"Oh, you fathead! I tell you the Zeppelin may be there, and if the Germans see us they may shoot."

"Well, they won't shoot me—I'm neutral," said Fish, with a grin.

"They may not stop to ask you that. Prussians ain't particular."

"Well, I guess, if I see a Zeppelin, I'll eat it!" said Fish. "I'm keeping on. Mind, I'm waiting for you fellows!"

"Oh, my hat!"

The Famous Five started again, and Fisher T. Fish tramped doggedly after them. Unless his legs gave up, the Yankee junior was not going to "get left."

ANSWERS

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NEXT MONDAY—OUR GRAND EASTER DOUBLE NUMBER! ORDER TO-DAY.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER. A Sudden Surprise!

"O^W! That sudden exclamation came from Hurree Ram Singh about half an hour later.

The juniors were climbing a steep slope, among sharp rocks and loose stones, one after another—Fisher T. Fish bringing up the rear, a considerable distance behind.

Hurree Singh's foot had slipped on a loose stone, and he fell, clutching at the rocks and roots to avoid rolling down on the fellows behind him.

A shower of loose stones were knocked down over the following juniors, and they stopped, and held on. The slope was too steep to dispense with the use of hands.

"Inky, old scout, hurt!" exclaimed Wharton anxiously.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh suppressed a groan.

"Ow! The hurtfulness is terrific! My esteemed ankle has had a disgusting twist."

"Oh, what rotten luck!"

The juniors gathered round Inky. Hurree Singh lay extended on the rocks, his dusky face contracted with pain. Fisher T. Fish laid himself down, and waited. He was only too glad of the rest. But the other fellows were worried and anxious.

Harry Wharton bared Inky's dusky ankle and examined it. The Nabob of Bhanipur winced as he touched it.

"It's not a sprain," said Harry. "Does it hurt much, Inky?"

"I can bear it grudgingly," said the nabob, with a wry face: "but I fearfully think that I cannot climb any farther, my esteemed chums. You must go on without me, and I will return crawlingly and hopfully."

"You can't go on," said Harry, "and you can't go back alone, Inky."

"It will be all rightful."

"Rot! One of us will have to go back with you," said Harry.

"Fishy!" said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, good!"

Wharton turned back towards Fisher T. Fish.

"Fish, Inky's hurt his ankle, and he's got to get back. You can help him back to Greyfriars."

Fisher T. Fish snorted.

"I guess I'm not out to help lame ducks," he replied. "I calculate I'm going to get to the top of this lyer pike!"

"Now, look here, you silly ass!" said Wharton, in a tone of remonstrance. "You can't get to the top, and if you did, we can't carry you home. Make yourself useful and help Inky back."

"Scat!"

"Fishy, you burbling duffer—" began Bob Cherry.

"I guess you can yalp till you're black in the face," said Fisher T. Fish. "But this child isn't taking the back-track—not if he knows it! I guess I'm going to the top! I'm some climber."

Wharton looked at his companions. It was evident that one of them would have to go back with the nabob.

"I can go lonesomely on my own, my esteemed chums," murmured Inky.

"You can't! We'll toss up for it," said Squiff.

"I'll go," said Frank Nugent; "I'm getting a bit winded, any way."

"We'll toss up, and chance it, if you like," said Bob.

"No; it's all right. I'll do it," said Frank. "This climb is rather a twist for me, anyway. I'll look after Inky."

"My esteemed chum is goodfully kind," murmured the nabob gratefully.

Nugent's offer relieved his chums of the difficulty. Nobody wanted to abandon the climb; but, as Nugent said, it was a "twist" for him. He was not quite so tough as his comrades.

"Well, that's settled, then," said Wharton. "Mind how you go down, Inky, old kid. Lean on Franky, and dot and carry one, you know."

Hurree Singh was raised to his feet. His ankle hurt him badly whenever he put his foot on the ground, and it was clear that he could not make the descent without assistance, unless he was to risk a bad fall. With

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Nugent supporting him, the nabob disappeared down the steep, limping.

Fisher T. Fish, having recovered his wind during the long halt, rejoined Wharton and Squiff and Bob Cherry.

"I guess I'm waiting for you," he said coolly.

"We won't keep you waiting long, you owl!" growled Squiff.

The three chums started afresh, Fisher T. Fish plodding on behind. Higher and higher they rose, winding round the hill. The sea had disappeared, they were on the landward side of the pike again. There was no vestige of a path, and Fish inwardly wondered how on earth the juniors were finding their way.

Wharton had been over the ground before, however, and so had Bob, and their training as Boy Scouts had given them keen eyes for topography. They made hardly a fault, though once or twice they had to stop and "try back." On each of these occasions Fisher T. Fish calmly sat down and rested, leaving it to his guides to find the way. But for these rests, Fish would certainly have disappeared from sight behind.

But, at last, even with the occasional rests he obtained when the path was doubtful, Fisher T. Fish could stand it no longer. His breath was coming in painful jerks and the perspiration was streaming down his face. The three Removites were leaving him behind, when Fish called out to them:

"Hold on, you galoots!"

Harry Wharton looked back.

"Can't stop for lame ducks," he said.

"I—I guess I want a bit of a rest! I'm not at the top of my form to-day."

"Better get back."

"Can't, you jay! I don't know the way back."

"Why, you—you cheeky worm!" howled Squiff. "Do you think we're going to stop for you because you don't know the way back?"

"I guess you don't want me to be lost on the pike all night, do you, you galoots?"

"Well, of all the cheek—"

"Not that I'm asking any favours of you," said Fish, loftily. "I guess I'll chance it, if you go on and leave me. I don't call it sporting. But do it; I don't care a Continental red cent!"

Fisher T. Fish knew very well that they would not leave him, or he would not have made that offer. They had not thought of it before, and the keen Yankee junior had them where their hair was short, as he would have expressed it.

As they were not likely to come back precisely the same way, they could not leave him, and pick him up on their return. If they abandoned Fisher T. Fish now, he was lost on the pike, and the remembrance of an unfortunate climber who had been lost on the pike, and had died from exposure, made it impossible for the juniors to take Fish at his word.

They glared at him as if they would eat him. The climb was a hard one, anyway, and they did not want to waste time loitering to keep pace with a "lame duck." If too much time was lost, it might be dark before they reached the bottom of the pike on their return. And a descent of the pike after dark was fearfully dangerous.

"Well, you—you swindling larrikin," said Squiff, "you've planted this on us! Why didn't you go back with Inky, you worm? We can't stay up here after dark, you know that, and so we can't afford to lose time."

"I guess we'll all go back together, then," suggested Fish. "I've kept on as far as you guys, you can't deny that!"

"I—I've a jolly good mind to pitch him down!" said Bob Cherry sulphurously. "He's mucked up our climb so that he can swank that he climbed as far as we did."

"Waal, I guess I have, just a few!"

"We're not going back," said Wharton shortly. "I suppose we shall have to dawdle, and let that silly idiot keep up with us. Come on, you gas-bag! And if you're too jolly slow, we'll leave you behind, and chance it."

"I guess I'll see it through!"

Fisher T. Fish limped and gasped on again after the juniors. The steepest part of the climb was over now, and the juniors were able to use only their feet; before

them lay a steady climb of a mile or more, winding round the hill among the rough rocks and the stubby trees, ere they reached the summit.

They tramped on in far from good humour. Even the threat of being left behind could not make Fisher T. Fish buck up; he was simply pumped, and he could hardly stagger on at all. Bob Cherry and Squiff, none too gently, seized his arms and helped him on, and then the pace was accelerated, though with many a gasp and groan from Fisher T. Fish.

The sun was sinking in the west now. To ascend the pike and return was a good afternoon's work. The juniors had hoped to have half an hour or so to spare, for a feed at the top, if the Zeppelin was not there. But the time lost over Fisher T. Fish forced them to abandon that hope. The utmost they expected now was to reach the top, and look over the rocky plateau at the summit to ascertain whether Squiff's surmise was correct, and then to start immediately on the return journey. Even then they knew that they would not reach the road before dark. So it may be imagined that their feelings towards Fisher T. Fish were not amiable as they helped him on.

"We shall have to carry the blighter back, I suppose," groaned Bob Cherry.

"Jolly good mind to leave him on the top," growled Wharton. "If I'd foreseen this, I'd have hammered him till he turned back, at the half-way stop."

"I guess you can leave me hyer, if you like!" gasped Fish.

"You rotter, you know we can't! You ought to have gone back with Inky."

"I reckon I'm going to the top if you do!"

Harry Wharton frowned angrily. When he returned to Greffrarians he knew that Fisher T. Fish would proudly announce that he had climbed the pike, and wouldn't be left, omitting mention of the fact that the climbers had had to stop for him, and half-drag him up the final mile. And for the sake of that absurd "swank" the egregious Fish was giving them no end of trouble, spoiling their chance of a picnic on the top of the pike, delaying their return till after dark, which would mean being late for calling-over, to say nothing of the possibility that they might have to carry him home, dead beat.

No wonder they were almost inclined to take the risk of leaving him alone there. But that would not have done, so they bore it as well as they could, and Bob and Squiff only grinned when Fisher T. Fish groaned, and gasped, and pleaded with them to go a little bit more slowly. They were not inclined to stand on ceremony with that most troublesome of "lame ducks."

"We're close on the top now," said Wharton at last, breathing hard. The climb was telling on him. "We'll leave Fish somewhere where we can find him again; no good his doing the last bit. If the Germans are there we shall have to dodge pretty lively, and that winded image hasn't a dodge left in his carcase."

"I guess I'm going to the top!"

"You silly ass! Suppose the Germans—"

"I reckon I'm willing to eat all the Germans there are."

"It's quite possible, I tell you—"

"Oh, come off!"

"Stop here," said Wharton. The last slope was before them; fifty yards farther on was the level. The juniors stopped in the midst of thick trees. "Now, Fishy, we shall know this place again all right, so we'll leave you here—"

"I guess you won't! Ow!"

Fish gave a gasping howl as Bob and Squiff released him, and he sank on the ground with a bump. He was utterly fagged, and could not even stand alone.

"You stay there," said Harry. "We're simply going to the top to look over it, and we shall be back in a quarter of an hour."

"I guess you want to be able to say I was left," panted Fisher T. Fish. "You go on and leave me, you galoots, and I'll crawl after you. Just a few!"

"Crawl, and be hanged!" growled Bob Cherry. "You

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won't crawl far, I fancy. Mind, if you lose yourself we've no time to hunt for you. It will be a pretty close fit getting back, anyway. If we don't pass the dangerous part before dark, our necks are as good as broken!"

"Waal, I s'wore! I guess I'm coming on, all the same."

"Go and eat coke! Come on, you chaps, and let the silly idiot do as he likes! It's not ten minutes to the top now, and— My hat!"

Bob Cherry broke off with that sudden ejaculation, as a figure appeared from the trees. The juniors gazed at the stranger with starting eyes. Fisher T. Fish blinked at him as if paralysed. For the stranger was a man of powerful frame, with a blonde, bearded face, in the garb of a German airman, and in his hands he held a rifle, which came up to his shoulder as he sprang out from the trees, and the levelled rifle bore full upon the group of juniors.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

In the Hands of the Enemy!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. stood transfixed.

They could not speak.

The German was within six yards, and the magazine-rifle bore full upon them. In four seconds the German could have shot down the four schoolboys if he had chosen, and they were without defence. For one

fearful moment they believed that he was about to fire, and their hearts almost died within them.

They had climbed the pike to see whether the German airship had landed there to repair damage. They had not really thought it was there, but there had been a chance, and for that they had come. But they had not needed to reach the top. They knew now that Squiff's surmise was founded on fact.

The Zeppelin was there! And they knew now, too, that, inaccessible as the pike was, the Germans were keeping guard against the possibility of someone arriving, and they had come upon a watchful sentry.

The German did not fire.

But the levelled rifle bore full upon the juniors, and it needed but the slightest pressure of his finger for the weapon to spit forth sudden death.

There was nearly a minute of frozen silence. The juniors had come in the hope of finding the Germans, and it was the Germans who had found them.

The man spoke at last in German, in a guttural voice. The juniors knew some German, but they did not understand him. German in a thick provincial accent was a little too much for them.

Wharton shook his head. After the first terrible shock he had recovered his coolness. It occurred to him, too, that the Germans, hiding on the pike while they repaired the airship, would not wish to risk giving an alarm by the report of firearms. They would not shoot if they could help it. For, long as the climb was to the summit of the pike, the length was caused by the necessity of winding round the steep hill; the direct distance from the top to the road at the foot of the pike was not great. A rifle-shot would certainly have been heard by anyone on the road. That thought came to all the juniors excepting Fisher T. Fish, who was glaring at the levelled rifle as if it fascinated him. Fish's face had been crimson from the efforts he had made, but it had suddenly become like chalk in its hue. Fagged out as he was, he found himself able to get on his feet, and he yelled breathlessly to the German:

"Don't shoot, you galoot! I guess I'm a neutral. Savvy? I'm a neutral. Don't you dare to shoot an American citizen, or you'll have Old Glory on your track. Savvy? You pot me, sir, and the Yewunited States will want to know about it—just a few!"

The German evidently did not understand either

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English or American. He growled something again in his guttural tongue. Wharton shook his head once more to signify that he did not understand. The man scowled, and made a gesture there was no mistaking. He meant that the juniors were to keep on towards the top of the pike.

For a moment they hesitated.

They knew now that the Zeppelin was there, with the rest of her crew—the murderers who had launched bombs on quiet towns and villages the previous night. What had they to expect from such villains? And the desperate thought was in their minds to attempt to dodge and run.

But they thought better of it. For, although the German clearly did not want to shoot if he could help it, he would have fired instantly to prevent them from getting away with the news they had to carry, and he would have potted them like rabbits in a few seconds.

The rifleman repeated his gesture angrily, and made a motion with the rifle.

"I guess I'm going on," said Fisher T. Fish. "That's what he wants."

Fisher started on, forgetting that he was aching with fatigue. Wharton and Bob and Squiff followed him. There was no help for it.

They marched on savagely up the last slope of the pike in the red sunset. The German walked after them, with the rifle under his arm, ready for instant use if they attempted to bolt.

"Well, here's a go!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Here's a giddy go! Lucky for Nugent and Inky they went back!"

Wharton gritted his teeth.

"We oughtn't to have run into that scoundrel's hands

like that. We ought to have been scouting our way up. We should have spotted him then. But—but I didn't really think the brutes were here, and that's the truth of it. It was such a slim chance that they were here."

"Half a chance in a thousand, wasn't it?" groaned Squiff.

"But we ought to have been on our guard, all the same," said Wharton. "We might have been, too, if we hadn't been bothering with that idiot Fish. How is a fellow to scout when he's dragging a silly dummy up a hill? Anyway, we're in for it now. I don't think there's much to be afraid of, kids. They'd hardly have any reason for hurting us, and they won't want to shoot if they can help it. A shot here would be heard down on the road—might even be heard at Greyfriars, as the wind's in that direction."

"Just going to keep us quiet till they've started off after dark, most likely," said Squiff, brightening up. "Hang it all, they can't be utter beasts enough to harm us for nothing! Dropping bombs on the villages is rather thick, but cold-blooded murder isn't in their line. We're all right. They'll strand us here, and let us find our way down when they're gone."

"Unless they have a fancy for taking home some prisoners," grunted Bob Cherry.

"Oh, rot! Their own people would laugh at 'em if they brought home four schoolboys as prisoners."

"Well, I suppose they would. We oughtn't to have been caught like this," said Bob. "What price fetching the Tommies from Wapshot to collar them? That won't come off now."

"They'll take jolly good care of that," growled Wharton. "It's all the fault of that silly idiot Fish!"

"Oh, what rotten luck!"

Fisher T. Fish was not speaking at all. He was looking over his shoulder every minute, keeping an uneasy eye on the German's rifle. The big German grinned as he noted the Yankee junior's uneasiness, and made motions with the rifle that increased it.

The juniors came out on the level at last. The top of the pike was almost flat, and several acres in extent. There was a thick belt of trees round it, and most of the surface was hard rock, where only stubby bushes grew in the crevices. It was the highest point for many miles round, and there was no danger of its being overlooked; and from the bottom of the hill the plateau was, of course, quite invisible, and was further screened by the belt of trees. A better hiding-place for the disabled airship could not have been devised. It had landed there in the dark, unseen, and since then the raiders had kept quiet, exposed only to the danger of a chance climber coming up the pike. And they were evidently on their guard against that, as the capture of the juniors showed.

"There it is!" Bob Cherry exclaimed breathlessly.

Almost in the centre of the plateau, clear in the setting sun, loomed up the long, heavy shape of the Zeppelin.

The airship was before their eyes. Men were busy inside and outside, with

OUR SCHOOL CARTOON SERIES.—No. 4.



THE RACE IS NOT ALWAYS TO THE SWIFT. NOTWITHSTANDING ALL HIS PREPARATIONS FOR CAPTIVATING SOMEBODY ELSE'S SISTER, LITTLE WILLIE WAS LEFT AT THE FINISH, AND BIG WILLIE WALKED OFF WITH THE FAIR MAIDEN! THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 373.



Hurree Singh's foot had slipped on a loose stone, and he fell, clutching at the rocks and roots to avoid rolling down on the fellows behind him. A shower of loose stones was knocked down over the following juniors, and they stopped and held on. The slope was too steep to dispense with the use of hands. "Inky, old scout! Hurt?" exclaimed Wharton anxiously. (See Chapter 7.)

blackened hands and faces, evidently hard at work repairing the damage that had been done when the airship was struck the previous night.

But the work was suspended, and there was a general exclamation, as the four juniors appeared on the summit of the pike, with the sentry following them.

A tall man, with a fair face and a spiked moustache, rapped out a savage order, and the airship crew instantly resumed their labour, taking no more notice of the new arrivals. Not a glance did they cast now towards the juniors. Prussian discipline, hard as iron, had crushed all the soul out of them, and turned them into human machines—machines that moved at the word of their

master, and had scarcely any thinking capacity of their own left.

The officer strode towards the juniors.

The sentry saluted, and jerked out a few words in guttural German; and then, at a sign from the officer, he went back the way he had come. The German officer fixed his eyes upon the juniors.

"Who are you?" he asked, in perfect English, with hardly a trace of an accent.

"We are schoolboys," said Harry Wharton. "We belong to the school you dropped your bombs on last night."

The German laughed. He was plainly the commanding

officer of the airship, and the juniors regarded him with surprise. After the murderous work of the previous night they would have expected to see some beetle-browed, savage-looking ruffian in command of the Zeppelin. But the German officer looked a good-tempered man. He was a young man, hardly over thirty, and his face was good-looking and fat.

"Then I am glad to see you alive," he said. "But what are you doing here?"

"We climbed up here," said Harry.

"But why? I thought this was a very lonely place where no one came; that is my information," said the German, regarding him suspiciously.

"Your spies have told you the truth, as far as that goes," said Harry bitterly; "but we came up, as you see."

"You did not come up by chance," said the German captain abruptly. "Tell me—is the presence of my airship here suspected?"

"Not that I know of."

"Is anyone else coming up the hill?"

"I do not know of anybody."

"Good! I shall know whether you have told me the truth, and if you have tried to deceive me, beware."

"You would know that I have told you the truth, if you knew a decent face when you saw one," said Harry.

The German laughed again.

"Even the young Englishers grow loudly," he said. "We shall change all that. But I believe you—you look honest."

"You can believe me," said Harry. "If the soldiers were coming, you would not get a word from me. I am only sorry that they are not."

"I am glad to hear that they are not, mein kind," said the German. "But, tell me—for what reason have you climbed this hill? It must have been a difficult climb for boys like you."

"I guess we came up here to picnic," said Fisher T. Fish.

"Is that all?"

The juniors were silent.

"I am waiting for your answer," said the German captain. "I need not point out to you that your lives are in my hands."

"Do the Germans make war on schoolboys?" said Harry.

"When necessity demands it, yes—even on the babes at the mother's breast," said the captain coolly. He drew an automatic pistol from his belt. "Tell me why you came up this hill."

"There's no harm in telling the beast!" murmured Bob Cherry. "He's got us now, anyway."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"We suspected that the Zeppelin might be here," he said.

The German started.

"And you came up to see?"

"Yes."

"That was bold of you, mein kind—over-bold. You will not get away to tell your news," said the German captain, smiling. "You have found us now. Look your fill upon my airship—one of a fleet that will soon reduce England to cinders and ashes."

"What a big order!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Still, you've done the gym at Greyfriars towards it."

"I hope you'll let Australia off, sir," said Squiff, in his meekest tone. "I belong to that little island, and I should be sorry to see it totally destroyed by a gas-bag."

The German frowned. He did not appear to appreciate the humour of Sampson Quincy Iffley Field. He made a sign to one of his men, and rapped out an order in German. The man disappeared into the airship, and returned with a coil of rope.

"I have ordered this man to bind you," said the captain. "Do not be foolish enough to resist. I would willingly spare your lives, but if you give the slightest trouble, I shall shoot you instantly."

Harry Wharton shrugged his shoulders. Resistance was out of the question. There were twenty Germans in sight, and it would not have been necessary for the officer to use his weapon. The German sailor proceeded to bind

their hands behind their backs. There came an angry protest from Fisher T. Fish.

"I guess you can leave me out, sir!" he exclaimed.

"I'm a neutral."

"What!"

"I guess my name's Fisher Tarleton Fish, of Noo York, in the Yewnited States," said Fish excitedly. "You've no right to lay hands on a free American citizen. If you touch an American citizen, sir, you'll be called to account. You jest order this galoot to let my paws loose. You hear me?"

"I hear you, mein kind."

"Waal, I reckon you'd better let me go. Don't I keep on telling you that I'm a neutral?" demanded Fisher T. Fish. "This ain't my war. I don't care shucks about your old war. You keep your hands off a free American citizen, or you'll hear the American Eagle scream, I tell you."

To Fish's indignant astonishment, the German captain burst into a hearty laugh. Apparently that fearsome bird, the American Eagle, had no terrors for him.

"Are you going to let me loose?" shouted Fish, with all the natural indignation of a free American citizen under the circumstances.

"Nein, nein."

"Then you can watch out for trouble with the Yewnited States, when they hear of this at Washington," said Fisher T. Fish impressively.

Even that dreadful threat did not seem to worry the German captain. He laughed until his fat cheeks shook.

Fisher T. Fish was simply breathless with indignation. To see the American Eagle disregarded in this manner fairly got his mad up, as he would have expressed it in his native language.

"You—you watch out!" he gasped. "You watch out, that's all! When the American Eagle begins to scream, your Kaiser will feel pretty sick on his throne, sir, I tell you. You can twist the British Lion's tail as much as you please, but don't you dare to touch a feather of the American Eagle! I guess, sir, if you don't loose me instant, Germany is as good as wiped off the map of Yurup."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "Don't be so funny, Fishy. I can't laugh with my hands tied."

"Why, you silly jay—"

The German captain made a sign to the sailor, and the bound juniors were led away into the airship. Fisher T. Fish was trembling, not with fear, but with wrath. He repeated at the top of his voice that he was a neutral, but the Germans were evidently completely indifferent to whether he was a neutral or not. The prisoners were thrust into a tiny room, about six feet by six, windowless, but lighted by an electric bulb. The door slid shut, and was fastened. Then they were left to themselves.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Carried Away!

"O H, Jerusalem!" said Fisher T. Fish.

"Oh, crumbs!"

Harry Wharton & Co. were in an exasperated frame of mind. It was not the danger of their position that worried them—though that was considerable—nor the uncertainty of the near future, though that was great. It was the fact that, coming there to "spot" the Zeppelin, they had themselves been spotted and made prisoners, and could not carry away the news that the German raiders were there.

It was intensely exasperating. As they sat on the floor in the cell—for there was no furniture—they could hear the German sirmen busily at work. The repairs of the damage done to the huge fabric were going on incessantly. Doubtless by night the work would be finished, and the monster would be ready to rise into the sky again, safe from attack and pursuit. If word could only have been sent to the men in khaki at Wapshot Camp, five hundred British Tommies would have come swarming up the pike, and the air-raiders would have been "roped in" without the slightest difficulty. That was what the juniors had intended, if they found the Zeppelin stranded there. But it was only too clear that the intention could not be carried out.

Apart from that, their position was exceedingly uncomfortable. They were tired and hungry, and their hands were bound tightly. Wharton and Bob and Squiff felt inclined to kick themselves, and one another, and the world generally.

"Listen to the beasts," said Squiff. "They're not losing a second. I suppose they've been slogging at it all day, ever since they landed here, in fact. They must have been hard hit by the guns last night."

"Oh, it's rotten!" said Harry savagely. "To think that we should walk into their paws like this. If we'd really believed the beasts were here, we'd have been more on our guard. I admit it never struck me that they might have sentinels part of the way down the hill, as they have."

"All that idiot Fishy's fault," growled Bob Cherry. "We meant to scout up here very cautiously, but with that dummy bothering us—"

"I'd smash his silly, long nose if my hands were loose!" groaned Squiff.

"I guess you've got nothing to complain of," snapped Fisher T. Fish. "You're in this silly war, you sons of John Bull. I'm not. I'm a neutral. They've no right to touch me. The Yewnited States will hear about this."

"A fat lot they care about the United States," growled Squiff. "They don't care tuppence. They can't import anything from the United States, while the British Fleet rules the waves; and they have no other use for your blessed States. The American Eagle can scream herself hoarse, and the Germans won't turn a hair."

"I guess—"

"Oh, shut up! I say, I'm dashed hungry, and there's grub in these wallets, and we can't get at it. What a rotten sell!"

"It's barely possible they may be nabbed after all," said Harry. "We shan't get back to Greyfriars, and Nugent and Inky will guess at once that something's wrong. They will tell Quenchy what we came here for, and explain to him that the Germans must have caught us—"

"Quelchy won't believe it. He'll simply think we're lost on the pike," said Squiff. "People have been lost up here before."

Wharton grunted. It was only too probable that the Remove master would take that view. They would be searched for, perhaps, but only by masters or prefects—not by an armed force.

"They won't even search for us to-night," went on Squiff. "It's impossible to search the pike on a moonless night, and there'll be no moon. It will be left till daylight."

"I—I suppose so. Hang it!"

The prospect was "rotten" anyway. If the repairs were finished that night, the German airship would sail away, and the juniors expected that they would be left stranded on the top of the pike. If the repairs were not finished, and the raiders had to spend another day there, they would be prisoners the whole time. If two or three Greyfriars prefects came searching for them, the searchers would simply fall into the hands of the Germans, as the juniors had done.

An hour passed—another hour. The minutes crawled by on leaden wings to the imprisoned juniors.

They were suffering from a hunger which Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, if he had been there, would have described as terrific.

"Look here, we're not going to starve," exclaimed Squiff, at last. "Let's make a row, and call some of the brutes here."

"I guess they'll whale us if we worry them," said Fisher T. Fish. "I don't want my brains knocked out with a rifle-butt."

"If you had any brains you wouldn't be here," growled Squiff. "Shout out to the beasts, you chaps, and chance it."

The juniors made up their minds to it, and they shouted together. For a quarter of an hour or more no notice was taken of their shouting. Then the door was slid back, and an angry German face peered in, and a gruff voice rapped out something in German.

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EVERY MONDAY, The "Magnet" LIBRARY. ONE PENNY.

"We're hungry," exclaimed Wharton, "savvy? Wir sind hungri!"

"Ach! Silent mit you," grunted the man, in bad English.

"Call your captain here," said Squiff, "we want to speak to him. Der Herr Hauptmann, that's what you call him in your weird lingo, isn't it?"

The German looked over his shoulder.

"Der Herr Hauptmann Von Krook kommt," he said, and moved away.

Captain Von Krook looked in. His fat face was bland and smiling, and its expression showed that all was going well with his repairing business. If it had been otherwise, he would most certainly not have looked so bland.

"You must not make so much noise," he said. "I wish not to hurt you, as you are boys, but if you call out, I shall have you gagged."

"We wanted to speak to you," said Harry.

"Very good. You have some information to give me?" asked the German.

Wharton grinned.

"Yes, sir."

"What is it?"

"We're hungry."

Von Krook stared at him for a moment, and then smiled. That was not the "information" he had been thinking of.

"Ah! you are hungry," he said.

"Yes. We have food in our wallets here, if you'll let your man untie our hands. We couldn't get through steel walls, you know, even with our hands untied."

"That is true," assented the German. "I do not wish to be cruel to you, though you are a nuisance, with your coming here where you are not wanted. You shall be untied, but if you make yourselves troublesome, you will be shot."

He called to one of his men, and the juniors' hands were unbound. They stretched their cramped arms with great relief. Now that the door was open, they could see that darkness had fallen on the pike.

"Thank you," said Harry Wharton.

"May I ask you, sir, what you are going to do with us?" "You may not," said Von Krook, with a smile, and he strode away, and the sailor closed and secured the door.

"Beast!" growled Squiff. "Still, he isn't such a beast as might have been expected. These Germans are queer chaps. You'd hardly believe that a good-looking, good-tempered fellow like that would rain down bombs on villages, and murder women and children wholesale."

"It's their system of war," said Harry, "a system they seem to have borrowed from the Red Indians. In private life they're not bad chaps. Germans are queer beasts, anyway. Our German master, old Gans, is a jolly good fellow, but he can't see anything wrong in dropping bombs on non-combatants. They've got a kink somewhere in their blessed German brains, I suppose. Buck up with that grub."

The juniors started on the contents of their wallets with wonderfully keen appetites. Their unfortunate position did not prevent them making a good meal. They felt very much better after a tremendous feed. It was a relief, too, to have their limbs free.

After the feed, the time passed slowly. Hour after hour passed away, and at length their watches told them that it was midnight. Still they could hear the Germans at work, and once or twice they heard a buzz from the engines, as if the airmen were testing them.

"I wonder what they're thinking at Greyfriars?" said Bob.

"Thinking we're lost on the pike," grunted Squiff. "Might even be looking for us. No good if they do—these beasts are on the look-out. If only Quelchy had

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NEXT MONDAY—OUR GRAND EASTER DOUBLE NUMBER!

sense enough to believe what Franky must have told him—but he would want a lot of convincing that a Zeppelin was here."

"You see, Nugent couldn't tell him for certain," said Harry. "Franky may think that most likely we've had some accident, or got lost. He'll tell Quelchy; but, on the whole, we can't expect Quelchy to believe this. Before we came up, we didn't think there was much chance of the beasts being here."

"Half-a-chance in a thousand, you giddy asses!" said Squiff. "I say, when they start the engines to go, they'll be heard. You remember we heard them last night, that was what put the idea into my head that they had landed on the pike. I wonder when they're going to let us out?"

"There goes the blessed engine again."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" shouted Bob Cherry. "we're moving!"

"My hat!"

A sudden lurch of the airship flung the juniors across the room. They scrambled up in astonishment and alarm.

The Zeppelin was moving.

Harry Wharton & Co. stared at one another in consternation.

They were rising.

"What the thunder!" gasped Squiff. "They—they're starting. They—they can't intend to take us away with them!"

"Oh, Jerusalem!"

"Oh, the brutes! Perhaps they've forgotten us!" exclaimed Bob. "Let's hammer on the door."

"Not likely to go down again to land us," said Harry. "It can't be easy to get this big, clumsy beast landed."

The floor slanted under their feet.

The Zeppelin was rising into the clouds. Whether they had been forgotten, or whether the Germans intended to carry them off as prisoners, their fate was sealed now. The Zeppelin was rising, and they were rising with it. And when they came down again, it would be in—Germany!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Flight Through the Night!

D ISMAY fell upon the four juniors.

The buzzing of the Zeppelin filled the little cell with echoing sound.

They could tell that the airship had already attained a good speed. They were shut off from the sight of what was outside their prison. But they knew that already the pike must have been left far behind.

Where were they now?

Probably already far from land—out in the darkness over the wild waters of the North Sea.

With his airship damaged, temporarily repaired under difficulties, Captain Von Krook was not likely to think of further raids—or of anything but getting safely back to Germany. And Harry Wharton & Co. were going with him. What then? To be "interned" in a concentration camp till the end of the war—like the luckless British who had been in Germany on the outbreak of hostilities. Their lives would be spared—there was hardly any doubt about that—but it might be years before they would see their native land again. Truly, the expedition to the summit of the Black Pike had had disastrous results for the Greyfriars juniors.

"I—I thought they'd strand us on the pike, when they started," muttered Bob Cherry. "What on earth do they want to take schoolboys prisoners for?"

"The beasts have some reason, I suppose," said Harry. "But—but what are we going to do? They're going back to Germany."

"Concentration camp and black bread!" groaned Squiff. "Oh, what a sell!"

"I guess they can't keep me a prisoner," said Fisher T. Fish. "I'm a neutral. They can't keep an American citizen prisoner."

"Bet you they will, all the same," said Squiff, "and serve you jolly well right."

"I guess I'll let our Ambassador in Berlin know all about it!"

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"If they let you, you silly ass!"

"What can they want us for?" said Wharton, in perplexity. "Hang them! How the rotten thing's jolting! We must be over the sea now. I almost wish it would fall."

"I guess we should get wet if it did," said Fisher T. Fish.

Bob Cherry hammered on the door. For some time no notice was taken, but at last the door slid back, and Captain Von Krook appeared. He was smiling, evidently in a state of the greatest satisfaction.

"Do not be alarmed, my children," he said. "There is no danger for you. You are afraid that you will fall—hein?"

"We're not afraid of falling," said Harry. "I suppose you wouldn't have started if it hadn't been safe. But why are you taking us away? We're not any use to you as prisoners, I suppose?"

"Nein, nein! But there is no help for it," said the German captain. "I would willingly have left you on the hill. I do not desire to take you with me. But it is yourselves that you must thank. You came where you were not wanted, and you must pay the penalty. But have no fear, you will not be hurt. You will simply be detained in the camp with other civilians till the end of the war."

"Two or three years, perhaps," exclaimed Bob Cherry.

The captain shrugged his shoulders.

"It is your own fault," he said. "You know too much, mein kind. It would have been better for you to stay in your school, and not to poke the nose where you had no concern."

"But why?" said Harry, "why should you take us with you? Can't you tell us that, sir?"

"You know too much—that is the reason."

A light dawned on Wharton's mind.

"Oh, my hat!" he exclaimed. "You mean, you may use the pike for a resting-place another time, and you want it kept secret that you stayed there."

"Now you understand," smiled the captain.

"But we shall be missed!" exclaimed Squiff. "There were two chaps coming up with us, and they went back half-way. They knew what we expected to find on the pike. When we don't come back, they'll tell everybody. They've told already, in fact."

The German frowned for a moment.

"These friends of yours—they did not see my airship?"

"No. But they knew we expected—that we supposed, anyway—"

"It matters not. What you supposed is not, as you say in English law, evidence," said Captain von Krook, smiling. "If these boys tell their story, people will not easily believe that a Zeppelin has rested on the hill for a whole day—hein? They cannot say that they have seen it. As for your disappearance, there are so many chasms and pits in the hill, you will be supposed to have fallen into some of them. That has happened before, and all the bodies have not been found. You see that I know as much of your hill as you know yourselves. We are very well informed in our country. I shall see that instructions are given that you are not allowed to write letters while you are prisoners in Germany."

"Then our people will think that we are dead!" said Harry.

"I am sorry. War is war, and it cannot be helped," said the captain. "Even if, as you hope, perhaps, my little secret cannot be kept, it is too late now to land you. We are twenty miles out over the North Sea."

The utter dismay in the juniors' faces seemed to move the German captain a little. His manner was very kindly.

"I am sorry for you," he said. "but it is your own fault. Listen to me. By coming to look for my ship, you were, in fact, taking part in the war, which is not permitted for civilians. I should be justified in having you shot for that reason. Many German officers would shoot you without compunction for having acted as scouts for our enemies—for that is what you intended, as you have admitted. You get off very cheaply if you are only taken prisoners."

The juniors were silent. There was certainly something in what the German captain stated. It was

undoubtedly the case that many officers of the Kaiser would have taken their lives without a moment's compunction. It was curious enough to meet with mercy at the hands of the commander who had rained bombs on sleeping villages. But human nature is full of strange contradictions—especially German nature.

"But I guess I'm a neutral," said Fisher T. Fish at last feebly. "You can't make a neutral citizen a prisoner."

"Necessity knows no law," said Captain von Krook. "If you are an American, I am sorry to make you a prisoner. But war is war. But do not be afraid. None of you shall be hurt."

"We are not afraid," said Harry. "But—well, I suppose you've treated us as decently as we could expect, and—and I suppose we ought to thank you."

The German smiled.

"You are going back to Germany now?"

"Yes; if my engines hold out. There was a bad hit last night from the guns on the shore. It is patched up. If there is engine trouble, however, I shall make for the German lines in Belgium, as the nearest place to land in safety. But then I shall have to pass over the British lines."

"Then we may be fired at?"

"Quite possible. But your countrymen are bad shots," said the German, smiling. "Do not have any fear; they will not hit us. You may sleep in peace. I will send you some blankets. But you cannot expect comfort here."

"We sha'n't sleep, anyway," said Harry, "but we'd be glad of the blankets; it's cold. I—I suppose you won't let us come out of this little box?"

"You would be in the way. But if you like to see where we are going you may." The German bent and moved one of the metal plates of the floor, and disclosed a thick sheet of glass, protected by wire-netting. "Look! You can see far below from this. If we are fired at it will be covered, but now you may see."

"Thank you, sir!"

The captain retired, and a few minutes later blankets were brought into the cell. Then the door was closed and fastened.

The juniors could not help feeling something like gratitude towards the German commander. Utterly brutal and merciless as his methods of warfare were, in that he was carrying out the orders of his savage superiors in Berlin, the man himself seemed to be kindly in his nature. Yet they knew that, if policy had demanded it, he would have had all four of them pitched into the sea without a moment's hesitation. His nature was typical of that of the German nation—originally kindly and even sentimental, but capable of the most hideous atrocities in the excitement of war and the lust of conquest.

"Might have been worse off," said Bob Cherry at last, with an attempt at philosophy. "Some of the German officers would have shot us out of hand—some of them blighters in Belgium, for instance."

"Not a bad sort!" said Squiff. "I'm jolly glad to be able to see where we're going, anyway."

The juniors bent down round the circular glass plate. Below them was utter darkness, but every now and then they caught a white gleam, the froth of a leaping wave. They were speeding away over the North Sea, eastwards. The Zeppelin was making a good speed, and keeping on an unchanging course, in spite of the wind that was blowing hard.

Though they were now in the small hours of the morning, the juniors felt little inclined for sleep. No one came to the cell; the airship crew were busy, and the captain probably had his hands full. They understood that Captain von Krook had plenty of anxieties just then. If the damage to the airship prevented him from making the long journey back to Germany, his only chance of safety was to head for the German lines in Belgium. And between him and those lines lay the lines of the Allies—hundreds of thousands of British and French troops.

And there aeroplanes by the score scouted in the sky, and anti-aircraft guns were to be feared. And if the Zeppelin did not succeed in attaining safety before dawn she would be seen, and Captain von Krook would have to run the gauntlet. Whether they would have preferred

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the airship to be shot down or to escape the juniors hardly knew. If it was shot down, it meant almost certain death for everyone aboard, including themselves. But their wishes had no influence on the course of events; they could only wait and watch.

They rolled themselves in the blankets at last and slept. They were thoroughly tired, and, in spite of their anxieties, and the throbbing of the airship, they slept soundly enough.

Bob Cherry suddenly awakened, with a distant booming in his ears.

He started up.

The electric light was no longer burning in the cell, but through the glass plate in the floor came a glimmer of light.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

It was the sound of cannon—of heavy firing.

"Wake up!" exclaimed Bob.

The juniors started up, rubbing their heavy eyes.

"What the dickens—" mumbled Squiff.

"It's dawn," said Bob, "and they're firing at us. We must be over the land—over the British lines! My hat, what a go!"

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Fall of the Zeppelin!

BOOM! Boom! Boom!

The heavy roar of artillery came clearly to the ears of the juniors.

They were wide awake now in a moment. The roar of the cannon was growing louder. They gathered round the circular glass and gazed downward.

The airship was below the clouds. Dimly below, in the dawning light, they caught glimpses of trees, houses, fields, and moving figures that looked like ants. But they were not ants; they were men in khaki. They saw puffs of white smoke that curled upward from guns trained with their muzzles to the sky. They did not need telling what that meant. Anti-aircraft guns were firing at the Zeppelin. They were over the British lines in Flanders, and the airship had been seen and attacked from below.

A falling object whizzed from under the airship and vanished in rapid flight. The juniors, gazing below, saw a cloud of smoke rise, and a muffled explosion followed. It was a bomb that had been dropped.

Their hearts thumped with excitement.

It was clear that Captain von Krook had found engine trouble, and that he had been compelled to steer the Zeppelin on the shortest route to safety to avoid sinking down to death in the waters of the North Sea.

In the black hours of the night the Zeppelin had crossed the narrow sea, and had reached the coast of France, and sped on over the British lines towards Belgium. But all the speed that could be exerted had failed to bring her to the German lines before dawn. The rising sun found the Zeppelin still over the British lines. Huge shells were soaring upward from the great guns.

"Why don't they rise higher?" muttered Bob. "We're well within range."

"Can't, I suppose," said Harry. "There's been damage done. May have been hit again while we've been asleep. My hat! If one of those shells hits us fair and square!"

"Yow! Shut up!" groaned Fisher T. Fish. "I guess I'm not ready to pass in my checks just yet. Oh, the mugwumps, to have the cheek to bring a neutral into this!"

Wharton set his teeth.

"I jolly well hope they'll be hit! Whatever happens to us, it will be a jolly good thing if this nest of murderers is wiped out."

Crash!

A shell had exploded close to the sailing airship. The whole fabric reeled and trembled from the shock, and the juniors felt the floor slant under their feet. It was not a "fair and square" hit, or the Zeppelin would have -not downwards like a stone. But the craft had been hurt. By the moving objects below, the juniors knew

NEXT MONDAY—OUR GRAND EASTER DOUBLE NUMBER! ORDER TO-DAY.

that the pace had slackened. The airship was trembling and "wobbling."

"Oh, crumbs! Are we going down?" muttered Bob.

"Oh, Jerusalem!"

The door of the cell slid back, and a German came in. His face was furious. He hurled the juniors savagely aside and closed the metal plate in the floor. Then he tramped out of the cell without a word, and closed the door again.

The view was shut off now. The juniors were in complete darkness. But they could still hear the booming of the guns and feel the trembling of the airship.

But the Zeppelin was still moving onward—onward towards the German lines, though how near or how distant those lines were the juniors could not guess.

Crash, crash, crash! came from the darkness about them.

The airship shivered.

Harry Wharton & Co. were silent. Instant death hovered over them; at any second now they knew the end might come.

There was a sudden gleam of light in the darkness. They stared and blinked dazedly—it was daylight! A huge fragment had been ripped away from the side of the craft, and there was an opening in the cell large enough for one of them to get through. A deep groan came from Fisher T. Fish.

"Good heavens! Fishy, are you hit?"

"Yep! Ow!"

The juniors gathered round the Yankee schoolboy. There was plenty of light now. Fisher T. Fish sat on the floor groaning, with blood running down his face. Wharton looked anxiously at his injury, and then uttered an exclamation of impatience.

"You silly ass, it's only a scratch!"

Fish rubbed his head dazedly.

"Ow! It hurts! Sure my blessed cabeza isn't knocked right off?" he asked anxiously.

"Oh, go and eat cake!"

A splinter had cut a gash on the Yankee junior's forehead, but it was only a scratch. The other fellows had not been hit. But there was little comfort in that, for destruction was hovering over them.

Boom, boom, boom!

They looked with bated breath through the gap in the side. The airship was reeling drunkenly, but still kept on. Captain von Krook evidently preferred death to surrender. He did not intend to descend in the British lines and yield up his airship. If the Zeppelin descended it would be in fragments. With desperate courage the air-raiders were prepared to play the game out to the bitter end.

Boom, boom! Crash!

Shells were bursting round the Zeppelin. In the distance the juniors caught sight of a circling aeroplane, evidently preparing to attack.

"It's a case of 'save us from our friends!'" growled Squiff.

"We've got to take our chance," said Harry quietly. "It's their business to bring this brute down, if it were crammed with prisoners."

"Oh, Jerusalem! I guess they've no right to fire on a neutral!"

"Oh, shut up!"

Boom, boom, boom!

The cannonading seemed to be growing fainter. Was the Zeppelin passing beyond the lines of the British? Landing in the German lines meant life instead of death, perhaps; yet the juniors were conscious of a fierce disappointment at the escape of the Zeppelin.

There was a crackle of rifle-fire below now, it came from trenches. The juniors guessed that they were passing over the most advanced British trenches, and that they were very near to the enemy now. But the Zeppelin was sagging drunkenly, and sinking. The earth seemed to have rushed up to greet them. They could make out the forms of the muddy, unshaven men in the trenches who were blazing away skyward. They heard bullets pattering like hail on the fabric of the airship.

But the pattering ceased, the rifle-fire died away behind. Doomed to fall as she was, the Zeppelin was fighting for every inch, as it were—struggling like a wounded bird. As she rolled and pitched, the juniors

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had to hold on, or they would have been hurled bodily through the gap yawning in the side.

Below them, now, was a country wasted by war, and deserted. Houses burned down, farm buildings shattered and scarred, fields torn in huge chasms by the bursting of shells. Here and there a dead man lying stiff and stark, in the grey of the German or the khaki of the Briton. On a road that was shattered by shells, they sighted a wounded horse, kicking feebly, in a pool of blood and mud.

They were over the "debatable land" that lay between the two armies, where miserable peasants still lurked amid the ruins of their homes, desperate and famished. A town that seemed little more than a heap of scarred ruins came into sight; a village glided below, piled in hideous wreck. Amid the ruins of the village cottages dead men lay like cut corn; it was clear that that spot had witnessed a fearful struggle. Death had reaped a rich harvest of the bravest.

The juniors' faces were pale now. It was their first sight of the horrors of war. This was what invasion meant—this! And this was what threatened their own fair land of England, if the "thin khaki line" failed to stem the German torrent.

From the distance there came still the boom of cannon—from every direction, as it seemed. Heavy artillery on both sides was thundering—German and British and French guns, adding, at long range, to the harvest of death.

The Zeppelin gave a kind of convulsive shudder—the end was at hand. Beyond the firing now, but not yet in the German lines. In a field where the signs of war lay thick, in torn earth, shattered sheds, and desolation, the airship settled down.

"We shall be on the ground in a minute or two," said Harry Wharton, in a low voice. "The craft won't land, it will bump. There'll be a wreck."

"Looks like it."

"Jump when we're near enough," said Harry. "If we get to the ground with whole limbs, we'll bolt for it."

"I—I guess they'll fire after us," muttered Fish, through his chattering teeth.

"They'll be too busy to think of us, with their rotten airship smashing up round their ears," said Harry. "But we'll chance it. You fellows game?"

"Yes, rather!"

"I—I guess—"

"You can do as you like, Fishy; we're going to bolt."

"I reckon I'll vamoose along with you."

"Look out, she's going!" gasped Bob.

The airship took a sudden plunge downwards, head-foremost. Crash went the Zeppelin into a mass of trees. She turned sideways, and crash on crash followed. Loud yells and shrieks could be heard from the German crew. The juniors had no chance to jump. They were hurled over by the shock, and, for a minute or two, they rolled over one another in blind confusion, not knowing what was happening.

Wharton dragged himself up. The Zeppelin was on her side, smashed, and wreckage surrounded them; but gaps yawned on all sides.

Crash!

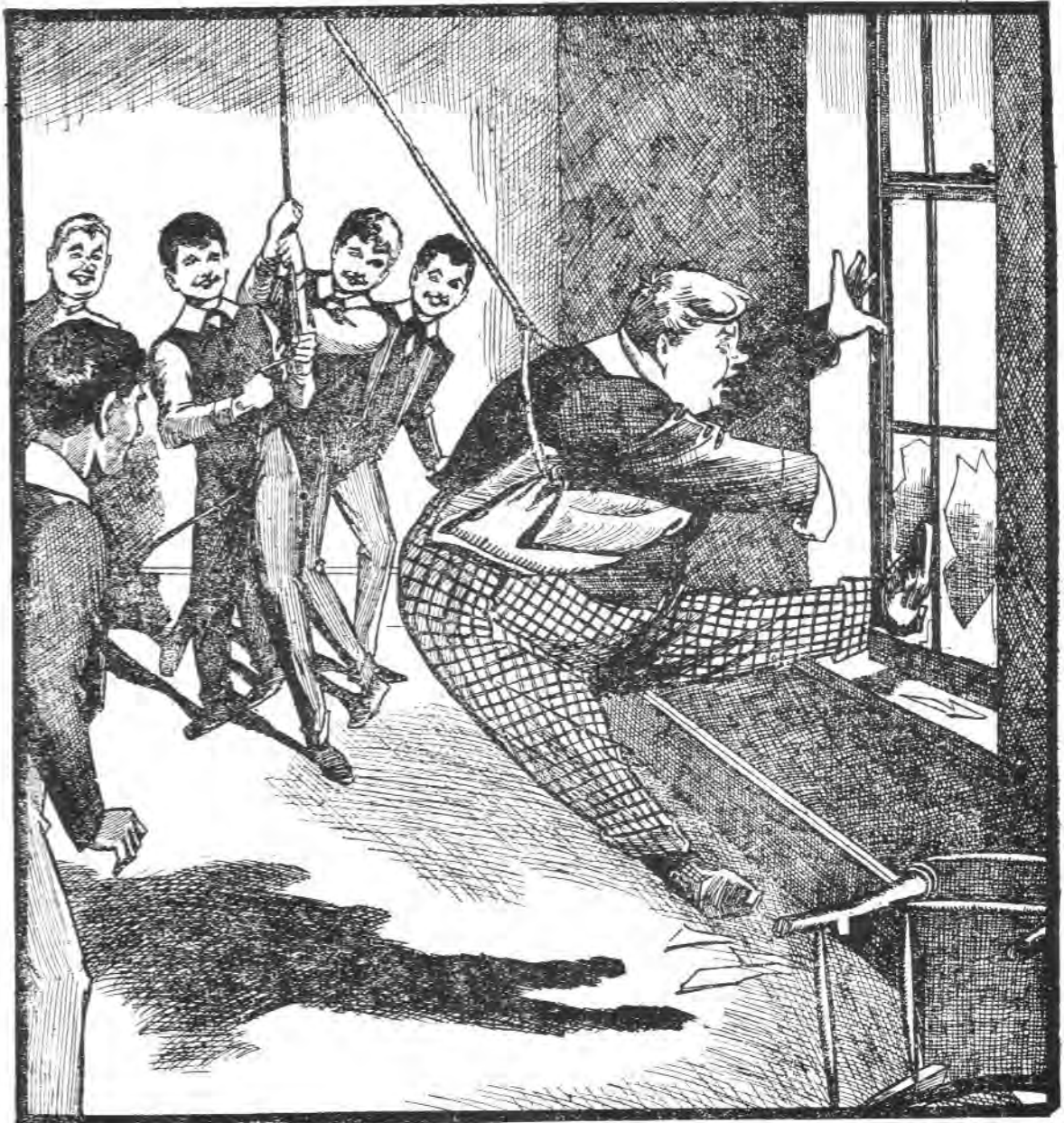
Wild shrieks rang in their ears from the German crew. A shell had pitched near the stranded airship and burst. Through the gaps in the broken side the juniors could see the airship crew—or what was left of them—running. They caught sight of Captain von Krook; he was dashing across the field among his men. The wreck of the Zeppelin was abandoned.

Crash!

It was another bursting shell.

"They're firing on us from somewhere!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Let's get out of this!"

They dragged themselves through the openings, and rolled in the field. Not an instant was lost: they knew that the next shell might finish the airship and themselves along with it. Not knowing whither they went, they picked themselves up and ran. Breathlessly, as fast as their legs could carry them, they dashed away, while behind them sounded crash on crash, as the shells, with the range correct at last, piled on the stranded airship and reduced it to splinters.



"I—I say, you fellows——" gasped Bunter. Back he swung to the window, and there was another crash as his foot went through a second pane. The juniors were yelling with laughter, and Billy Bunter was yelling to be let down. (For this screamingly funny incident you should read "THE GREYFRIARS REVELLERS!" the magnificent long complete 22,000-word story of Harry Wharton & Co., contained in our new companion paper "The Dreadnought" now on sale price one penny.)

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Red War!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. scrambled on blindly, only intent upon putting a greater distance between themselves and the field where the shells were bursting. Captain von Krook and his men had vanished, whither they did not know or care. The Germans were running for their lives, and had no time to trouble their heads about the juniors.

It was doubtful if they could get away as it was. But the juniors did not think of them. The bursting shells behind them gave them plenty to think of. Not till they were past the crest of a rise in the ground did they

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pause to take breath. There they were safe for the moment, at least.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Bob Cherry, as he halted, panting in breath. "That's done it. Out of the giddy frying-pan into the blessed fire! Ow!"

"A close shave, if you like," said Squiff. "But where the thunder are we now?"

"In the mud, anyway," said Wharton.

The juniors looked round them breathlessly. They were in a little hollow between two hillocks, where the mud was knee-deep. Shells were flying overhead, and bursting with incessant crashes. There was no one in sight, with the exception of a figure in grey that lay

half-buried in the mud. It was a dead German soldier, and they turned their eyes away from the still form in horror.

Where they were there was no guessing. Somewhere on the debated ground between the two armies, over which the shells rained from either side. Some of the big guns were firing from a distance of miles, some were closer at hand, as the reports showed.

The airship that had brought them there had sailed on its last mission of murder. Evidently the British gunners in the distance had seen it fall, too far outside the British lines to be captured. Guns had been turned on it, and the shells were knocking the fabric to fragments. If the gunners had found the range a little more quickly, not a soul would have quitted the Zeppelin alive. As it was, the juniors had had time to get clear, and most of the German crew.

"No good sticking here," said Harry Wharton, after a long pause. "We're away from those beasts now, that's something. We've got to try to find our way to the British lines somehow."

"Which direction?" asked Bob Cherry, with a faint grin.

"Blessed if I know!"

"Same here, old scout. If we show ourselves over the rise there we may be potted by either side."

"Let's keep along the hollow, and see what we shall see," suggested Squiff.

The juniors proceeded along the hollow, dragging their legs through the deep mud. They could see that the hollow had been flooded recently, and the mud was more than a foot deep and very wet. There had been fighting there, too. Khaki caps could be seen where they had fallen, broken rifles and spent cartridges. They passed another body that was nearly hidden in the mud, only an arm and a shoulder emerging into view. Keeping their eyes well about them, they came into a rutty, muddy lane, where a peasant cart, smashed by a shell, lay on its side, with the dead body of its owner beside it—a grim-faced Flemish peasant, whose ragged blouse was drenched with blood.

Crack!

It was a sudden rifle-shot close at hand. Bob Cherry's cap went spinning from his head. The juniors spun round. On the other side of the overturned cart a German infantryman was kneeling, with a rifle to his shoulder. Even as they caught sight of his fierce, savage face, he fired again, and they broke into a run down the lane. The bullet whistled by. They dashed down the lane as fast as the mud would allow, panting. Another bullet flew after them, and tore leaves from a ragged bush close at hand.

They ran on as hard as they could go. It was a "sniper" that they had come upon, and the German sniper was not particular as to his victims. Doubtless he had recognised them as English from their looks.

They stopped again, out of breath. Bob Cherry felt his head. The bullet that had knocked away his cap had grazed the skin. He had been within an ace of a terrible death.

"I guess the jig is up!" groaned Fisher T. Fish. "What filthy galoots to shoot at us! What do they want to put us for?"

"Some of them would be glad to pot anything English," said Harry. "They might take us for spies, too; they couldn't guess how we got here. The brutes shoot the peasants sometimes for nothing."

"We seem to be nearer the Germans than the British," said Squiff. "If we could find a native, we might get news of where we are and find our way. Oh, my hat! It's all up!"

From a half-ruined farmhouse in a field close at hand three Germans suddenly appeared—an officer and two troopers. They came at a run towards the juniors. It was useless to bolt; the rifles were ready to shoot them down. With pale faces and thumping hearts, the juniors waited for the trio to reach them. The officer—a lieutenant, with a heavy, brutal face—rapped out a question in German as he came up. Then, without waiting for a reply, he went on in English:

"You are Englishers?"

"Yes," said Harry; "we came here—"

"Spies!"

"We are not spies," exclaimed Wharton indignantly; "we are schoolboys! We came here by accident!"

"Mein Gott! You shall see how spies of your accursed nation are treated here!" roared the German.

He made a sign to the two troopers. They raised their rifles.

The juniors stood frozen with horror. They had no mercy to expect. This was a German officer of a type different from Captain von Krook. The ruffian had ordered them to be shot down in cold blood.

Crack!

The report of a rifle rang out from a clump of trees at a distance. One of the German soldiers pitched over on his face, with a groan. The other stared round him, forgetting the juniors in his alarm. But before he could locate the puff of smoke from the trees the hidden rifle sounded again, and he pitched over like his comrade. The officer, uttering fierce curses, was already speeding back to the cover of the farmhouse.

The juniors stood as if transfixed. The second soldier who had fallen was not dead; he was writhing in the mud, with deep groans. The lieutenant had vanished into the farmhouse. Half expecting that the next bullet would strike among them, the juniors stood dazedly. But another bullet did not come. They realised that it must have been a British sniper who had spotted the Germans and picked them off. They looked round dazedly for him, but they could see no one. He was still in his place of concealment, several hundred yards away, watching for another chance at the Germans. The groans of the fallen man died away, and he lay stiffly in the mud.

"Let's get out of this!" panted Wharton.

They tramped hurriedly down the lane, with little hope of emerging alive from that charnel-house. At any step they might have been met by the bullets of a German sniper. And overhead every moment the great shells were roaring and bursting. Their narrow escape from instant death had had almost a stunning effect upon them.

They tramped on blindly. A village, with half its buildings shattered by shell-fire, came in sight, amid ragged trees and desolated fields. The juniors tramped into the torn, shattered street, half expecting to be greeted by murderous fire. But the village seemed deserted. The inhabitants had deserted their homes, joining in the stream of hapless refugees driven before the red tide of war.

The aspect of the village street was terrible. There had been a recent struggle there. Rifles and bayonets and spent cartridges littered the ground, and dead bodies lay in all directions, some in khaki, some in grey. But the juniors were getting used to horrors now; they hardly glanced at the dead men sprawling in the mud.

This was war! Was it only yesterday that they had been in the quiet old Close of Grefrriers, safe and careless? This was what had been going on for months, while they were safe at home. And now they were in the midst of it. They looked about them desperately as they passed down the shattered street. In one place the dead lay so thick that they had to tramp over the bodies. The village inn, half in ruins, met their gaze, and Wharton led the way into it, as he saw someone moving within. An old Belgian peasant, in rags and tatters, with a bandage across his forehead, fixed terrified eyes on them. He seemed to be the only inhabitant left in the desolated place.

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"Nous sommes amis, Anglais!" exclaimed Wharton, in his best French.

The old peasant's face brightened up.

"Les Anglais!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said Harry, still speaking French. "Don't be alarmed. We are trying to get away from the Germans. What is the name of this place?"

The old man stammered out that it was the village of Mun, eight kilometres—or five miles—from Ypres. In trembling accents he told them of what had happened there the previous day—a fierce struggle between British and Germans, and the flight of the inhabitants who had remained until then. He had stayed. He was the inn-keeper; he had taken his chance. The British had fallen back, but their artillery had driven the Germans out of the village. But the old man was in momentary expectation of their return to resume possession of it. He had been hiding in a cellar, and had come up to look out, when the juniors arrived.

"What the thunder are we to do?" said Squiff. "If we stay here the brutes may be on us any minute; if we start looking for the British we shall be shot down by their snipers. Look here, let's stay and have something to eat, and hope for a British advance. If this old chap has been hiding in the cellar we can hide there, too."

"I'll ask him," said Harry.

Before he could speak, however, there came a sudden shout from the street. There was a tramp of feet, and wild, hoarse voices yelling "Hoch—hoch!"

"Les Bosches!" gasped the old Belgian.

He made a dive for the narrow, rickety stairs leading to the cellars. The juniors dived after him. They had already learned what to expect from the Germans— instant execution. They rushed down into the cellar—a narrow, dark hole, with brick walls and earthen floor. The old man hardly seemed to see them, so great was his terror. He fell upon his knees in a corner of the cellar, clasping his hands, and they heard him praying in his own language. Wharton closed the rickety door. A trampling of feet and a roar of hoarse voices above showed that the Germans were in the building.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

"Here We Are Again!"

THE juniors listened.

The half-ruined inn above them was crammed with Germans. They had advanced once more to take possession of the abandoned village, and were preparing to hold it against a British attack.

"If they come down here!" muttered Bob.

"They may come looking for wine; they're drunken brutes," said Squiff. "Let's get out of sight. Look here!"

At the further end of the cellar was a dark cavity, evidently a coal-hole, though there was no coal in it now. Wharton touched the kneeling old man on the shoulder, and pointed to the dark recess. But the old man did not move. He was mastered by his fears, and he continued to pray, insensible to his surroundings. There were already heavy steps on the rickety stairs. The juniors plunged into the blackness of the little cellar, down a couple of steps. The Germans were not likely to search it, unless they suspected that fugitives were hidden there. Crouching, almost holding their breath, in the intense darkness, the juniors heard the door of the wine-cellar open, and caught the glimmer of a lamp held up by a German soldier. The wine-cellar was soon full of rummaging Germans, but they did not trouble to look into the black den where the juniors were crouched with palpitating hearts.

A roar of laughter greeted the discovery of the old Belgian on his knees in the corner. The juniors heard the sound of blows and the cries of the old man as he was driven out of the cellar and up the stairs. For a quarter of an hour the wine-cellar swarmed with Germans, within a dozen feet of the hidden juniors. Then they departed, having taken, apparently, the supply of wine they had come for.

The juniors remained where they were. They listened to the trampling above, and wondered what had become of the old Belgian. The Germans had driven him out of the inn, to wander among the desolated fields, to be shot, perhaps, by some more brutal Hun in the street.

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The sound of rifle-fire close at hand crackled through the air. There was a renewed trampling and shouting, and then silence above. The Germans had quitted the inn. But fighting was going on close at hand; the juniors could hear the cracking of rifles, the yells and shouts of combatants. The British were attacking again, and the struggle for the shattered village was renewed. They crept back into the wine-cellar, and listened, with beating hearts, to the sounds of conflict.

The sounds died further away. The attack had been repulsed. Again there was a trampling overhead. But the crash of bursting shells followed, and once more the inn was deserted.

Crash! Crash! Crash!

The bursting of the shells, the crash of falling buildings, made a deafening uproar. It was a continuous thunder without a moment's cessation. The British were shelling the village, while it was held by the Germans. But at last the thunderous roar died down. The shell-fire had driven the Germans from the place once again; for the moment, at least. Shells continued to fall, but at intervals—the Germans were gone.

A loud crash above almost stunned the juniors' ears—the building was coming down over their heads.

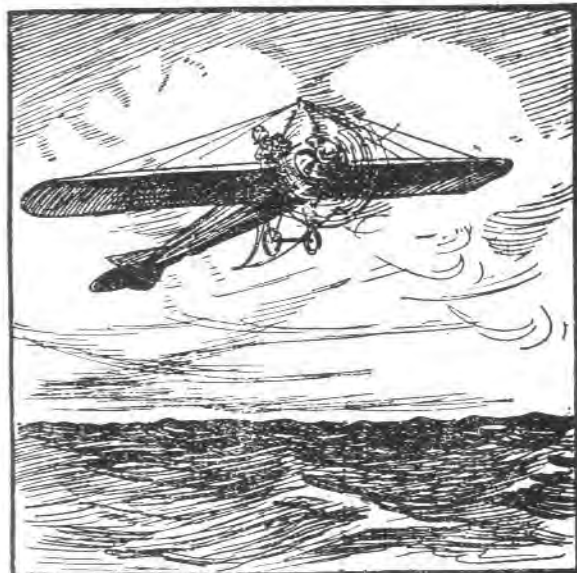
"Let's get out," said Wharton desperately. "We may be buried alive here!"

They scrambled up the stairs. The inn lay in shattered ruins; hardly a wall was left standing. Outside, there were fresh bodies added to the scene of slaughter. The Huns had lost heavily before they had retreated. The juniors picked their way out of the ruins; the shells were falling closest round the inn. They hurried down the street amid the dead and wounded. A German machine-gun lay on its side, smashed, with the shattered bodies of the gun-crew round it. A single shell had done the work.

Trampling of feet again, and hoarse voices yelling:

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"Vorwaerts!" The Germans were advancing once more. They were determined to hold the village; probably an important point for checking the advance of the Allies. The shells fell thicker from the distant guns.

"Cover!" panted Harry.

A tumble-down cottage close at hand gave them shelter. It was a miserable hovel, with a single room, and two steps down from the street. The roof was gone, but the walls remained. The juniors hurried into the hovel, and crouched there out of sight. Wharton jammed the half-shattered door shut. With thumping hearts they listened. But the German shouts had died away once more.

Rifle-fire now, as well as the bursting shells, swept the ruined street. Bullets spattered upon the walls of the hovel.

"Better lie low for a bit," said Harry Wharton. "It's rotten luck! We're right in the thick of it."

"I guess this is awful," groaned Fish. "I wish I was back in the Yewntited States, I do. Oh, Jerusalem! Shall I ever see Noo York again?"

"Shall we ever see Greyfriars again?" growled Squiff. "Shut up mumbling, and keep a stiff upper lip."

It was not easy to keep a "stiff upper lip," in the situation the juniors found themselves in. The village was being shattered to splinters by the British artillery. And the moment the fire slackened, they could guess that there would be a German advance on the place. And with the village swarming with Germans once more, the juniors were certain to be discovered, and then—

"If the British would only come!" groaned Bob.

The minutes passed, crammed with horror. Shells were bursting on all sides, and the juniors lay flat on their faces. The noonday sun was streaming down through the roofless hovel. The crackle of rifles, amid the din of the shells, showed that there were infantry close at hand. Whether German or British or French they could not guess.

If the Allies captured the disputed spot, their lives were saved. Otherwise, they knew that they would never see another sun rise.

"The guns have stopped," said Wharton, at last, in a low voice.

The shells had ceased to fall on the village. They were soaring over and beyond it, dropping out of sight.

"Now look out for the Huns!" muttered Squiff.

"Hark!"

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

It was the tread of marching feet in the village street. The juniors crouched low behind the flimsy walls of the hovel.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

A large body of men were advancing into the disputed village—swarms of them—innumerable. Hope died in the breasts of the juniors. Fish gave a low groan. The others were silent. The village was swarming with soldiers now, and discovery could not be long delayed.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

They listened, as if fascinated, to the tread of heavy boots on the cobblestones.

Marching men, by the hundred, by the thousand, closing in on the shattered village that had been disputed so long—won at last.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

"If—if they should be the British," whispered Bob Cherry, with a gleam of hope.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

Then a sudden roar of voices—voices raised in a rousing chorus—voices that sent a thrill of new life to the hearts in which hope had almost died.

"Here we are!
Here we are!
Here we are again!"

British voices, roaring the triumphant chorus. The juniors sprang to their feet. It was their own countrymen who were marching in—British soldiers, whose steady tramp rang on the cobbles.

"Here we are!
Here we are!
Here we are again!"

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"Hurrah!"

"The British!" gasped Wharton. "Oh, what luck! Our men—our men! Hurrah!"

"Hip, hip, hurrah!" roared Bob Cherry, in a frenzy of delight.

His shout reached the street. The door was kicked open. A man of khaki looked in, with his bayonet at the ready.

"Got the thunder!" said the man in khaki. "Who are you scarecrows, and what are you doin' 'ere? Now, then, sharp!"

"We're British, and jolly glad to see you," said Harry Wharton. "Hurrah!"

"I guess," said Fisher T. Fish; "I guess I never was so glad in my life to see a gol-darned Britisher! I guess this puts the lid on. Hooray!"

The adventures of the chums of Greyfriars were over, and glad enough they were of it. They had seen more than enough of the war at close quarters. The village had been won, and it was held, by the British. One more point gained in the great advance. And the officer commanding the detachment, after hearing the juniors' story, sent them back to the railway, and the next morning they were in Boulogne, and the Channel steamer bore them back to their native land.

Night was falling when they arrived at Greyfriars. They were expected—the telegraph had preceded them. Nugent and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh almost hugged them as they came in.

"They've been searching the pike for you," said Nugent. "We told Quelch about the Zeppelin, but he persisted that you'd tumbled into a hole or something. And they've been searching."

"The searchfulness was terrific," said Hurree Singh. "But was the esteemed and disgusting Zeppelin there, my noble chums? I guessfully surmised that you had been taken away by the disgusting Germans, but the esteemed Quelch was an unbelieverful Thomas."

"It was there," said Harry Wharton; "and they carried us off in it. And—and we've had the time of our lives; and we don't want to go through it again at any price."

"Where's the Zeppelin now?"

"In Belgium—in bits."

"Oh, good! And where have you been?"

"In the fring-line."

"Oh, my hat! Tell us the yarn—quick!"

But the Head had to be satisfied first. Dr. Locke listened in astonishment to the story they told him, and expressed great relief at their safe return. And the news that the air-raider had been, after all, destroyed, was a source of great satisfaction. When they left the Head's study, the juniors were surrounded by an eager crowd, all athirst for information, and four groups surrounded the four juniors, to hear what they had to tell. Needless to say, Fisher T. Fish's account was the most thrilling of all. And the Yankee junior explained at great length, to an unbelieving crowd, how his presence and example had bucked up the other fellows, and enabled them to keep a stiff upper lip through all their trying experiences.

Now that they were safe home in Greyfriars again, the heroes of the Remove did not regret having gone through their experiences in the fighting-line. But they did not want those experiences to be repeated. They had had quite enough. And the scenes they had witnessed in stricken Belgium remained long graven on their minds—long after their happy return from the hands of the enemy.

THE END.

(Every Magnetite should see that he gets a copy of next week's Grand Easter Double Number, which contains a great 50,000-word story of the chums of Greyfriars, entitled, "THE FALL OF THE FIFTH!" There are also many other fine features. Order now!)

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Sir Richard Battingley, a much-travelled scoundrel, has some mysterious reason for wishing the death of Clive Clare, a handsome and daring circus performer, also known as the King of Equestrians. He, therefore, engages another villain, named Paul Murdway, to compass Clive Clare's death for the sum of ten thousand pounds.

Paul Murdway follows the circus in its wanderings, and, under the name of Adrian Deering, leagues himself with a member of Cyrano's Circus, named Senor Miguel Gurez, a Mexican dead shot, to bring about Clive's death, and arranges that the Mexican shall shoot with a noiseless air-rifle at one of the ropes of a trapeze from which Clive takes a daring leap on to the back of a galloping horse.

This plot fails, but the two villains do not give up their intention of injuring Clive when an opportunity occurs.

Clive Clare one day hears a shriek coming from one of the tents, and finds that Ben Ellis—or, Professor Durnette, the King of Lion Tamers, to give him his stage name—is ill-treating his daughter, May Ellis, a clever equestrienne in the troupe. Clive rushes to her rescue, but finds himself powerless in the man's grasp, and the lion-tamer grips him by the throat and shakes him as a mastiff might shake a greyhound.

(Now go on with the story.)

Clive Clare and Professor Durnette Come to Blows—Sando, the Strong Man, Intervenes—Clive's Promise.

It looked, indeed, as if it would go very hard with Clive Clare, for each moment the other's grip grew tighter, and his aspect more ferocious.

"Hang you!" repeated Durnette. "I'll teach you to interfere with—"

Whatever else he would have said was interrupted, for from out of the tent near which the struggle was taking place there suddenly sprang a broad but agile figure, who seized the arms of the lion-tamer.

And if Clive had seemed to be but a baby in Durnette's clutch, Durnette, in his turn, seemed like a veritable feather in the grip of this new-comer. In a twinkling the tamer's hands were wrenched from the youth's throat, his huge body was seized in a vice-like grip, and a moment later Durnette found himself placed gently but very firmly on his back.

Recovering his breath, Clive Clare turned and faced his rescuer.

"Sando," he exclaimed fervently, putting out his hand, "how can I ever thank you?"

"By saying nothing about it, laddie," replied the Strong Man quietly, "and by avoiding quarrels as much as you can in the future. And, look here, professor," went on Sando, addressing himself to the lion-tamer, who had now managed to scramble to his feet, "you are a big man, you know, and it isn't very creditable in you to tackle a lad."

"He was insolent to me," growled Durnette, rubbing his ribs where Sando had hugged him, "and I won't stand insolence from a cub!"

"H'm!" returned Sando drily. "Still, I should advise you, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 373.

NEXT MONDAY—OUR GRAND EASTER DOUBLE NUMBER! ORDER TO-DAY.

professor, to learn to treat a lad like Clare a little differently from the cubs in the cage yonder."

"I shall do as I choose!" retorted the lion-tamer, still labouring under the influence of liquor.

"You won't if I'm about," Sando said quietly.

At which remark Durnette, remembering the other's mighty power, relapsed into silence, and contented himself with scowling.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen!" remonstrated Mr. Adolph Cyrano, who, with one or two others, now emerged from the tent on hearing the altercation. "And what's the trouble now?" The circus proprietor's plump, beringed hands passed over one another smoothly. "What ever is the matter?"

Neither of the contestants spoke for a moment, but Bononi chipped in:

"It would seem that the tamer of lions and the tamer of lion-tamers have come to words!" observed the melancholy clown.

"I don't want to speak to you!" growled Durnette, turning on Bononi.

"Come away, William!" chimed in Roly-Poly, bursting into a pretended flood of tears. "The gentleman don't want to speak to such as *us*."

"Alas!" said Bononi, with mock grief. "So I perceive. Sir," he went on, turning to Durnette, and bowing very low from the hips till his head almost touched his feet, "allow me to bid you farewell, with the assurance that your wish is heartily reciprocated. Henceforth I shall wear hackcloth and sashes—excuse me, I mean, hashcloths and sackies—and—oh dear me, I can't say it! Say it for me, Roly-Poly!"

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen!" broke in Mr. Cyrano, still rubbing his hands, and still smiling genially all round. "These little differences of opinion are really most regrettable. Come, come, professor, be reasonable! You don't want to quarrel with Mr. Sando, or anybody else. To think that these things should occur in my circus! Here I do everything I can to make everybody comfortable, and turn the whole business into a sort of happy family party, and you, professor—oh dear me!—you try to turn it into a—"

"Family vault!" suggested Roly-Poly. "He tried all he knew to do for Clive Clare."

"Please be serious, Roly," begged Mr. Cyrano.

"Oh, I'm always grave," said Roly-Poly, with a wink, "when I'm chatting about family vaults!"

"Well, well!" said the circus proprietor, ignoring the clown's little joke. "I'm sure the professor will shake hands with Mr. Sando."

"I'm perfectly willing," rejoined the Strong Man cheerfully, stepping forward and extending his hand. "I bear no malice."

"I shouldn't like to be the one you bore it against, if you did!" said Bononi cooly.

"No," agreed Roly-Poly. "If he just took you between his finger and thumb, William, he'd break you in halves like a match."

"And if he got you under the palm of his hand, Josephus," retorted Bononi, "there would be a grease-spot underneath when he removed it."

Very reluctantly the lion-tamer took Sando's proffered hand.

"That's good!" said Cyrano, the peacemaker, rubbing his hands gleefully. "I'm so pleased we're all reconciled once more! Professor, I hope before the show to-night you'll make it up with young Clare in the same way. He's gone now, seemingly, but you'll see him again before the show."

Clive Clare had indeed gone off just as Mr. Cyrano and the others arrived. Not that he was afraid to face it out—there was no question of that sort in his mind—but it was necessary to get May Ellis away from the painful scene, and he had, therefore, strolled with her round the big tent to a place where they were alone.

"Oh, Clive, Clive!" the agitated girl moaned, as she placed a handkerchief to her eyes. "What will happen now?"

"Oh, it's all over now!" Clive answered. "I'm sorry this has occurred; but nothing more will come of it."

"I'm not so sure of that," returned the girl. "You don't know father as I do. He's always good and kind to me when he's sober, but when he is"—she hesitated for the word—"when he is the other way he seems to lose all control of himself."

"Well, he must be taught not to, that's all," said Clive. "How dare he raise his whip to strike you? I'm very glad I arrived just in time."

"Oh, I don't think he would have hurt me much!" said May, striving hard within herself to reconcile the actions of her father with her own conscience, "and I am afraid now that he will dislike you, and will try to keep us apart."

"That he shall never do!" said Clive.

"No!" the girl replied, with a sob. "But he is my father, remember, and to him I owe a duty."

"Which will become less and less," Clive struck in, "the more he forgets his duty to you. Forgive me," he went on, "but I have for some time suspected that he wasn't as kind to you as you always make out."

"Oh, hush, hush!" pleaded the girl, burying her face in her hands.

"No; I'll speak out, May. It is better for you that I should. I have suspected he was something of a brute to you, and now, after what I have seen to-day, I know for certain that he is. As you say, you owe your father a duty. Well, I suppose you do, and until you are twenty-one—which won't be for four years—you will have to bear with him, I suppose; but after that you will be your own mistress."

"Don't talk like that, Clive!" the girl pleaded. "I can't bear to hear you talk in that way. I love my poor father, harsh as he sometimes is. He is not all bad, I assure you. He has been very good to me. It is only since poor mother died, and he took to drinking, that he has changed. Don't speak of him, Clive, as though you hated him. I love my father, and I don't want two people to hate one another. You will try to like him, Clive, and you will make up this quarrel, and be friends?"

Clive hesitated a moment.

"Promise, Clive," said the girl—"promise to make it up, for my sake."

"Yes, I will for your sake," he replied.

Roly-Poly and Joe Bononi Have a Discussion, which, Although Funny, has a Serious Side—How the K-nut Beat the Strong Man.

A week had passed. Between Clive Clare, Sando, and Professor Durnette a reconciliation had been effected, and, to all outward seeming, it appeared for a day or two as if the circus had again returned to its normal state, phrased by Mr. Adolph Cyrano as "a happy family party." That was for the first three days. But then an event occurred which, as far as most of the artistes were concerned, threw them into a state of doubt.

Sando the Strong Man had suddenly and mysteriously disappeared. He had gone out one morning, apparently for his usual training walk, and had not returned all day. The performance that night—and, indeed, all the performances since—had to take place without him. Dando, the remaining Herculean Twin, giving a single-handed exhibition. It really was a very strange affair. Nobody seemed to know much about it. Dando, the missing man's twin-brother, was silent and reserved, and, to all appearances, greatly worried by Sando's unaccountable disappearance. Mr. Adolph Cyrano, the proprietor, also displayed signs of nervousness and annoyance. As for the remainder of the company, they were thrown into a state of apprehension and alarm.

"It's my opinion, Bill," remarked Roly-Poly to his fellow-clown, "that the professor is at the bottom of this business."

"Why, Joe, you don't think that Sando has been kidnapped, do you?" queried Bononi.

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Roly-Poly shook his head doubtfully.

"You see," Bononi went on, "Sando isn't exactly the sort of person a man can take hold of by the coat-collar and hustle away without his knowing it."

"I know that," replied Roly-Poly, somewhat seriously; "but physical strength ain't everything, and, big as Sando's biceps are, they ain't absolute proof against foul play. In an open fight he'd be good enough against half a dozen men—that I grant you. But some people don't go in for fighting openly; and there is such a thing as druggin' a man, or stabbin' him in the back."

"H'm! Then you think Durnette might do that sort of thing?"

"Well, I shouldn't like to say so to anybody else, Bill, because I'm only going on bare suspicion. But Durnette, when I look at his wicked eyes, strikes me as bein' one o' them fellers as would say 'All's fair in hate and war,' and I believe he hates Sando like pison. I know he shook hands with him the other day; but that sort o' reconciliation is like beauty—only skin deep, and I fancy he only did it to please the boss."

"But how could he have got Sando out of the way?" objected Bononi. "It's only man against man, and, powerful as Durnette is, Sando could crumple him up like a bit of touchwood."

"There you go agen, Bill—always thinkin' about physical force. But there's summat else at work in this show besides physical force. There's brains at work, and wicked brains at that. It seems to me as there's a sort of a—a—what shall I call it?—a conspiracy, if you like—against young Clive Clare. Durnette hates him for what he did the other day, and then there's Gurez got nothin' for the lad but scowls and growls and wicked looks. And—and—well, there's another."

"Another! And who is the other, Joe?"

"Well, Bill, what d'you make o' that cove Deering—Mister Adrian Deering? What's he doin' about here? What's he followin' in our footsteps for? If you remember, he come to the show by accident when he was at Abbeyford. That's a week ago, and he's bin with us ever since—followed us to Market Eastney and to Barcot, and now to-day I spotted him here in Dulbury. What's his little game, I asks? He seems to be a toff with no end o' money, swaggin' about at the best hotels. But why's he follerin' Cyrano's show? And why's he so uncommon thick with Gurez and Durnette?"

"You question me in riddles, oh, my friend!" replied Bononi.

"Well, I can answer it partly myself," continued Roly-Poly, his plump cheeks getting hot and red with the intensity of his feeling. "It's my opinion Deering's after Miss May herself, and consequently he's agen Clive."

"Well, Joe," returned the other, "there is nothing alarmin' in that. He's not the first by many a score who, havin' seen Miss May Ellis, has fallen in love with her. Could we, friend Joseph, but take a careful census, we should find that about ninety-nine per cent. of the male visitors to our royal cirque and imperial hippodrome tumble head over heels in love with our beauteous queen of equestriennes, just as ninety-nine per cent. of the female visitors thereto fall madly, desperately, hopelessly in love with the great and world-renowned emperor of jesters—the one and only Bononi!"

Roly-Poly broke into a fit of unctuous laughter.

"I like that!" he observed incredulously. "Ladies fall in love with you? Oh, William, you surprise me!"

"Joseph," said the other severely, "I ignore your innuendo, but beg to assure you that I am the shrine at which thousands of the fair sex worship in secret."

"William, I can only repeat that you surprise me."

"Ah, I do! Well, I cannot help it. My face, you know, and my figure, you know. Nature has indeed endowed me richly with her gifts!"

"Ha, ha! He, he! likewise ho, ho!" irreverently laughed Roly-Poly, and, slinging a bundle of clown's clothing at his colleague, added:

"Get your noble figger into them!"

"Avant, little fat man!" rejoined Bononi; "but don't avant with my make-up box."

It was time to dress for the evening performance by now, and the two clowns, who had carried on the foregoing conversation in the dressing-tent, proceeded to adorn themselves.

As usual, Cyrano's "galaxy of talent" attracted a huge audience. In addition to the cheaper seats, the reserved portions of the auditorium were filled with the well-to-do professional people and gentry of Dulbury and its neighbourhood. Every item of the really admirable show was applauded to the echo. Roly-Poly and Bononi got innumerable laughs at their sallies, while Clive Clare and May Ellis were more brilliant than ever, and were applauded with a vigour that would have gratified the most exacting.

The Strong Man turn was now due, and Dando, attired in

THE DREADNOUGHT, THE FENNY POPULAR, CHUCKLES, 14 Every Thursday, Every Friday, Every Saturday. 2

pink fleshings, which displayed his superb muscular development to perfection, came into the ring and went through his preliminary acrobatic performance—his "muscle-stretcher" he always called it—after which Mr. Patross, the ringmaster, made his customary announcement regarding the feats of strength which were to follow. This announcement, which was made mightily, consisted of an enumeration of the feats about to be performed, and concluded with the following challenge:

"Signor Dando, ladies and gentlemen, claims to be the strongest man in the world. On various occasions he has competed with and vanquished many so-called strong men. He is willing to uphold his title as the strongest of all strong men by throwing out a challenge to the world. Signor Dando will now perform several wonderful feats of strength; and, with the concurrence of Mr. Adolph Cyrano, will present a cheque, value fifty pounds, to any man performing similar feats in this ring."

After this quite serious announcement it was Roly-Poly's invariable custom to step forward and, imitating the ringmaster, supplement the latter's announcement somewhat in this style:

"One important omission I am requested to make good. In issuing the challenge, Mr. Patross used the words 'any man.' What I have to say is, that the challenge extends to any woman or child!"

"Yes; let 'em all come!" chipped in Bononi.

"Further," added Roly-Poly, with the utmost gravity, and slowly drawing up his right arm, beneath the sleeve of which he had concealed a huge pad, in imitation of a flexed bicep—"further, I beg to inform you that I myself am barred on account of this." He indicated the bogus bicep. "As for this person"—indicating Bononi, who was staring in mock amazement at Roly-Poly's dummy muscle—"he also is barred, the challenge applying to man, and not to monkeys!"

With which remark Roly-Poly made a profound obeisance, and, stalking round the ring with ludicrous dignity, displayed his huge right arm, the pad of which presently slipped round to the back, amid much merriment.

"Triceps as well, you see, of the same prime quality!" observed Roly-Poly, creating another roar, which, having subsided, Dando proceeded with his programme.

Having executed several tremendous feats, he was suddenly interrupted by a small, squeaky voice from one of the reserved seats, demanding a word with the "haw-haw pwpwietah."

Mr. Patross, the ringmaster, looked round.

"Yes, sir," he said, in surprise, advancing a little to where the voice came from. "The proprietor is not here just now. Can I do anything for you, sir?"

"Well," went on the squeaky voice, "I—I want to know if I should get that fifty pounds for doing what that Johnnie in the wing has just done? Should I be allowed to compete?"

Mr. Patross grew more surprised than ever.

"Oh, yes," he said, "I'm sure you're welcome to try, sir," he answered, with difficulty suppressing a smile. "The challenge is open to the whole world."

"Then I—I'd like to have a shot, doncherknow!" observed the young gentleman in the audience. As he spoke he stepped down from his seat, and very awkwardly clambered over the low partition into the ring.

A loud roar of laughter greeted his appearance, as well it might. The very nature of the challenge demanded that the acceptor should at any rate be a powerful man, whereas the young gentleman who on this night had taken up the gaze was quite a slim-looking youth, with sloping shoulders, slight, fair moustache, an eyeglass, a very shiny tall hat, and a cane whose gold knob he energetically sucked. From the top of his tall hat to the sole of his spick-and-span patent-leather shoes he was a k-nut of k-nuts. No wonder, then, that the audience laughed, for in the contest about to take place they anticipated considerable merriment.

At the invitation of Mr. Patross, the gorgeous young man removed his hat, placed it with his walking-stick on the ground, and approached the ponderous-looking weights which he was going to try to lift.

"Won't you take off your coat, sir?" inquired Mr. Patross.

"No-no, I think not. It's such a doosed fag, doncherknow!" replied the other. "Besides, it makes a fellow's shirt so beastly dirty, doncherknow!"

There was another roar of laughter at this, at which the lispng young gentleman looked round in bewilderment.

"Give him the 300-pounder!" roared out a facetious sailor from one of the top seats.

The k-nut caught the remark, and followed it up.

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ONE
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"Yes, give me the doosid 300-pounder!" he demanded, amid a roar of laughter.

Mr. Patross instantly instructed the attendants to roll the huge bar-bell to the middle of the ring.

"E's a-going to lift that!" yelled the sailor. "Mind yer don't hurt yerself an' bust yer collar-button, Dandy! Dando versus Dandy, wet-o'!"

The k-nut regarded the ponderous weight carefully through his eyeglass; then, going on his knees, he tugged and tugged at it till he was apparently blue in the face, without being able to budge it an inch. The laughter was deafening.

"Telet me see you do it first," suddenly interpolated the panting young man.

Dando at once smilingly stepped forward, laid flat on his back, and then, with both hands clutching the great bar-bell, raised it slowly and gracefully above his head.

The young gentleman now started to emulate this feat. Amid loud guffaws and ironical cheers he carefully brushed away the sawdust from the spot where he was about to lie down, and then threw himself awkwardly on his back. His hand, too, clutched the bar, and then—goodness gracious! What was happening? He certainly was—yes, he was lifting the 300lb. bar, and, by Jove, right up, too!"

Yes, he had done it, and, what was more, he was lowering the bar-bell and raising it again. And now, with the ponderous thing raised above his head, he was slowly rising himself into a sitting posture, then forward on to his knees, then—unparalleled exhibition of strength—right on to his feet! And all the time that same nervous, insipid look was on the young man's face, and that same single glass was stuck in his eye.

The audience could not understand it—could scarcely realise it yet. Something must be wrong with the weight, surely? But no; it was solid and genuine enough, for the young gentleman had dropped it with a tremendous thud on to the ground. And then the audience let itself go. No laughter now—all cheers. And nothing ironical about the cheers now—good, genuine British demonstrations of admiration for a great, right-down real, genuine physical feat.

Once more to the thunderstruck audience the young gentleman bowed; then, in the same thin, quavering voice in which he had spoken before, he said:

"Signor Dando, will you kindly permit me?" And, seizing the professional strong man round the waist, he raised him clean above his head, opened his right palm, and held the rigid body of Dando aloft!

The spectators gasped, Bononi gasped, Roly-Poly gasped—everybody seemed to gasp. And then, while still the form of Dando was poised in the air, Mr. Patross, the ringmaster, stepped behind the young man. He touched him between the shoulders, seemed to pull a string, and, lo and behold! there was a transformation.

The faultlessly-cut suit of the young exquisite fell from him as if by magic; the monocle dropped from his eye, the false wig and fair moustache were snatched from him by his own disengaged hand, and there, in all the glory of pink fleshings, stood the twin brother of Dando—Sando himself—the stronger of the two strong men, the man who had been missing from Cyrano's circus for a week!

Yes, Sando it was without a doubt. Finding, a week before, that private business necessitated his presence in London for a few days, Sando had asked Mr. Cyrano's permission to go, and had arranged the scene described above.

"Joseph," remarked the lugubrious Bononi, after the show that night, "you opined earlier on this momentous evening that Professor Durnotte was at the bottom of our worthy and mighty friend Sando's disappearance. You are, I say, a most faulty suspensor."

"William," rejoined the other clown, "for once in a way you are right, though how such a thing happens I don't know. My suspicions were wrong, I admit; but, still, I think there's something in 'em."

Saying which, the tall and thin Bononi placed his arm in that of the short and stout Roly-Poly, and the two passed out of the tent, and made their way to their lodgings and supper.

(Look out for the extra-long instalment of this fine yarn in next week's "MAGNET"—our Easter Holiday Double Number. Be sure to order well in advance, or you'll newsagent will probably be sold out!)



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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**NEXT MONDAY'S
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 NUMBER.**



NEXT MONDAY'S GRAND EASTER DOUBLE NUMBER.

For many weeks now I have been hard at work preparing a real treat for my readers, in the form of a grand Easter Double Number. This will be placed before my chums next Monday, when they will be able to judge whether or not it has come up to their expectations.

It is never safe to boast, but I will say that I have little fear but that my chums will be unanimous in their approval of next week's superb issue.

In the first place, a splendid double-length story of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled

"THE FALL OF THE FIFTH,"

will cause the heart of every lover of school stories to rejoice. The story is rendered especially interesting by the introduction of the two famous characters, Arthur Courtenay and the Caterpillar, whose adventures in "The Boy Without a Name" gave endless delight to thousands of boys and girls.

In next week's story an unknown advertiser offers fifty guineas to the best company of schoolboy actors for a country-house play, and amateur theatricals are the order of the day at Greyfriars, Coker of the Fifth coming out very strongly in rivalry to the Remove. The competition between the two Forms for the honour of giving the performance is unusually keen. There are exciting times at the country house, and the excitement is rendered all the more intense in that it demonstrates

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Altogether, next week's bumper issue will be well worth

THE BEST SCHOOL STORY EVER WRITTEN.

The present year opened with a blare of trumpets so far as the Companion Papers were concerned, for it was on the first day of 1915 that "The Boy Without a Name," Frank Richards' great masterpiece, appeared on the market.

Probably no story of recent years has called for such a wonderful and widespread tribute of praise as "The Boy Without a Name." The so thorough delineation of the various characters, and the inimitable style of the famous "Magnet" author, made the story so popular that it was entirely sold out within a few days of publication, and it became necessary to execute a huge reprint order. Any boy who has been unfortunate enough to miss his copy should at once inform his newsgent, who can still obtain the book direct from this office. So ask your newsgent to-day to order a copy from the publisher.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

E. Driver (Hastings).—The story you mention has never appeared in the form of a threepenny book. Yes, Dick Rake is still at Greyfriars.

Harold Franklin (Sheerness).—Many thanks for your appreciative little note, which I have passed on to Mr. Richards. "The Boy Without a Name" was adjudged by all who read it to be a splendid story.

Frank Barker (Manchester).—The story you refer to is out of print. Your surmise concerning the "Dreadnought" is quite correct.

F. M. & J. H. (Doncaster).—I should like to thank that workmate of yours for his thoughtfulness. Back numbers are unobtainable from this office. Best wishes.

W. Young (East Ham).—The football colours of Greyfriars and St. Jim's are as follows: Greyfriars, blue jerseys and white knickers; St. Jim's, red-and-white jerseys, and white knickers. These colours, however, are not always adhered to.

Rimmie Hunter (Horne Bay).—Very many thanks for your letter. Frank Nugent is Harry Wharton's special chum.

A. E. Fisher (Walthamstow).—I am afraid your poem falls short of publication standard. Your sentiments, however, are excellent.

Ernest Clarke (Sheffield).—The character you mention will be heard of again at a later date.

Maidie Tucker (Sidmouth).—Bunter is fifteen years of age, and weighs nearly fourteen stone. Many thanks for your nice comments on this paper.

"A Lover of the Magnet" (Monkstown).—Frank Nugent is the boy in question. Percy Locke, the Head's nephew, has taken a commission in the Army.

Miss P. W. M. Jennings (Carlisle).—The names you require are George Bulstrode, Percy Bolsover, George Potter, and Richard Greene. I am not aware of a MAGNET League in Carlisle, but no doubt some enterprising young gentleman will start one in that town before long.

H. J. B. (Deal).—The places you mention are fictitious. Canterbury and Ashford are large towns some miles from Courtfield.

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