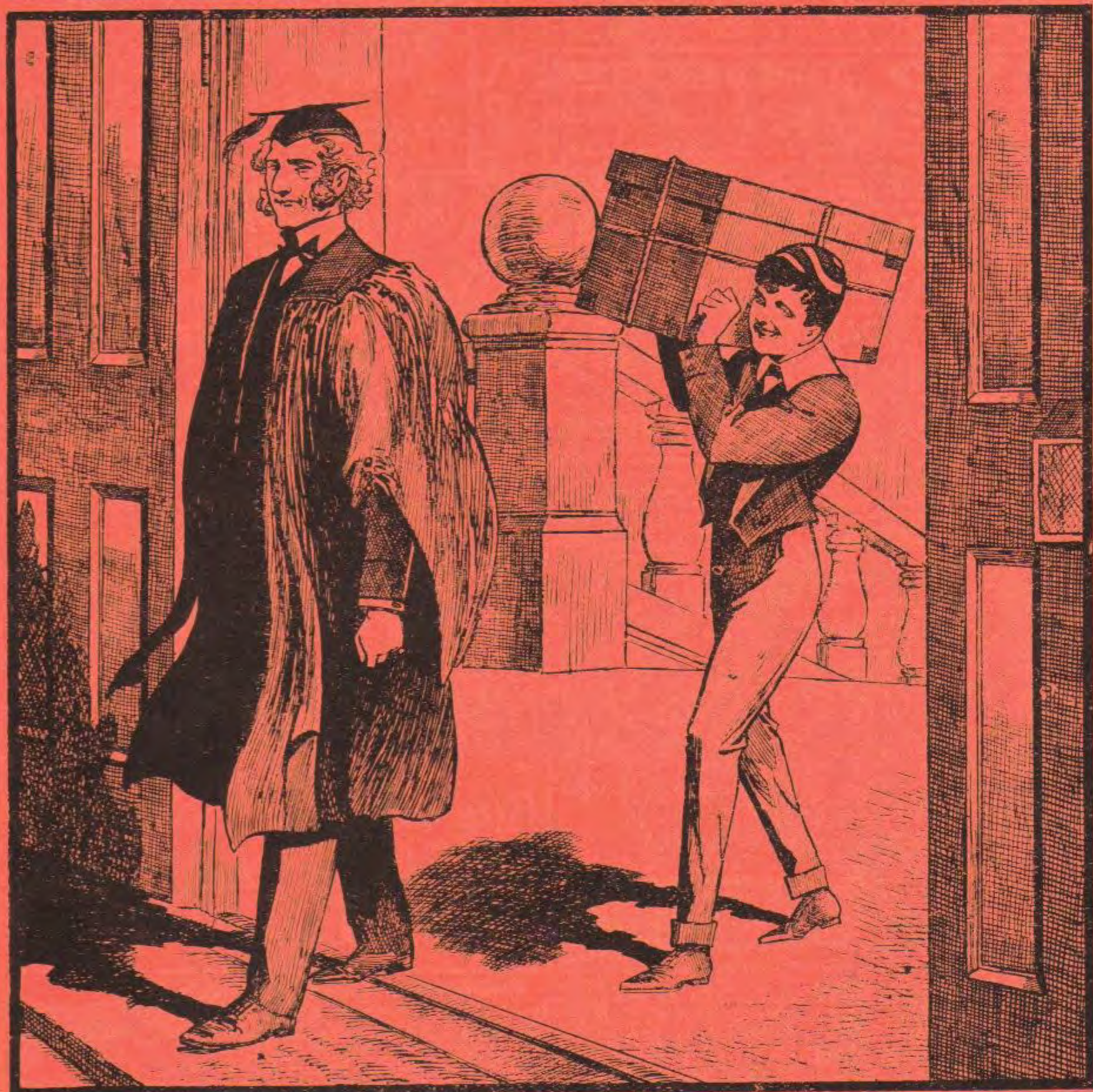


WHEN JOHNNY COMES MARCHING HOME!

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



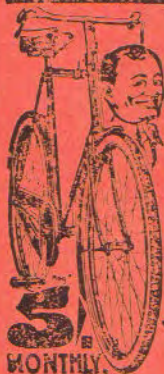
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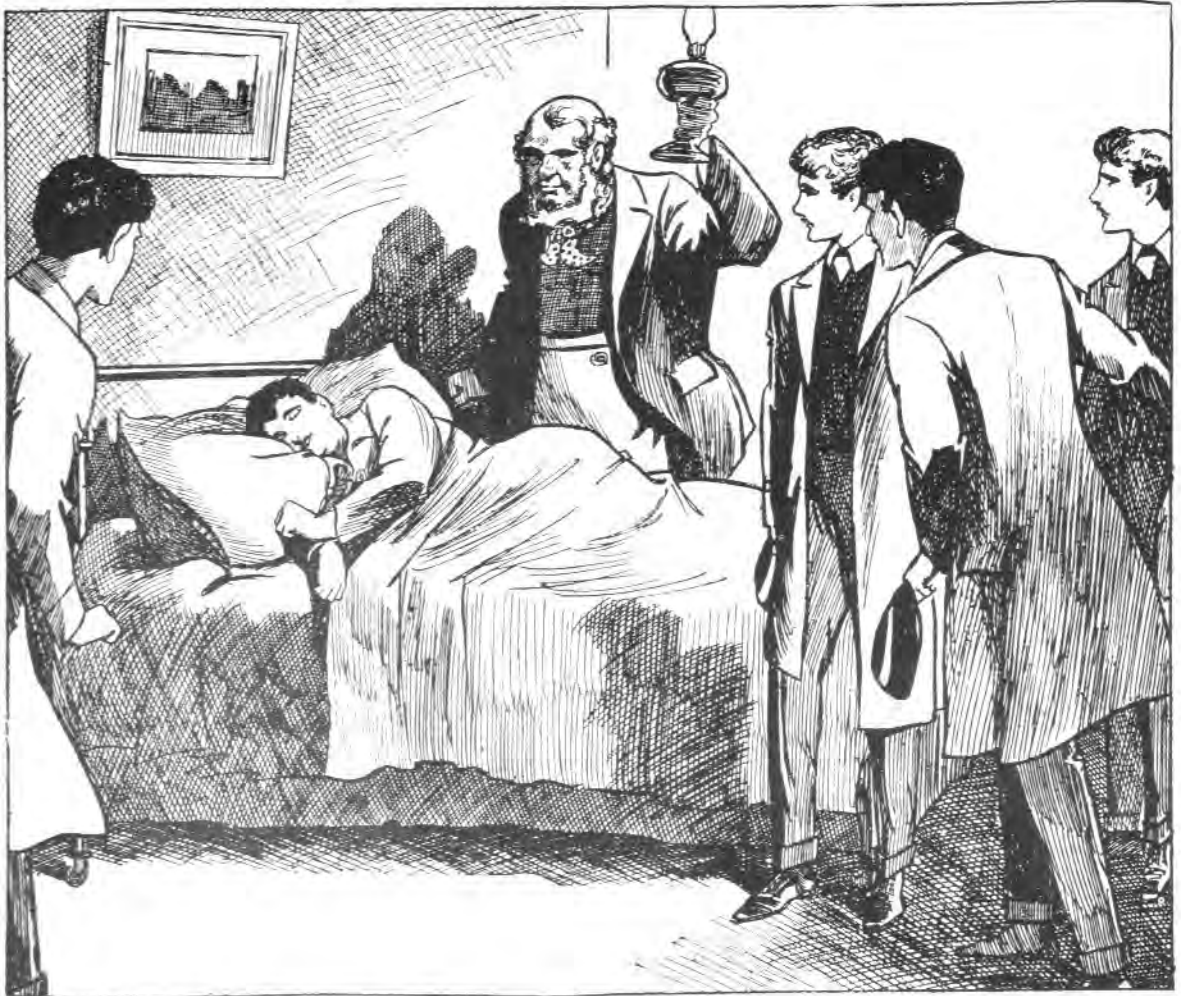


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finished with, to a
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WHEN JOHNNY COMES MARCHING HOME

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

By FRANK RICHARDS.



Dave Trumper held up the lamp, and let the light fall upon the face of the rescued lad. There was a yell from all the juniors at once. "JOHNNY BULL!" (See Chapter 14.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Great News!

THERE was a sound of revelry in No. 1 Study. From that famous apartment came a merry chorus, roared out with the full force of healthy, youthful lungs, and it rang from one end of the Remove passage to the other. Harry Wharton & Co. were evidently in great spirits. Five merry voices were blended together, loudest of all sounding the booming tones of Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter, the Owl of the Remove, tapped at the door, but his tap was not heard. Little could have been heard in the Remove passage just then save the chorus from the study. It was a variation of the old song about Johnny who came marching home, brought up to date by Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter opened the study door, and blinked in through his big glasses.

"I say, you fellows—" he began.

Five thunderous voices answered him, all together.

For Harry Wharton & Co knew now that their old chum, Johnny Bull, was coming back to Greyfriars, and they were rejoicing accordingly. Bob Cherry's variation of the old song was really topping:

"When Johnny come marching home again. Hurrah, hurrah!

"When Johnny comes marching home again. Ha, ha! Ha, ha!

We'll let old Coker know who's who,
And give the Fourth the kybosh, too!

And we'll make things hum, when Johnny comes marching home!"

"I say, you fellows!" roared Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry slid off the table. "Is that Bunt? Have you come to rejoice with us?"

"No, I jolly well haven't! I— Leggo, you blithering ass! Yow!"

Bob Cherry's spirits were always exuberant, and they were more exuberant than ever just then. He clasped Billy Bunter and waltzed the fat junior round the study. Billy Bunter had to go; there was no resisting Bob Cherry.

"Help! Leggo! Oh, you fathend! Rescue! Yah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The table rocked as Billy Bunter crashed into it. Then he bumped into a chair and sent it flying, and then into the bookcase, and there was a shower of books. Wharton and Nugent and Hurree Singh and Squiff yelled with laughter, and Billy Bunter yelled for help.

But there was no help for him. Bob Cherry waltzed him round the study till both were breathless, especially Bunter, and then plunged into the armchair, and bowed gracefully.

"Ow-yow-ow!" stuttered Bunter. "You thumping ass! I'm out of breath. Yow-ow! I'm hurt, you silly chump! Groooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter snorted for breath and blinked furiously at the chums of the Remove. Never had Harry Wharton & Co. been seen in such exuberant spirits. They had missed their old chum, and now he was coming back. There was a telegram from Johnny Bull on the study table, and it was that telegram that had caused the outbreak of revelry in No. 1 Study.

"You—you blessed asses!" growled Bunter. "Catch me coming up here to tell you there's a letter from Johnny Bull another time. Groooh!"

"A letter from Johnny Bull?" exclaimed Wharton. "Oh, good!"

"Didn't you bring it up, fatty?" demanded Bob.

Bunter sniffed.

"Certainly not! You've told me to let your letters alone, since that accident happened to Bull's letter once—it came open by chance while I was looking at it, and you suspicious beasts—"

"Where is it, tubby?"

"I saw it in the rack," said Bunter. "It's got a foreign postmark—Portuguese, I believe. I say, you fellows—"

But the fellows did not wait to hear what Bunter had to say. They rushed from the study, and made for the stairs. Johnny Bull's telegram was brief; it merely stated that he was coming. They were anxious to get his letter.

Five excited juniors came swooping down the staircase on the broad, smooth banisters, one after another.

They landed one after another in the hall, and it was by sheer ill-luck that Coker of the Fifth came striding along at the same moment, and became mixed up with them as they landed.

Harry Wharton was the first to land—on Coker.

He clasped Coker round the neck to save himself, and Coker roared with wrath and astonishment; and then Bob Cherry landed on both of them, and they all went to the floor. Before they could sort themselves out, Squiff came whizzing down, and then Hurree Singh, and then Nugent.

Sprawling juniors were strewn upon Coker like leaves in Vallambrosa.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Gerrooh!"

"Help!"

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"Gerroff!" came Coker's muffled voice from under the five juniors. "Yurrooh! Ooooh! I'll smash you! Yoooooop!"

"We have fallfully dropped on something!" gasped Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "I think it is the esteemed Coker! Oh, dear!"

The Famous Five rolled off Coker in a somewhat dishevelled and breathless state.

Horace Coker sat up and roared.

"You young villains! Yurrooh! You—you—you young Huns! Ow! I—I—I'll pulverise you! I'll mop you up! I'll—I'll— Why, you cheeky young ruffian, leggo! My hat! Help!"

Bob Cherry's exuberance was not exhausted yet. He grasped Coker by the ankles, and yanked him along the smooth floor. Coker slid along at a great speed on his back, his arms waving wildly in the air, and dreadful yells proceeding from his wide-open mouth.

"Bob!" gasped Wharton. "Chuck it! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Leggo! Yarooop! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, came striding out of his study, with rustling gown and frowning brow. He stood almost rooted to the floor as he caught sight of Bob Cherry and Coker.

"Cherry!"

Bob suddenly dropped Coker's ankles. They might have been red-hot by the sudden way Bob dropped them.

"Ye-es, sir!" he stammered.

"What are you doing, Cherry?"

"Ahem! Only—only a little—a—little joke, sir—"

"Groooh!" Coker sat up dazedly. "I'll smash him! I'll—I'll—"

"Cherry, how dare you? How dare you, I repeat?" rapped out the Remove-master. "You—you were actually dragging a senior along the floor—"

"We—we—we've had a telegram from Johnny Bull, sir," stammered Bob.

Mr. Quelch stared at him.

"What has that to do with the matter, Cherry?"

"Johnny Bull's coming back, sir; he'll be here in a few days."

"I am aware of that, Cherry; but what has that to do with your extraordinary and outrageous conduct at the present moment?"

"Ahem! You—you see, sir, I—I was feeling rather—rather in high spirits, sir."

"If your high spirits lead you to drag a senior boy along the passage by his ankles, Cherry, you must curb them. You will take two hundred lines. Coker, you will kindly not touch Cherry; I have punished him."

Coker gave Bob Cherry a glare, and retired from the spot. But for the presence of Mr. Quelch, the festive Bob would certainly have been the victim of a violent assault and battery. Horace Coker was compelled to bottle up his just wrath.

Mr. Quelch did not smile till he was back in his study with the door closed.

"Hum!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Perhaps that was rather rough on Coker, when you come to think of it! But when a chap's got good news, he can't help celebrating a bit. Let's get that blessed letter."

The Famous Five hurried to the letter-rack at the back of the Hall. They looked eagerly over the letters there. But there was none in the well-known "fist" of Johnny Bull.

"It's gone!" said Wharton, puzzled.

"If it ever came!" growled Squiff. "That fat boulder has been pulling our leg. Who would take it away?"

"Well, if he's pulled our leg, we'll pull his ears," said Bob Cherry. "Kim on!"

The Famous Five rushed back to No. 1 Study. But Billy Bunter was gone, too.

Peter Todd met them at the door of the study.

"What's the news from Johnny?" he asked. "You've had the letter?"

"Then there was a letter?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Yes; I saw it ten minutes ago," said Todd. "Why don't you get it, you duffers?"

"It's gone."

"Some ass has taken it to bring to us, perhaps," said

Nugent. "It can't have flown away. We'd better ask all the fellows."

Up and down the School House the Famous Five went, asking after that letter from Johnny Bull. But there was no news of it. The letter had vanished.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bunter's Reward!

"TEA in Hall this evening!" growled Peter Todd.

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

"Nothing in the giddy larder," said Peter, throwing open the door of the study cupboard; "and the oof-bird has taken unto itself wings and flown away. Loozy, how is the money market?"

It was past tea-time, and No. 7 Study was hard up. Tea in Hall was a last resource in hard times.

Alonzo Todd shook his head in his solemn manner, in reply to Peter's question.

"My dear Peter, I am quite unacquainted with the state of the money market. I never look at the financial news in the paper. Indeed, my Uncle Benjamin says that the money market is an immoral institution, and ought to be suppressed."

"Fathead!" roared Peter. "I mean, how are you off for cash?"

"Oh, I see! Unfortunately, my dear Peter, my personal resources at the present moment amount only to the inconsiderable sum of three-halfpence—"

"How are you off Bunter?" demanded Peter Todd. "I don't see why you shouldn't stand your whack for once."

"Stony!" growled Bunter.

"Hasn't your pater sent you any more of those whack-ing remittances? Has he been found out already?"

"You silly ass!" snorted Bunter. "He hasn't done anything to be found out. He makes his money on the Stock Exchange; I've told you lots of times."

"Well, then, you write to him, and tell him that this study wants some of the loot," said Peter. "You can tell him that I'm studying law, and I'll do my best for him when the chopper comes down."

"You blithering—"

"How are you off, Dutton?" roared Peter, addressing Tom Dutton, his deaf study-mate who was gazing into the empty cupboard with a dolorous expression.

"Eh?"

"How are you off for money?"

"Well, I don't think so."

"Eh! You don't think what?"

"I don't think it's funny. Seems to me rather rotten not to have any tea," said Dutton. "Blessed if I can see anything funny about it!"

"Not funny, ass—money—cash—spondulics—rhino—tin—brass—"

"Eh?"

Peter Todd put his head close to Dutton's and bellowed: "Got any tin?"

Dutton jerked his head away with a frown.

"No, I haven't, and don't shout at me, Peter Todd; I'm not deaf."

"Then it's all up," growled Peter Todd. "Tea in Hall, by gum! Bunter, you fat rascal, you were rolling in money yesterday. Why didn't you put some by for a rainy day? I've a jolly good mind to bump you!"

"Look here, I'm jolly well not going to have tea in Hall," said Bunter. "Blessed doornsteps and weak tea! Groooh! I'm going to raise some tin."

"How? When? Where?"

"You leave that to me," said Bunter. "I've got all the brains there is in this study, I know that. I've got an idea."

Peter Todd grunted disdainfully as Bunter rolled out of the study. He had not much faith in Bunter's ideas.

Billy Bunter blinked into No. 1. The Famous Five had gathered there again, very much puzzled and annoyed by the loss of the letter. Half a dozen fellows had seen the letter from Johnny Bull in the rack; and from the rack it had vanished, as completely as if it had disappeared into thin air. Nobody had taken it to bring to them; nobody seemed to have any idea what had become of it.

"Some silly ass must have taken it for a joke, and shoved it somewhere," said Squiff. "That's all I can think of."

"We'll jolly well scrag the jokey ass, if he has," said THE MAGNET LIBRARY—No. 376.

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ONE
PENNY.

Bob Cherry. "Hallo, nallo, hallo, you fat bounder! Have you seen our letter?"

"Haven't you found it yet?" asked Bunter.

"No, tubby!"

"That's very odd," said Bunter. "Somebody must have hidden it, for a jape on you chaps. A very unfeeling thing to do. I'm awfully anxious for news from old Johnny. You remember he was my best pal when he was here."

"I don't remember anything of the sort. I remember that he couldn't stand you at any price."

"Oh, really, Cherry! I was going to make a suggestion for finding the letter—"

"Get it off your chest, then!"

"You know what people do when they lose things," said Bunter. "They advertise in the paper—"

"Fathead! Do you want us to advertise in the Greyfriars Herald?"

"And offer a reward—"

"What!"

"That's the way to find anything that's been lost," said Bunter. "You offer a reward for it, and I'll be you it will turn up."

Harry Wharton & Co. stared hard at Bunter. There was only one possible conclusion to be drawn from Billy Bunter's suggestion, and they drew it.

"You fat villain!" said Wharton. "You've got the letter!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Hand it out at once!"

"I'll try to find it, if you offer a reward," said Bunter calmly. "I should suggest a reward of ten shillings."

"Why, you—you—"

"I should then work hard at looking for it," said Bunter. "I might find it! I don't say I could. But I'd try. I should expect the reward in cash down. Everybody offers a reward for lost articles, you know. And, as a matter of fact, we're hard up in our study. I'd try very hard to find that letter. All you've got to do is to offer a reward."

"There's not going to be any reward," said Wharton, picking up a cricket-stump, and stepping between Bunter and the door. "But there's going to be a first-class hiding if that letter isn't handed over at once!"

"Oh, really, Wharton, of course, I know nothing about it! If you don't offer a reward, you may never recover it, and then the money will be lost."

"The money?"

"Certainly! If you mean to risk losing a cheque for ten pounds, to save a paltry ten shillings, I think you're silly asses, I must say that."

"So there was a cheque in the letter?" howled Bob Cherry.

"I—I—yes—no—I—I don't know, of course. How should I know what was in Wharton's letter, Cherry?"

"And you've opened it?" roared Wharton.

"Certainly not!"

"Then how do you know what was in it?"

"I—I don't, of course. I—I just thought that perhaps Johnny Bull's uncle might have given him a cheque, for a celebration when he came back to Greyfriars, you know."

"Why, you unspeakable worm—"

"Johnny Bull's uncle is awfully rich, you know, and his aunt has a lot of money, and—and as Johnny isn't going to Australia with them after all, I—I thought—Leggo, Bob Cherry, you beast! I tell you, I don't know anything about the letter, and it's not in my pocket—Yaroooooh!"

Bob Cherry did not let go. He brought Billy Bunter down on the study carpet with a terrific bump, and then the Famous Five went through his pockets. A letter with a foreign postmark soon came to light, addressed to Harry Wharton in Johnny Bull's familiar handwriting.

"Here it is!"

"Now scalp him! It's been opened!" exclaimed Wharton.

"I—I didn't open it!" yelled Bunter. "It—it came open by accident—pure accident! I haven't read it. I

don't know anything in it—not a word. I don't know that Johnny Bull stopped at Port Said, and that he's coming back in a French steamer. Yaroooh! I don't know how that letter came in my pocket at all. Leggo! Peter Todd must have slipped it in for a joke, or that fellow Kipps. He's always playing conjuring tricks, you know. I—I've never seen that letter before."

Bump! Bump! Bump!

"Oh! Ow! Help! I—I swear I've never seen that letter before!" roared Bunter. "I—I didn't even know it had come! Oh, crumbs!"

Bump! Bump! Bump!

"What the dooce are you doing to my porpoise?" exclaimed Peter Todd, looking in. "Don't kill him, you duffers; he's got a scheme for raising funds for tea."

"I say, Toddy—help! Yaroooh!"

"We've found the letter," said Wharton. "Bunter suggested offering a reward for finding it, so we knew where to look for it. He thinks that you slipped it into his pocket for a joke—or Kipps—so he says."

"Wha-a-a-at!"

"I—I didn't say so!" howled Bunter, as Peter swooped down on him. "I mean, I was—was only jock-jock-joking—Yaroooh!"

Billy Bunter rolled out of the study with yells of anguish, as Peter dribbled him away like a football. A minute later fiendish yells were heard proceeding from No. 7 Study, and a sound of a cricket-stump smiting a very fat carcass.

The lost letter had been found, and Billy Bunter was getting his reward.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. The Tenner from Johnny!

HARRY WHARTON drew out Johnny Bull's letter. He did not need to cut the envelope; the Owl of the Remove had already saved him that trouble.

The Famous Five gathered round eagerly to read the letter. It was dated from Port Said.

"Dear old pals,—I told you in a letter some time back that I had decided to come back to Greyfriars after all. Uncle is awfully decent, and he was going to give me a good time in Australia, but I miss Greyfriars too much. We had a long jaw over it, and uncle and auntie decided at last that I'd better come back, as they saw how I felt about it. So the long and the short of it is that I'm coming. I'm going to have a bit of a look round here, and see the Territorials and the New Zealanders. I suppose you've read in the papers how they licked the Turks. I've seen some of the Turkish prisoners; awfully scrubby lot.

"Uncle John Arthur has arranged for me to come back on a French steamer that's going to Cherbourg, in charge of a parson who's coming home. Not that I need anybody to look after me, but you know what uncles are. The clerical Johnny is going to see me to Cherbourg, and put me on the steamer for London. I shall send you a wire from Cherbourg, and I dare say you will get it by the time this letter arrives.

"Uncle's given me a tip for a celebration when I get back. I enclose it herewith. It is for ten quid, and payable to Wharton. You can get old Quelch to cash it. Uncle and Auntie Bull are going on to Australia after they've seen me off for Cherbourg. Perhaps I'm going out later. I shall be jolly glad to get back to the old school. I hope the white rabbits are all right. So you can expect me when I arrive, if I don't get blown up by a German submarine in the Channel.—Always yours,

JOHNNY BULL.

"P.S.—Kick Bunter for me."

"Good old Johnny!" grinned Squiff. "He's rather a duffer not to go to Australia when he has a chance. But I'm jolly glad he's coming back. We'll have a tremendous celebration. Ten quids' His uncle is a brick!"

"And he's at Cherbourg already," said Wharton.

He picked up the telegram from the table, which had caused so much rejoicing in No. 1 Study that afternoon. The telegram ran:

The MAMMOT LIBRARY.—No. 276

OUR COMPANION: THE BOYS' FRIEND, "THE GEM" LIBRARY,
PAPERS: Every Monday, Every Wednesday.

"Leaving to-morrow in the Blackbird. Heeray!—JOHNNY BULL."

"It's jolly good news," said Wharton. "If he leaves Cherbourg to-morrow he will be in London the next day, and here on Friday. We'll get Quelch to change this cheque at once. Lucky the letter got here before Johnny."

"Yes, rather."

"And lucky it was a cheque in it," grinned Bob Cherry. "If it had been a banknote I fancy Bunter would have thought Johnny meant it for him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton proceeded at once to Mr. Quelch's study with the cheque. The Remove-master received him very kindly, evidently pleased himself by the fact that Johnny Bull was coming back. He readily handed the juniors two five-pound notes in exchange for the cheque signed by John Arthur Bull.

Fisher T. Fish, the American junior, met the captain of the Remove as he was returning to his study with the banknotes still in his hand.

"Waal, I swow!" ejaculated Fish, catching sight of the two fivers. "Have you been robbing a bank, you galoot?"

Wharton explained.

"I guess that's real handsome of Johnny Bull's uncle," said Fish. "I'll tell you what, Wharton—I've got an idea! You know I'm a business chap—"

"Bow-wow!"

"I've got a new scheme—"

"Oh, cheese it!"

"A regular gilt-edged stunt," said Fish impressively; "a top-notch high-roller, sir. All I need is some capital to work with. I guess if you hand over that ten quid to me I'll let you have fifteen back—"

Wharton chuckled. He was not likely to hand over Johnny Bull's ten pounds for one of Fish's weird business schemes.

"There's practically no risk," urged Fish. "It's a real topping stunt, I tell you. A new scheme for making some money out of the war—Yow! Ow! Wharrer you at?"

Wharton walked on, and left Fisher T. Fish sitting in the passage. He joined his chums in No. 1 Study.

"Better put those fivers in a safe place," said Nugent. "We don't want to change them till Johnny comes marching home."

"I'll lock them up in my desk."

But the fivers were not to be locked up just yet. All the Remove were interested in Johnny Bull and his unexpected return, and still more interested in the whacking tip Johnny Bull's uncle had handed out. There was quite a procession of juniors to No. 1 Study to see the fivers. Skinner proposed to change them at once, and stand a big feed on the spot, to testify the joy they felt at knowing that Johnny Bull was coming back. Skinner's proposition was not acted upon.

The fivers were locked up at last, and the Famous Five, having got rid of their numerous visitors, sat down to tea.

"Not much time for tea," Bob Cherry remarked. "We ought to buzz over to Cliff House and tell Marjorie and Clara. They'll have to come to the celebration when Johnny comes marching home. Better give 'em plenty of time to get leave from Miss Primrose."

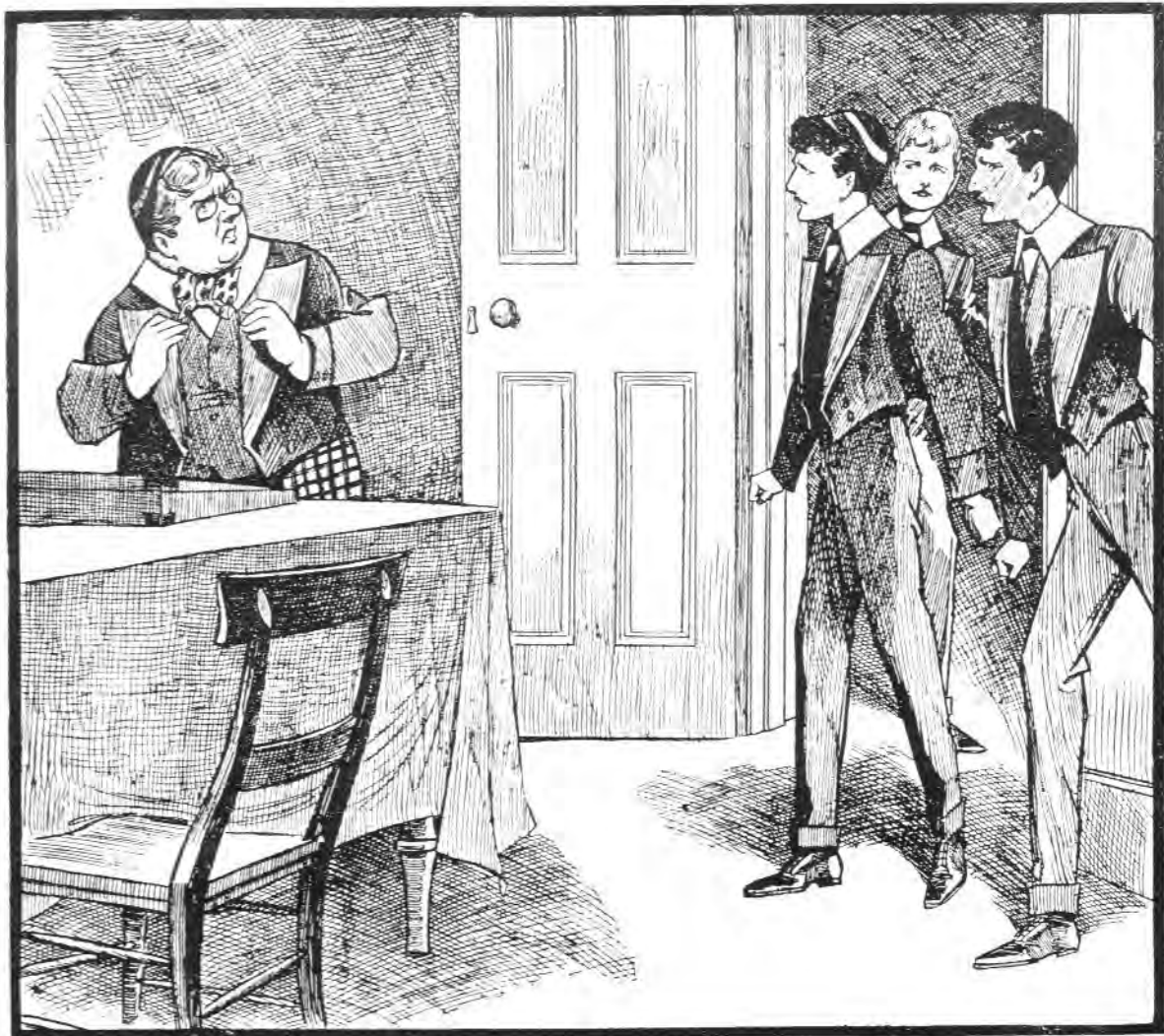
"Yes, rather," said Wharton; "we'll make it a regular jamboree. Heaps of funds this time. We'll have the Rag decorated with flowers and things."

"Good egg!"

The Famous Five finished their tea, and hurried out for their bicycles. The celebration of Johnny Bull's homecoming would not, of course, be complete without the presence of Marjorie Hazeldene and Miss Clara, their girl chums of Cliff House School. They wheeled out their bicycles and rode away in great spirits down the lane leading towards the bay.

ANSWERS

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There was a sudden clink as a bunch of keys fell to the floor, and Billy Bunter spun round from the desk in alarm, "Trying keys on the desk, by gum!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, in amazement. "I—I say, you fellows——"
"You blessed young thief!" exclaimed Wharton. (See Chapter 7.)

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Trouble for Marjorie!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Hazel!"

Bob Cherry put the brake on as he sighted a junior in the lane, and recognised, by the back view, Hazeldene of the Remove.

The Famous Five jumped off their bicycles. Hazeldene was making for Cliff House School, which was now in sight in the distance.

Hazel looked round at the juniors, and did not seem over-pleased to see them. But Harry Wharton & Co. did not notice that—at all events, they appeared not to notice it. They were too merry just then to be annoyed by anybody or anything, and they were quite determined to be on the best of terms with Marjorie's brother.

"Going to Cliff House?" asked Wharton.

"Yes," said Hazel shortly.

"So are we. We'll walk the other bit," said Harry.

The Famous Five prepared to wheel their bikes, but Hazeldene did not move. A moody look had come over his face.

"You're going to Cliff House?" he said.

"Yes."

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE MYSTIC CIRCLE!"

"It's too late for tea."

"We're not going to tea," said Bob Cherry; "only dropping in to tell Marjorie the news."

"Eh! What news?"

"Haven't you heard?" said Nugent. "Johnny Bull's coming home this week."

"Is he?" said Hazel indifferently.

"Yes, he is," said Frank Nugent, rather warmly; "and we're jolly glad."

Hazel had not been on the best of terms with Johnny Bull. Johnny was a painfully plain-spoken youth at times, and there were many of Hazel's little ways and weaknesses that he did not approve of.

"And there's going to be a tremendous celebration," said Wharton. "Johnny's uncle has sent a whacking tip for it—ten whole quids."

"Ten quids!" said Hazel. "My hat! In cash?"

"Well, it was in a cheque, but Quelchey gave me two fivers for it," said Harry.

"That's a lot of money," said Hazeldene. "You'd better be careful with it."

"I'm not carrying it in my pocket," said Harry, laughing. "It's locked up safely. Come on; we haven't too much time."

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

Hazeldene stood irresolute.

"I'll take your message to Marjorie, if you like," he said. "I'm going to see her."

"We'll all go together."

"But—but—"

"But what?"

"Oh, all right!" said Hazeldene. He moved on, and the five cyclists wheeled on their machines.

Hazel did not speak a word before they reached Cliff House. There was a deep shadow on his brow, and his manner was sullen. The chums of the Remove knew that expression of old. It meant that the weak and wayward junior was in trouble of some kind again, and they could guess why he was going to see Marjorie, and why he had shown unwillingness for them to come with him. When Hazel was in trouble it was one of his little ways to plant his troubles on Marjorie's shoulders.

Marjorie and Clara were in the garden, and they came down to the gate to speak to the chums of Greyfriars. There was little time to stay, as the juniors had to get back to Greyfriars before locking-up.

"We've come to tell you the news," said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "Topping news! Top-hole and ripping and a regular corker!"

"My hat!" said Miss Clara. "What is it? Are the Ruus beaten?"

"Oh, that's nothing new," said Bob. "More important than that. Johnny Bull's coming home. We've had a letter and a telegram. He's at Cherbourg now, and he's coming down the Channel to-morrow; he'll be home this week."

"I'm glad to hear it," said Marjorie. "You will like him to be back. I know you've missed him."

"We have, rather," said Wharton. "And Johnny's uncle has shelled out a whacking tip, and we're going to have a first-class celebration, and you've got to come."

"Hear, hear!" said Miss Clara.

Marjorie laughed.

"We will come with pleasure," she said. "We shall be glad to see Johnny again. So he did not go all the way to Australia?"

"No; he chucked it at Port Said. And he's been seeing the soldiers there, and the Turk prisoners," said Harry. "But here's his letter."

Marjorie and Clara read the letter. Hazeldene stood with his hands in his pockets, the sullen look deepening on his brow. The Famous Five all perceived that he wanted to speak to Marjorie alone, but they were not disposed to give him the opportunity. Their view was that it was simply notion of Hazel to get himself into silly scrapes and then worry Marjorie to get him out of them.

"I've got to walk back," said Hazel at last. "I haven't my bike—and there's not much more time."

"I'll give you a lift on mine," said Bob Cherry.

"Thanks," said Hazel. "I wanted to speak to you, Marjorie."

"Yes?" said Marjorie.

Hazel stared moodily at the Co. Marjorie coloured a little. The juniors made a movement to retire.

"Hold on," said Miss Clara, in her cool way, "you can go on, Hazel."

"Eh?" said Hazel.

"You can go on," said Miss Clara deliberately. "Marjorie doesn't have any secrets. Don't clear off your flows. Let Hazel tell us all about it."

"Oh, Clara," murmured Marjorie.

"Look here," began Hazel hotly, "when I want to tell you my affairs, Miss Trevelyan, I'll tell you I want to."

"You'll tell me, or you won't tell Marjorie," said Miss Clara calmly. "I'm fed up."

"What?"

"I've had enough of your bothering Marjorie. She was crying after you came to see her yesterday."

"Clara!"

"And I'm fed up," repeated Miss Clara, whose language was sometimes rather boyish. "I won't have it! I suppose you're in a scrape, as usual, and I'm not going to have you worrying Marjorie with it. That's

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plain English. Get out of your scrapes by yourself, if you are duffer enough to get into them—there!"

It certainly was plain English; exceedingly plain. But Miss Clara was angry, and she did not take the trouble to conceal the fact.

Hazel's face became crimson, and with a dark look at the plain-spoken Miss Clara, he swung round on his heel and walked away.

"Hazel!" called out Marjorie, in distress.

The sullen junior did not look back.

Harry Wharton & Co. were feeling exceedingly discomfited. They quite approved of Miss Clara taking the bull by the horns in that manner; it was just how they felt themselves. But it was an uncomfortable moment.

"Well, we must be off," said Harry Wharton. "We shall be late for calling-over."

The juniors raised their caps and moved off to their bicycles. Hazel had disappeared down the lane.

Marjorie made a sign to Wharton, and he lingered after the others. Miss Clara, with a sound that strongly resembled a snort, went up the garden path. Marjorie was looking deeply distressed, and there were tears in her eyes.

"Do you know what is the matter with Hazel?" asked Marjorie, in a low voice.

Wharton shook his head.

"He's been looking down in the mouth the last day or two," he said. "I noticed he has been chucking the cricket."

"He came over to see me yesterday, and he seemed very troubled, but he did not tell me anything," said Marjorie. "I—I suppose he was going to tell me now; but—but Clara—Clara is so—so impetuous. Poor Hazel!"

"I'll speak to him," said Harry. "I don't suppose it's anything serious. We'll see him through, anyway."

"I—I am afraid—perhaps—has he been gambling again?" asked Marjorie, in a low and tremulous voice.

Wharton started.

"I think not—I hope not. I haven't noticed anything. He wouldn't be ass enough, after the lesson he had last time."

"He forgets a lesson so soon," said Marjorie, with a sigh. "I have no right to ask you to trouble about him—"

"Oh, that's all right, you know we've agreed that we look after him," said Harry reassuringly. "He isn't a bad chap; but he's so deuced weak, any cad can lead him into anything. But I'll have a jaw with him, and see what's the matter—if anything is. I don't suppose it's serious—perhaps five bob at the tuck-shop, or something of that sort," he added smiling.

"I hope it is no worse than that," said Marjorie, with a sigh. "I—I wish Clara had let him speak. I am afraid he is angry now."

Wharton's opinion of Hazel, and his probable anger, could not have been expressed with politeness to Hazel's sister. So he said nothing.

"You—you will be easy with him," murmured Marjorie. "He is so quick to take offence. Don't let him quarrel with you."

"Rely on me," said Harry.

Marjorie stood with a little wrinkle in her brow as Wharton wheeled his bike after his comrades, and mounted. The five juniors rode back along the lane, their high spirits somewhat dashed. Half-way to Greyfriars they overtook Hazeldene. He was tramping along at a great rate, with his hands thrust deep into his pockets, and his eyes on the ground.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Have a lift, Hazel!" sang out Bob Cherry.

"No, thanks," said Hazel, without looking round.

"Then we'll walk—eh?"

"You needn't trouble."

"Oh!"

The chums of the Remove rode on, and left the sullen junior to himself. Bob Cherry's sunny face had become overcast.

"I wonder"—he said, when they were putting up their machines in the bike-shed—"I wonder—"

"Well?"

"I wonder whether Marjorie would mind very much if I gave Hazel a licking?" said Bob. Wharton laughed.

"I think she would mind very much," he said.

"It's just what he wants," said Bob. "There are some chaps who can't get on without a licking every now and then. They simply ask for it, you know."

"The lickfulness is off," said Huree Jamset Ram Singh, shaking his dusky head. "The esteemed and adorable Marjorie would be infuriated."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But what the dickens has he been up to?" growled Nugent. "It's sickening that that fellow can't keep out of trouble, and that he must bother everybody else with his rotten, silly scrapes. It can't be the Bounder this time, he's been trying to keep the silly ass straight. The Highcliffe cads, perhaps—"

"I shouldn't wonder," said Wharton. "anyway, don't slang the poor beast, if he hasn't sense enough to keep straight, I suppose he's to be pitied. Anyway, we've got to think of Marjorie."

"Oh, yes! All the same, he ought to be licked!"

The Famous Five agreed cordially that Hazeldene ought to be licked; but they concurred with Tuky's opinion that, for the sake of the adorable and esteemed Marjorie, the lickfulness was quite off.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. Bunter's Fever!

"BUNTER!"

Harry Wharton uttered the exclamation sharply, as he came into No. 1 Study.

A fat figure was bending over his desk, and blinking at it through a big pair of glasses. Billy Bunter spun round at the sound of Wharton's sharp voice. His face was crimson, and he blinked at the captain of the Remove very uneasily.

"What are you doing here?" demanded Wharton sternly.

"Doing here?" murmured Bunter. "I—I came to speak to you fellows, you know. As—as you weren't here, I—I waited."

"What were you doing at my desk?"

"Nothing," said Bunter. "I hadn't noticed your desk, Harry, old chap."

"You fat owl, you were blinking all over it, and if you call me 'Harry, old chap,' I'll give you a thick ear!"

"Oh, really, Harry— Here, keep off, you beast! I was just looking at the desk. I—I'm extremely interested in old furniture and things," stammered Bunter. "I—I was just wondering whether that desk was real—real Chippendale."

"You silly fathead! Get out!"

"I say, Harry—I—I mean, Wharton," said Bunter, dodging round the table, "are the fivers really there, you know?"

"So you were after the fivers, you fat burglar?"

"Well, why shouldn't I see them?" said Bunter. "Everybody else has had a squint at them. Why can't you show them to me?"

Wharton looked fixedly at the Owl of the Remove. Billy Bunter's ideas about money were so extremely free and easy, that they were liable to get him into trouble some day. Billy would have repudiated with scorn the suggestion that there was anything like dishonesty about him. But he had a way of regarding all money that came near his fat hands as his own.

"You utter young idiot!" said Wharton, at last. "If you don't chuck this kind of thing, you'll find yourself in prison some day."

"I refuse to reply to a remark like that, Wharton," said Bunter with dignity. "If I didn't happen to wear glasses, which make it difficult for me to lick you, I should ask you to come round behind the gym."

Billy Bunter drew himself up to his full height as he spoke. It was not very high, and the fat Owl of the Remove looked so absurd that Wharton burst into a laugh. It was never possible to be angry with Bunter for long.

"And as you're speaking so jolly plainly, I'll do the same," said Bunter. "I'm not satisfied with the way you're treating that money."

"What!"

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE MYSTIC CIRCLE!"

EVERY
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ONE
PENNY.

"My belief is that Johnny Bull intended it as much for me as for you. He was always my best pal. I look on you as practically keeping my money away from me."

"Why, you—you—"

"The best thing you can do, and the most honourable thing, is to hand over one of the fivers to me at once. Then I shall be willing to say no more about the matter."

Wharton did not reply. He picked up a cricket-stump, and Billy Bunter fled. He rolled out into the passage, getting a lunge in his fat ribs from the business end of the stump, and bowled, and bolted into the next study, and slammed the door and locked it.

There was a junior in the study. No. 2 Study was shared by Bulstrode, Hazeldene, and Tom Brown, the New Zealander. Only Hazeldene was there. He was seated in the armchair, his moody gaze fixed upon the fire, when Bunter bolted in, and he jumped up with an exclamation.

"You fat idiot! What on earth are you locking yourself in my study for?" he demanded irritably.

Bunter gasped.

"Ow! That beast Wharton; he's after me with a cricket-stump! Yow!"

"Well, I'll be after you with a cricket-bat if you don't clear!" growled Hazel.

"The awful rotter!" said Bunter, unheeding. "Just because I wanted my own money!"

"You've been getting another remittance?" asked Hazel, his manner becoming more civil.

"It's from Johnny Bull," explained Bunter. "He's sent two fivers, one for me and one for the other chaps."

"You fat Ananias!"

"Oh, really, Hazel! Wharton's got the notes locked up in his desk," said Bunter, in a deeply injured tone. "I told him straight that my old pal Johnny meant one of them for me. He didn't even deny it. He couldn't. He simply went for me with a cricket-stump. I call it brutal. It's dishonest, too. I always had my doubts about that chap Wharton, you know. I don't call him honourable."

"You'd better tell him so," grinned Hazel.

"How can I tell him so, you fathead, when he's got a cricket-stump?" said Bunter. "All the same, it's dishonest; it's mean. I shall certainly tell Johnny about it when he comes. I said to Cherry, quite plainly, that it was all rot to keep the money locked up till Johnny came, because the German submarines may blow him up, you know. I pointed out that if they blew him up we should all feel so cut up that we shouldn't want a feed, so it was better to have it at once and make sure. And the utter beast only kicked me!"

"Serve you right!" said Hazel.

"And you're a bigger rotter than he is!" growled Bunter. "Have you been playing cards with Ponsonby lately?"

Hazel started.

"What do you know about that, you spying cad?"

"I spotted you the other day," grinned Bunter. "I've played with Pon myself in the old barn. I saw you at it. I'll bet Pon won your money. He cheats, you know. I know he cheats, because he won my money, and I'm a topping player—a regular dab at it. That's what you've been looking so down in the mouth about, I suppose. Look here, Hazel, I'll tell you what. You help me to get my money away from those cads, and I'll stand you a whack in it!"

"What!"

"You find a key to Wharton's desk, you know," said Bunter, his eyes glistening behind his spectacles. "I'll stand you a quid out of my fiver!"

"But it isn't yours."

"Yes, it is. I'm convinced that Bull meant it for me. You see, Wharton didn't deny it when I said so. He proceeded to violence at once. When a chap proceeds to violence instead of arguing the matter, that shows that he's in the wrong, don't it?"

Hazel unlocked the door, took Bunter by his fat ears, and swung him into the passage without replying. Then he slammed the door on him.

Bunter gasped, and shook a fat fist at the door, and

rolled over to No. 7. He found his study mates there, beginning their prep.

"Toddy, old man," said Bunter, "I want your help."

"Hallo!" said Peter.

"I want to stand a big feed in the study——"

"Looking for another reward?" asked Peter, glancing round for a stump.

"Don't be a beast, Toddy! If you don't want to help me spend my fiver——"

"My hat! Another remittance from your pater?" said Peter Todd. "By George, your pater is going it! When you write home you might mention that my father is a ripping solicitor, and has acted for lots of celebrated criminals. When your pater gets into the courts he might give my father the case, and keep it in the family—see?"

"Tain't from my pater this time," said Bunter, loftily ignoring Peter's playful allusions to Bunter senior's speculations on the Stock Exchange. "It's a fiver from Johnny Bull."

"Wha-a-a-at!" ejaculated Peter.

"A Wharton's keeping it away from me," said Bunter.

"Wharton is!" howled Peter, in astonishment.

"Yes. Now, you know you ought to back up your own study, Toddy, old chap, and I think you can lick Wharton. You can try, anyway, and I'll hold your jacket. Then you can make him give me my fiver. Here, I say, wharrer you at?"

Peter Todd inserted his knuckles into Bunter's fat neck, and gripped his collar. Without a word he marched the wriggling fat junior out of the room, and along the passage into No. 1 Study. Wharton and Nugent were doing their preparation there, and they looked up in surprise as Peter marched the fat junior in.

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

"Bunter says that Johnny Bull has sent him a fiver, and that you're keeping it back from him," said Peter Todd.

Wharton jumped up.

"I—I say, I—I didn't exactly say that!" howled Bunter. "What I—I meant was that—that Johnny Bull hadn't sent me a fiver, you know, and—and that Wharton wasn't keeping it back, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Nugent. "A little mistake of yours, Toddy. You see what Bunter really meant to say."

"The fat beast!" exclaimed Wharton, his brows contracting darkly. "It's Johnny Bull's tip he's talking about. He seems to have got the idea into his head that half of it belongs to him, goodness knows why. I think he must be a born idiot!"

"Oh, really, Wharton, you know very well Johnny meant half of it for me. Wasn't he always my best pal?" demanded Bunter indignantly.

"You fat owl, he wouldn't touch you with a telegraph-pole!"

"Abuse is no argument," said Bunter, with a sniff. "A fellow who descends to abuse and violence admits himself in the wrong. Leggo my collar, Todd, you beast! You back up your own study, and see justice done!"

"That's all right," said Peter. "I've come here to see justice done."

"Oh, good!" said Bunter. "Leggo my collar, then! Make Wharton give me my fiver. You can lick him, you know, and Dutton can lick Nugent. We'll break the desk open and take it. It's ours, you know. Keep that beast off while I tell him what I think about him. I think you're dishonest, Wharton!"

"What!" yelled Wharton.

"And jolly mean, too! I despise you!"

"You—you—you despise me!" said Wharton dazedly.

"Yes, utterly. I regard you with contempt. I never could stand a fellow who wasn't perfectly honourable. I'm rather particular myself, and I always think that a chap can't be too careful in money matters. Still, if you hand over my fiver at once I'm willing to overlook the whole matter, and treat it as a joke!"

"Isn't he a bent?" said Peter Todd admiringly, while Wharton stared speechlessly at Bunter. "It's no good. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 376.

getting into a fury, Wharton. I'm not going to let you lick my prize idiot."

"Why, I—I—I'll smash him," roared Wharton.

"Dishonest! Why, I—I——"

"Keep him off," yelled Bunter. "I knew he'd get waxy when I told him what I thought of him. I knew he would. Keep him off!"

"Order, order!" said Peter Todd soothingly. "You can't lick a fat pig like Bunter, dear boy. Besides, he can't fight with his barnacles on. Besides, moreover, and in addition, he belongs to my study, and it's my business to lick him. All you've got to do is to lend me a stump."

"Oh, really, Toddy——"

Wharton, in angry silence, looked on while Nugent handed Peter Todd a stump. Billy Bunter blinked in great uneasiness at the chief of No. 7 Study.

"Now, Bunter," said Peter, in his most magisterial manner, "you're convinced by this time that Johnny Bull meant half that remittance for you?"

"Of course he did!"

"And you think you're entitled to a fiver?"

"You jolly well know I am!"

"Exactly. And it's simply no good arguing with you, is it?"

"Certainly not!"

"Quite so. So I sha'n't argue; I shall use the stump. Take his ears, Nugent, and yank him across the hearthrug."

"Yaroooooh!"

Whack! Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Help! Fire! Murder! Thieves! Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, Bunter, is that fiver yours?"

"Yes!" yelled Bunter.

Whack! Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Now is it yours?"

"Yow! No! Help! No! Certainly not! Yarooooh!"

"Do you still think Johnny Bull meant it for you?"

"Yow! Yes—no! No—no! Of course not! Certainly not! Nothing of the kind. Ow!"

"Quite sure?"

"Yes, quite! Ow! Beast! Wow!"

"There, you see, he's changed his mind," said Peter Todd. "Let the fat beast wriggle up. If you have any further doubts on the matter at any time, Bunter, you've only got to tell me. I'll always have a cricket-stump ready."

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

Billy Bunter rolled to the doorway, and into the passage. He was not feeling inclined to pursue his claim for the moment. Peter Todd made a soothing gesture to Wharton, whose brow was still knitted.

"Don't be ratty, my son. Bunter can't help being a born idiot. He's convinced now that he was off-side. Ta-ta!"

"He ought to be in a home for idiots," growled Wharton.

"Well, he used to be in this study," Peter remarked.

"You can have him back if you like."

"Oh, don't be funny!"

Billy Bunter blinked in at the doorway.

"I—I say, you fellows——"

"Well?"

"I—I can take a joke, you know," mumbled Bunter.

"I—I don't bear any malice. I'm willing to overlook this."

"Go hon!" said Peter.

"But—but I say—really, you know——"

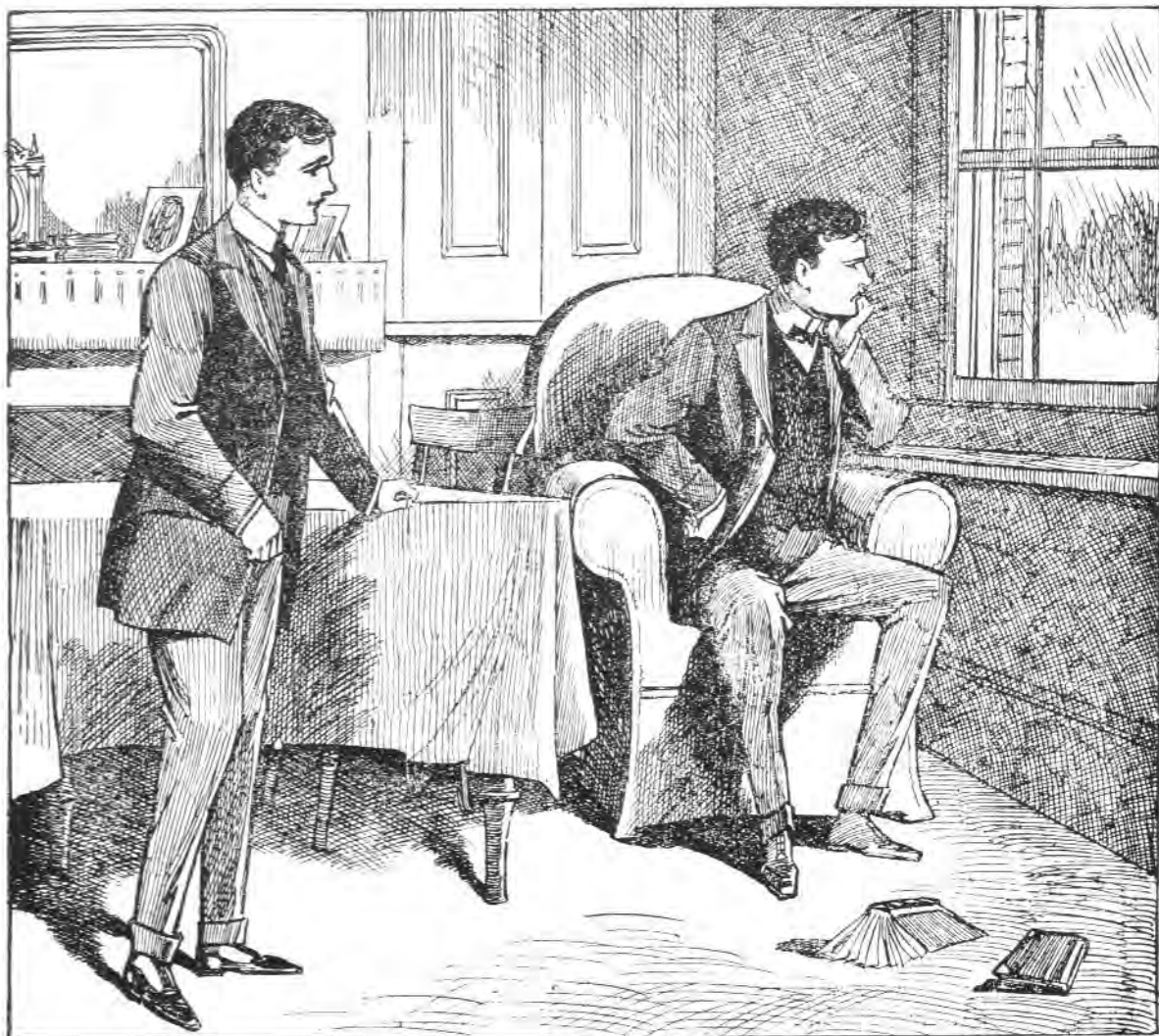
"Well?"

"Ain't I going to have my fiver?"

Peter Todd made a jump at him, flourishing the stump, and Bunter took to his heels, without any further inquiries after his fiver. Wharton kicked the door shut after Todd, and sat down, looking very much out of humour. Nugent was grinning.

"No good being ratty," he remarked. "The fellow's a born idiot. Blessed if he doesn't really think it is his fiver now. He'll be trying to burgle the study next, to get his fiver."

Wharton's brow cleared, and he smiled.



Courtney was there. He was not working. He was sitting by the window, gazing out into the rain, and there was a sombre, set look on his face. "Franky, old chap," murmured the Caterpillar, "don't kill me with a frown. I've come back, repentant and full of good resolutions!" (See Chapter 11.)

"I suppose it's no good being ratty with the blessed duffer," he agreed. "All the same— Oh, the silly ass! Never mind him. I was thinking of writing to Courtney and De Courcy at Highlife, and asking them to come to the celebration when Johnny Bull gets here."

"Jolly good idea!" said Nugent heartily.

And when prep was over, the letter to Courtney, of the Fourth Form at Highlife, was written, and posted; and Billy Bunter was dismissed from their minds. But the lost had not been heard of Bunter's claim—not by any means.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. The Black Sheep!

"FISHY, old man!"
Fisher T. Fish and Squiff were at work in their study when William George Bunter came in. Squiff went on with his work without looking up, and Fish paused.

"Yep?"

"I want a bunch of keys," said Bunter.

"Bunch of keys," said Fish thoughtfully. "Yep; I
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guess I could do a trade with you, Bunter. What sort of keys?"

"The fact is, I—I've lost a key to my desk," said Bunter. "I want a bunch of the kind of keys that will fit desks. I—I've got a lot of money locked up in my desk, and I can't get at it."

"I guess I can fill the bill."

Fisher T. Fish rose from the table. The Yankee junior always had something to sell; it was a habit of his, and he generally made a profit on his sales. On half-holidays, when other fellows were on the river or the playing-fields, Fisher T. Fish would spend hours and hours in roaming from one second-hand shop to another in Courtfield, picking up bargains, which he afterwards disposed of to fellows in the school at enhanced prices.

If a junior wanted a compass, or a pocket-knife, or a watch, or any old thing, so to speak, Fisher T. Fish was always willing to supply it. If he hadn't it in stock, he would always get it on the next half-holiday.

Fisher T. Fish was a born merchant. His "popper" in New York was a millionaire, according to Fishy, but Fish's allowance was very moderate for a millionaire's son and heir. He made more out of his little "trades" than he did out of his popper.

"I guess I've got the very thing you want," said Fish, opening a box. "I picked up a bunch of keys the other day at old Lazarus's, in his cheap box of odd-lots. Not that I got 'em cheap," he added hastily. "Old Lazarus is a screw, and prices rule high in these days—very high. I've got a bunch of keys here that you can have for a bob."

"I was thinking of a penny," said Bunter.
"Why, it cost me that!" exclaimed Fish indignantly.
"I—I mean, I can't trade with you. You're too mean, Bunter."

"Tuppence!" said Bunter.
Fish closed the box with a snap.
"Threepence, if the keys are all right," urged Bunter.
"I guess I've got my prep to do."
"Oh, really, Fishy, if you weren't a mean skunk, you know, you'd lend me the beastly keys, without asking anything at all."

"There's the door," said Fisher T. Fish.
"Look here, Fishy—"
"Oh, vamoose the ranch, do!"
"Fourpence," said Bunter.
"Oh, light out!"
"Fourpence, and you can have the keys back to-morrow."

"Now you're talking," said Fish, getting up from the table again. "Here's the keys—a splendid bunch of keys—more than a dozen, warranted to fit anybody's desk—splendid outfit for a sneak-thief or a burglar. Mind, you bring that bunch of keys back to me to-morrow."

"Right-ho! Give 'em to me, then."
"Where's the fourpence?"
"Ahem! The—the fact is, I—I'll bring the fourpence along with the keys to-morrow. I've been disappointed about a postal-order—"

"Then you'll be disappointed about a bunch of keys, too," said Fisher T. Fish grimly. "Get out of my study, you spoofing clam."

"Oh, really, Fishy, I can't open the desk, you know—I mean, my desk, and—and my money's inside. I'll settle up when I get my money, as soon as ever I've changed my banknote."

"I guess I'll believe in that banknote when I see it," growled Fish. "Still, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll come along with you and open your desk, if the keys'll fit it, and get the banknote out, if it's there—"

"Oh, no, that wouldn't do at all!" exclaimed Bunter hastily.

"Why wouldn't it?" demanded Fish suspiciously.
"Because—because—ahem! I say, Field, old man, you might lend me fourpence," said Bunter, blinking at Squiff. "This beastly Yankee would screw a fellow's last cent out of him. You ought to lend me fourpence, Field."

"Eh! Why ought I?" demanded Sampson Quiney Ilfey Field.

"Because—because you're an Australian, you know," said Bunter. "It's up to you to back up the Old Country, you know, against these disgusting neutrals."

Squiff, quite overcome by that argument, silently extracted four pennies from his pocket, and passed them to Bunter. He really considered that the Owl of the Remove deserved them for his check.

"Now gimme the keys, you blessed Shylock!" said Bunter.

And, quite forgetting to thank Squiff for his loan, Billy Bunter rolled out of the study with the keys in his pocket. He rolled along to No. 1 Study, and blinked in. He caught sight of Wharton and Nugent, and rolled hurriedly away again.

"Let 'em wait, the rotters!" murmured Bunter. "Just let 'em wait! The beasts—keeping my liver—my own money! I'll show 'em!"

Bunter went to No. 7 study to do his own preparation, which kept him busy till bed-time.

When the Remove went up to their dormitory, Harry Wharton stopped Hazeldene in the passage, while the other fellows went on. Hazel looked at him irritably.

"Just a word, Hazel, old chap," said Wharton, as good-naturedly as he could. "I told Marjorie I would speak to you—"

"Well, what about?" growled Hazel.

"If you are in any fix, I'd like you to tell me," said Harry. "I shouldn't preach you a sermon, but I'd help you out if I could."

"I'm not in a fix."
"You've been looking just as you looked the last time you got into a scrape. You were in debt then."

"I'm not in debt now."
Wharton felt relieved.

"Oh, good! Excuse my speaking, then. But you know you can rely on us to help you out of a scrape, that's all."

Hazel sneered.
"I know you take it on yourselves to interfere between my sister and me," he said. "I don't know why I stand it. Lots of fellows wouldn't. Ponsonby said he wouldn't stand it for a moment—" Hazel paused suddenly.

Wharton compressed his lips, and his eyes gleamed.
"It is like that Highcliffe cad to make mischief!" he said. "I suppose that means you are on with Ponsonby again."

"It's my own business if I am."
"It's not quite your own business, when you make other people get you out of your scrapes," said Wharton, his anger beginning to rise.

"Have I asked you to interfere?"
"You've asked me before now, and more than once."

"Yes; it's like you to remember it, and throw it in my face," said Hazel, with a nod. "Ponsonby wouldn't do a thing like that."

"Why, you cad!" burst out Wharton, deeply enraged at that comparison. To be compared unfavourably with the cad of Highcliffe was a little too much.

Hazeldene shrugged his shoulders.
"Have you stopped me here to call me names?" he asked. "If so, and if you're done, we'll get on to the dorm."

Wharton controlled his temper with an effort, remembering rather late that he had promised Marjorie not to quarrel with her brother.

"I don't want to throw anything in your face, as you put it," he said. "But, considering the fixes others have had to get you out of, and the promises you've made, we've a right to expect you to leave Ponsonby alone."

"I don't see it. I suppose my sister hasn't complained to you?" sneered Hazel. "I don't quite see what right you have to set up as her champion in this way, especially without being asked. You thought I went over to borrow money of her this afternoon; I could see it in all your faces, confound your meddling cheek! Well, suppose I did? I didn't borrow any, and it wouldn't be your business if I did. Suppose I am in want of money; you wouldn't be likely to lend me any. You've got ten quids you're going to waste, and you wouldn't stand me one of them!"

"Not to gamble with Ponsonby, certainly," said Wharton. "I think I can see what's the matter now. You've lost all you had, and Ponsonby won't play for waste paper, so you want more cash. I hope you won't get it."

"If you tell Marjorie that—"
"I sha'n't tell her. She ought to know, but I can't tell her," said Wharton. "I think you ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

Hazel clenched his hands.
"Do you kids know it's bedtime?" shouted Wingate along the passage.

The two Removes hurried on to the dormitory. Wharton did not speak to Hazel again. Further words would inevitably have led to a row, and he wanted to avoid that. His feelings were bitter. The wretched black sheep of the Remove, after his usual period of good behaviour following a bad scrape, had broken out—also as usual—and was playing his old foolish game again. And Ponsonby of Highcliffe was evidently doing his best to influence the weak and foolish fellow against the charm of the Remove, who were not likely to descend to Ponsonby's methods to keep in the good graces of a fellow like Hazeldene.

They could only stand aside till the inevitable trouble came, and then, for Marjorie's sake, they would chip

in, as they had done before, and drag the reckless fellow out of his difficulties, and listen to his promises of amendment, and then the usual period of good behaviour would follow till the fright had worn off. It was no wonder that the Co. were "fed up" with Hazeldene, and that, but for Marjorie's sake, they would have been tempted to let him go to the dogs his own way.

Hazeldene turned in sullenly, without a word. There was a sudden crash as Bill Bunter removed his tight garments. A bunch of keys had fallen on the floor.

"Hallo! Done with those keys, Bunter?" called out Fisher T. Fish.

"They're mine, you Shylock!"

"Only till to-morrow, I guess."

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Bunter. And he hastily put the keys out of sight, and turned in.

Wingate of the Sixth came in and put the light out. But, after the Remove had fallen asleep, there were two who remained wakeful, and listened to the hours striking from the clock-tower through the night. One was Hazeldene, and the other was Billy Bunter.

Hazel's eyes were gleaming in the darkness. He was thinking of the cards, of the money he had lost, and the money he had hoped to win; of how luck had been turning in his favour when he was "cleaned out," and how Ponsonby had politely but firmly refused to play for his I O U's, knowing that he would find money from somewhere to play, but that his I O U's were worth the paper they were written on, and no more. The gambling fever was in the wretched boy's breast. Every minute that he was away from the precious cards seemed a heavy burden.

Billy Bunter had his thoughts, too. He was thinking of "his fiver," locked up in Harry Wharton's desk, and of the bunch of keys he had obtained from the Yankee merchant, and of burglarious plans—quite justifiable from the Bunter point of view—which he had formed for that night.

But fivers and keys and schemes grew dimmer and dimmer in his mind, and at last a deep and unmusical snore resounded through the Remove dormitory, showing that William George Bunter was safe in the arms of Morpheus.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Missing!

"DON'T look much like cricket."

Bob Cherry made that dissatisfied remark, as the Remove turned out at the clang of the rising-bell the next morning.

The sky was deeply overcast, and a light rain was falling in the Close. It was a half-holiday that day at Greyfriars, and the juniors, who were looking forward to the match with St. Jim's, said things about the weather as they proceeded to dress. There was evidently to be no cricket practice that afternoon.

"Blessed storm coming on," said Nugent, "and Johnny's going to be on the Channel to-day."

"He'll be ready for a whacking feed when he gets in, then," said Peter Todd. "I know what the Channel's like. Groooh!"

There was a howl of wind in the Close, and the old elms were groaning. It was pretty plain that severe weather was coming on later. And the chums of the Remove thought of their chum, Johnny Bull, coming down the Channel from Cherbourg that day in the Black-bird steamer. Still, Johnny Bull was a good sailor, and a little attack of mal-de-mer, as Squiff remarked, would make him all the gladder to get home.

"Up with you, fatty!" shouted Peter Todd, waking up Billy Bunter with a swipe of his bolster.

"Yow-ow!" roared Bunter, coming suddenly out of dreamland. "Bob Cherry, you beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, it's you, Toddy, you rotter! I—I say"—Bunter sat up in bed and blinked—"I—I've overslept myself."

"I'll give you something to cure all that," said Peter Todd, dipping his sponge into the water.

Bunter rolled out of bed promptly.

"I—I mean, I've been fast asleep all night," he mumbled.

"You generally are, I believe, and you'd be fast asleep all the morning, too, if we let you," said Todd. "What's THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 376.

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the matter with you, owl? Why shouldn't you be fast asleep all night?"

"Oh, rats!" mumbled Bunter.

He did not reply to the question, but he growled very discontentedly as he proceeded to the "cat-lick," which he called a wash.

Fisher T. Fish tapped Bunter on the shoulder as they went downstairs.

"Done with my keys?" he asked.

"Go and eat coke! They're not your keys

"Haven't you opened your desk yet?"

"Blow my desk!"

"I'll come with you and open it now, I guess."

"Go and chop chips!"

"Look here, I shall have to charge two cents extra if you keep those keys all day," said the Remove merchant warningly.

Bunter snorted, and rolled away.

Just before morning school Harry Wharton ran up to his study for a book, and spotted Billy Bunter there. The Owl of the Remove was blinking at his desk, and Wharton caught him by the collar and pitched him out of the study without a word.

It was only too plain that William George Bunter had burglarious designs on that desk, and Wharton was not disposed to waste argument on him.

"Beast!" howled Bunter, as he fled.

During morning lessons Bunter was unable to conceal his impatience. Mr. Quelch came down on him several times for inattention, and he was down on Hazeldene, too, who looked quite pale and worried. Both of them were the richer by a hundred lines when the Lower Fourth were dismissed for the day.

After dinner the Famous Five looked out into the Close from the School House doorway with lugubrious expressions.

The rain was light, but it was steady, and the sky was still deeply clouded. There was an occasional roll of thunder in the distance, and the wind was making the elms creak and groan. In the distance they could hear the heavy surf thundering on the rocks of the great Shoulder.

"Jolly rough sea to-day," Bob Cherry remarked, "and it's going to be worse to-night. Johnny will be fed-up by the time he gets in."

"Still, he must be used to the sea, after getting as far as Port Said," said Frank Nugent. "He's pretty tough, too. I hope there won't be anything worse than bad weather for him."

"The German Fleet's not likely to come out," grinned Bob. "They know where they're safe, and they're fond of canals."

"There was a submarine spotted in the Channel yesterday," said Frank seriously, "and those murderous villains sink a ship at sight, without waiting to take off the crew or passengers. Of course, it's only a chance in a hundred."

"Everybody's risking it," said Bob. "The ships sail as usual, you know; nobody takes any notice of the German blockhead—I mean, blockade. It's really only the Kaiser's little joke. He's such a humorous old gent. Still, I wish Johnny were safe home. He'll be ashore to-morrow, anyway. Hallo, hallo, hallo! Going out, Hazel?"

Hazeldene had just come out of the School House, with his coat collar turned up. He nodded at Bob's cheery hail without speaking.

"Hold on!" said Bob. "We'll come along, too; we don't mind the rain."

"I've got an appointment," said Hazel, and he hurried on.

"Lot of good trying to be friendly with that chap, ain't it?" growled Bob, as he watched Hazeldene disappearing towards the gates. "Got a precious appointment! Huh! At Highcliffe, I suppose. Bunter's been yarning about seeing him playing cards with Ponsonby the other day."

"It's right enough," growled Wharton. "If he wasn't Marjorie's brother, I think I'd go after him and whop him bald-headed."

"The esteemed Marjorie would be infuriated."

"Not intimidated, you black ass!" said Bob Cherry. "Why the deuce don't you learn English—English English, I mean, not Indian English?"

"My esteemed Bob, I have studied English under the best native master in Bengal, who complimentarily assured me that my speakfulness was first-top class, and A1."

"Must have been a scorching, that master," said Bob, with a yawn. "I say, what's a fellow to do on a rainy afternoon? There are chaps who pass whole afternoons indoors without grumbling. I shall be dead by tea-time! Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow!"

"We haven't done the War Number of the 'Herald' yet," remarked Squiff. "It's been hanging about almost as long as the German attack on Calais."

"Yes; let's get on with that," said Wharton. "If we leave it much longer, it will have to be a Peace Number, and all the battle poems will be wasted."

The Famous Five proceeded to the editorial office, which was No. 1 Study. There was a sound of movement within as they approached the study, and Harry Wharton uttered an angry exclamation.

"That must be Bunter again!"

He threw open the door.

There was a sudden clink as a bunch of keys fell to the floor, and Billy Bunter spun round from the desk in alarm.

"Trying keys on the desk, by gum!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, in amazement.

"I—I say, you fellows—"

"You blessed young thief!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton, 'tain't stealing to take my own money—"

The Famous Five collared Bunter, and once more pitched him out. The fat junior bumped in the passage, but he blinked in a moment later.

"Gimme my keys."

Wharton picked up the bunch of keys and tossed them out of the open window into the Close. Bunter shook a fat fist, and rolled away in search of them.

"That fiver's quite Bunter's by this time," grinned Nugent. "Blessed if I thought he'd go so far as trying keys on the desk, though. I suppose he hasn't opened it."

"I'll jolly well see whether the banknotes are safe," said Wharton. "My hat! It's not safe to keep 'em there, if that fat villain has a key to fit the desk. I shall have to carry them in my pocket."

Wharton unlocked his desk, and opened the little drawer where he had placed the two five-pound notes.

Then he uttered a sharp exclamation.

"They're gone!"

"Gone!"

"Great Scott!"

The juniors crowded round to look in the drawer. It was empty. The two five-pound notes had been abstracted.

Bob Cherry gave a long whistle.

"They're gone right enough," he said; "the fat beast must have had them about him when we pitched him out."

"We'll soon get them back," said Nugent. "Don't look so jolly thundery, Wharton. The fat idiot hasn't sense enough to know he's stealing. It isn't the same as if anybody else did it."

"I'm blessed if I don't think a reformatory's the best place for him, all the same," said Wharton. "He will get into trouble if he keeps on like this. The Head would sack him if he knew, and I almost think we ought to tell him."

"No good being hard on the silly beast," said Bob. "He's got it into his fat head that Johnny meant half of that remittance for him. Let's go and get the notes back, and give him a hiding, and that's enough. We'll call Toddy."

Wharton nodded shortly. They found Peter Todd in No. 7 Study, reading law. Peter joined them at once when he heard what had happened. He looked very grave.

"I suppose you fellows don't want to give him away," he said. "He's not really a thief—he's a hopeless idiot. A thundering good hiding will meet the case."

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"Let's collar him before he has time to try to change the notes," said Wharton. "It won't be easy to keep it dark if anybody sees them."

The six juniors hurried out into the Close. They found Billy Bunter blinking over the ground under the study window, in search of the bunch of keys Wharton had tossed into the Close.

He squeaked as Peter Todd grasped him by the collar.

"Leggo, Wharton, you beast! Oh, it's you, Toddy! Help me to find my keys, will you? That rotter's chucked them out of the window! Wharrer you up to?"

"You're wanted, Bunter. Come up to the study."

"I'm not coming till I've found my keys. I'm getting jolly wet already. Leggo my collar! I tell you I'm not coming!"

"Do you want to be taken to the Head, Bunter?" snapped Wharton.

"Oh, rot! You take me to the Head, and I'll jolly well tell him about you keeping my five-pound note!"

"Carry the fat beast in if he won't walk!" growled Bob Cherry. "We can't stand here jawing in the rain."

"Lay hold of his hair!"

"Hold on! I'm coming!" howled Bunter. "Leggo, you beasts! I'm coming, ain't I?"

And Billy Bunter was marched up to No. 1 Study, where the six juniors followed him in, and the door was closed.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Condemned!

BILLY BUNTER blinked at the half-dozen Removites in some alarm.

He had expected a ragging, but there was no signs of ragging. The serious looks upon their faces alarmed him.

"I say, you fellows, what's the matter?" he mumbled. "What are you all looking like boiled owls for?"

"You know very well," said Wharton. "Give me the banknotes at once, Bunter, and we will keep this dark. We'll leave it to Todd to lam you."

"What banknotes?"

"The notes you have taken from my desk."

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Bunter peevishly. "You know you interrupted me before I could get the desk open."

The juniors stared at him. Bunter's guilt seemed so clear to them, that they had not expected even the champion Ananias to deny it.

"Do you mean to say that you didn't take them?" demanded Squiff.

"You know I didn't."

"Wha-a-at!"

"Every time I've come here, there was somebody here, or else I was interrupted before I could get a key to fit the lock," growled Bunter. "I don't believe any of the keys will fit it. That Fish is a swindler; I shall ask him for my fourpence back."

"What fourpence?" said Squiff. "So that is what you wanted the keys for? You told Fishy you wanted to open your own desk."

"Ahem! That—that was only a figure of speech," said Bunter. "I had to tell Fishy something. He wouldn't have given me the keys if he'd known I wanted to open Wharton's desk."

"Then you admit you meant to burgle my desk?"

"Tain't burbling to take your own property," said Bunter. "I meant to do it last night, but, somehow, I dropped off to sleep, and never woke up till that beast Cherry woke me this morning. Of course, I wasn't going to take both notes. Only one of them belongs to me."

"But you have taken both," exclaimed Wharton; "and you've got to hand both of them back at once, or you'll be taken to Mr. Quelch!"

Bunter blinked at him, and burst into a fat chuckle.

"Keep it up!" he said.

"Keep what up?"

"Oh, I know your little game! You're going to say now that the notes ain't in the desk at all, I suppose!"

"We've just found that they are missing."

"He, he, he!"

"What are you cackling at, you fat lunatic?" roared Peter Todd. "Can't you see that the matter is serious?" "Jolly serious for Wharton, if he don't put those notes back," said Bunter.

"I?" gasped Wharton.

"Yes, you. I know the little game. You're going to stick to those notes, and pretend I took them. Well, these fellows can let you stick to one of them if they like, but you're jolly well not going to stick to my one. I'm going to have the fiver Johnny Bull sent me, or there will be a row."

"Is he only lying, as usual, or is he mad?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Easy does it," said Todd. "Bunter, do you mean to say that you haven't taken the notes from Wharton's desk?"

"How could I, when I hadn't found a key to fit when these rotters interrupted me?"

"Yes or no, you fat idiot?"

"No," growled Bunter.

"But they're gone!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Wharton's got them, of course."

Wharton's face was crimson with rage. The accusation was, of course, utterly absurd, and he knew his chums would take no notice of it; but it was intensely exasperating all the same.

Nugent caught his chum by the arm, and Bunter backed away round the table.

"I say, don't be waxy, you know, Wharton," he remonstrated. "I don't mean to offend you, you know."

Wharton burst into an angry laugh. Bunter evidently thought there was no particular offence in accusing a fellow of stealing.

"You see, I'm simply telling the fellows where the notes are, if they ain't in your desk," explained Bunter. "I was going to take my one; but I shouldn't have touched the other. I hope I'm honest."

"You—you hope you're honest!" murmured Bob Cherry, almost overcome.

"Yes, certainly. I'm a rather particular chap in such matters—very different from some of you, I consider."

"Oh, suffocate him!" said Squiff.

"My idea is," pursued Bunter, with refreshing coolness, "that Wharton should produce the notes at once, and give me my one. Then I'm willing to say no more about the matter."

The chums of the Remove looked at one another in silence. Bunter was so hopeless a prevaricator, that his word could not be taken on any matter, great or small. Yet, somehow, he gave them the impression that he was speaking the truth, to the extent that he had not taken the notes. Yet the evidence against him was clear and unmistakable.

"Better search the beast," said Peter Todd at last. "He must have them about him, I suppose."

"I refuse to be searched," said Bunter loftily. "I regard that as an aspersion on my honesty. You'd better search Wharton."

"Will you hold your silly tongue?" shouted Wharton furiously.

"There you are, you see, he's getting into a temper. Guilty persons always fly into a temper," said Bunter.

Bob Cherry collared the fat junior, and Peter Todd went methodically through his pockets, in spite of his objections. But there was no sign of the notes on his person, and Peter's search was very thorough.

"Where have you hidden them?" asked Peter.

"Oh, don't be an ass," said Bunter peevishly. "You know very well that I don't know anything about them. Why don't you search Wharton? Or perhaps it was Nugent."

"We shall have to take him to Mr. Quelch, if he won't give up the notes," said Wharton. "We're not going to lose ten pounds and shield a dirty thief."

"It's bound to come out, too, when the duffer tries to pass the notes," said Nugent. "We should get into a row for keeping it dark. Come on, and let's get it over. Bring him along, Toddy."

"Come on, Bunter," said Todd.

Wharton opened the study door. Billy Bunter blinked at them in alarm. For the first time, the real seriousness of the situation began to dawn upon the obtuse mind of the Owl of the Remove.

"I—I say, you fellows, I—I don't want to go to Mr. Quelch," he stammered. "He—he wouldn't understand."

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about that fiver being mine, and—and he would be down on me for trying to open the desk."

"For stealing the notes, you mean."

"I haven't stolen them!" yelled Bunter. "I tell you I don't know anything about them, unless Wharton's got them. Perhaps it was Tom Brown."

"Tom Brown, you young villain!"

"Yes, the key of his desk fits Wharton's desk, you know. He lent it to Wharton once when he had mislaid his key."

"You vile young rascal!" said Wharton. Tom Brown, the New Zealand junior, was well known to be the soul of honour. "How dare you say such things about Brown?"

"Well, I didn't say it was Brown, I only said it might be. But it wasn't me, anyway. I tell you I hadn't found a key to open the desk."

"Wait a bit," said Peter Todd. "I—I can't help thinking that Bunter isn't lying so much as usual, somehow. Let's find those keys. If there's one of them that fits the desk, that will settle it."

"Oh, good! And if there isn't?" said Squiff.

"That will prove Bunter's yarn."

"Keep the fat brute here, and I'll soon get the keys," said Wharton.

Wharton hurried away, to search in the rainy Close for the bunch of keys. He was not long in finding them, where they had fallen under the window. He returned to No. 1 Study with the keys in his hand.

Billy Bunter was looking, and feeling, utterly uneasy now. He had purchased that bunch of keys from Fisher T. Fish, in the hope that one of them would fit Wharton's desk. Now he hoped more fervently still that one of them did not fit it.

Wharton tried key after key on the desk. It was a common lock enough, and it was probable that one key out of a dozen would fit it. And so it proved; the tenth key he tried turned the lock quite easily.

"That settles it!" said Bob Cherry.

"The settlefulness is terrific. The esteemed Bunter is a ludicrous thief!"

Harry Wharton threw the bunch of keys on the table.

"It's settled. Now, Bunter, we know that you opened this desk, and took the banknotes. Will you hand them over at once, or will you come to Mr. Quelch?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Will you hand me those notes?"

"How can I, when I've not got them?"

"Then come along!"

Wharton grasped the Owl of the Remove by the shoulder and marched him to the door. His mind was made up now. Bunter burst into a terrified yell.

"Toddy! Toddy! I won't go! Toddy, old man!"

And Billy Bunter caught hold of Peter Todd, and clung to him, fairly blubbering with terror.

THE NINTH CHAPTER. The Benefit of the Doubt!

HARRY WHARTON released the fat junior.

In spite of their anger and indignation, the Removes could not help feeling a sentiment of compassion for the miserable Owl.

Peter Todd's face had softened.

Bunter's instinctive appeal to him had gone to Peter's heart. He let the wretched Owl of the Remove cling to him.

"Hold on a bit, you chaps," said Peter awkwardly.

"Give the poor beast time!"

"I won't go to Mr. Quelch," wailed Bunter. "I tell you he wouldn't understand about that fiver being really mine. I should get a flogging! They might sack me. Keep off, Wharton, you beastly bully!"

Wharton flushed.

"I'm not bullying you, Bunter. You can't reasonably expect us to let you rob us of ten pounds, and keep the money."

"I don't know anything about it."

"You've admitted that you meant to steal half of it."

"That wasn't stealing, when it was practically my money. But, besides that, I didn't touch it. How could I, when you interrupted me before I found a key to open the desk?"

"Bunter, old man, you'd better own up," urged Peter Todd. "We don't want to be hard on you—we know you're a born idiot. Give Wharton the banknotes, and we'll keep it all dark, if you'll promise not to do anything of the sort again."

"I haven't got any banknotes, Toddy."

"You had a key to the desk, Bunter, and you got it specially to open the desk. You can't expect us to swallow that, you know. Besides, somebody must have taken the notes, as they're gone."

"It was somebody else, then. There's another key. There's Tom Brown's key."

"If you say another word about Tom Brown, I'll yank you off to Quelch at once, by the scruff of the neck!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Well, there's Bulstrode and Hazeldene—"

"What?"

"Brownie always leaves his key in his desk, and they're in his study, and they could have used it if they liked."

"They're not beastly thieves," said Wharton, "and you are. You've owned up that you meant to steal one of the notes."

"Well, anybody could have borrowed Brown's key. Lots of the fellows know that it fits your desk. You ought to have put the notes in a safer place."

"I never thought about Brown's key—I'd forgotten, and I wasn't expecting the notes to be stolen, either—unless you could get at them. I knew what would happen then," said Wharton savagely. "And anybody couldn't get Brown's key. You'd have got it if you could."

"Well, anybody in his study could get it," said Bunter. "How do you know it wasn't Bulstrode?"

"I do know, anyway."

"Or Hazeldene?" said Bunter. "He's been gambling with Ponsonby, and very likely he owes him money. I shouldn't be surprised if it was Hazeldene."

"Will you shut up, you slandering cad?" said Bob Cherry, indignant rather on Marjorie's account than Hazel's own, at that insinuation. "Blessed if you don't chuck accusations about like snowballs. It was Wharton and Nugent a few minutes ago."

"Why don't you own up, Bunter, and have done with it?" said Nugent. "Look here, we've got to get this done. Those Highlife chaps will be coming over to tea, if the rain doesn't stop them. We don't want them to drop on to this."

"Toddy, old man, you believe me, don't you?" said Bunter beseechingly.

"How can I, Billy?" said Peter uneasily. "It's jolly plain that you took the notes, you know."

"I tell you I didn't!"

"Well, what's going to be done?" said Squiff, at last.

The sight of tears streaming down Bunter's fat face disarmed the juniors, indignant as they were. They felt that they could not haul up the miserable Owl before Mr. Quelch.

The juniors looked inquiringly at Peter Todd. They depended upon him for a decision.

"I—I suppose it's rot, but somehow I can't help thinking that Bunter isn't lying as usual," said Peter hesitatingly. "He always contradicts himself when he lies, and he hasn't contradicted himself this time. His lies always get mixed up, but this time he's told a straight yarn, though it's pretty steep."

"But somebody's taken the notes," said Wharton.

"I know. But— Look here, you don't want the money till Johnny Bull comes, and he won't be here before to-morrow night, most likely Friday. Suppose we give Bunter time to think

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it over. There's a point in Bunter's favour, though he's too fatheaded to see it himself."

"So am I, then," said Wharton. "I can't see it."

"You haven't studied law as I have," said Peter cheerfully. "What was Bunter doing when we collared him in the Close?"

"Looking for his keys."

"Exactly. That's the point in his favour."

"Blessed if I see—" began Bob Cherry.

"I'm pointing it out to you," said Peter Todd politely. "Naturally, you wouldn't see it till then. What I mean is, if Bunter had already opened the desk and taken the notes, he would have done with the keys. He wouldn't want to go out in the rain and hunt for them when he didn't want them any longer. They're not worth anything."

"By Jove!" said Wharton.

Peter's argument impressed the juniors. Certainly Bunter had been hunting desperately for the keys, and getting wet in the process, when they had found him in the Close. There was no need for him to find the keys if he had already opened the desk.

"Moreover," went on Todd quietly, "if Bunter had just taken the notes when you found him in the study and booted him out, they ought to be somewhere about him. You found out almost at once that they were missing, and we went and found him in the Close. He hadn't very much time to hide the notes anywhere."

"Not very much, but enough, all the same," said Bob.

"Granted. But there's another point—he didn't take the notes to hide them. He's such a silly ass that he'd have gone straight to the tuckshop to try and change them. If he had the notes we should have found him in Mrs. Mumble's shop, not squirming in the rain looking for a bunch of keys."

"Then you think—"

"No, I don't; I only say that that's a point in Bunter's favour. It's a jolly serious thing to accuse a fellow of stealing, if there's a shadow of a doubt."

"There's his own admission that he intended to steal. It's only a question whether some other rotter got ahead of him!" growled Wharton.

"All the same, if some other rotter did get ahead of him, he didn't steal the notes. I suggest giving Bunter time to think it over. Bunter, I suppose you understand that Wharton has the numbers of the notes, and you can't change them. Whoever tries to change these notes will be arrested when the numbers are notified."

"I was only going to take my oae," mumbled Bunter. "If Wharton was mean enough to publish the numbers and say they were both his, of course I shouldn't try to change my one, if I had it. I should know that I should be misunderstood. But I haven't got it; I haven't got either of them. If Wharton hasn't got them I don't know where they are."

"No good acting in a hurry," said Todd. "Are you fellows agreeable to leaving it over till to-morrow?"

The juniors nodded assent.

"I don't see that it's much good," said Wharton, "but we'll leave it till to-morrow if you like. Only if Bunter doesn't own up he's got to be shown up. We don't want a thief in the Remove."

"Get out, Bunter," said Todd.

"You've got till to-morrow to think it over, and I'm going to think it over, too."

Bunter rolled to the door, his tears dried up at once. At the door he paused, and blinked back at the Famous Five.

"I say, you fellows, did you say the Highlife chaps are coming over—Courteau and the Caterpillar, I suppose?"

"Yes; get out!"

"You'll be standing them a pretty good tea, I suppose," said Bunter.

"Well, I'll come!"

For Next Monday:

- THE - MYSTIC CIRCLE!

Another Splendid,
Long, Complete Story
of the Chums of
Greyfriars.

—By—

FRANK RICHARDS.

Order in Advance.

PRICE ONE PENNY.



The study door was thrown open, and Tom Brown looked in with an excited face. He had his cap and macintosh on. "You fellows coming?" he exclaimed. "What's on?" asked Wharton. "Haven't you heard—Coker's just brought in the news! There's a steamer on the rocks—a giddy wreck! They're taking out the lifeboat! (See Chapter 13.)

"What!"

"I don't hear any malice for this, you know, now you've owned up you've made a mistake. You see, I'm stony, and now Wharton's been careless with those bank-notes, I shan't have my fiver. The least you can do is to ask me to tea. Yaroooh!"

Bunter departed from the study with the assistance of Bob Cherry's boot, and the door slammed after him.

"What do you think of that?" said Peter Todd. "It's jolly odd, but Bunter didn't do it. He meant to, I admit, but he didn't. But who did? That's a giddy mystery."

"It's unfair to suspect any other chap when we knew Bunter meant to do it, and all the evidence proves that he did do it," said Wharton.

Peter Todd shook his head.

"Either Bunter's innocent, or he's the best actor I've THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 375.

ever seen," he said, "and we know he isn't an actor. When he tells lies he tells so many they spoil one another, and give him away. He was telling the truth—I admit it's miraculous—but I really believe he was telling the truth. Anyway, he ought to have the benefit of the doubt."

"But what about the tenner? We can't lose that."

Peter Todd rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"No, you can't lose that," he agreed. "But you won't lose it, if you notify the numbers of the two fivers to the police."

"We can't do that! We don't want Greyfriars dragged into the papers," said Wharton irritably. "We don't want that fat imbecile sent to prison either. It's a matter for our Form-master to deal with, not the police. We'll keep it quiet till to-morrow, if you like. I hope Bunter will have sense enough to own up by that time."

Peter Todd nodded, and left the study, looking very

thoughtful. The chums of the Remove, with somewhat worried faces, set about getting tea ready for the visitors from Highcliffe—if they should come over in spite of the rain.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Hazel's Plunge!

HAZELDENE came across the quadrangle at Highcliffe in the rain, and two juniors who were looking out at the doorway glanced at him. They were Courtenay and De Courcy of the Fourth Form, the two Highcliffe fellows who were on "pally" terms with Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, much to the annoyance of Ponsonby & Co. Courtenay and his chum had been looking at the weather, and debating whether they should venture out that rainy afternoon.

"There's a fellow who has chanced it, Caterpillar," said Courtenay. "He's come over from Greyfriars. Besides, it may clear up before tea-time; we haven't got to go yet."

"It won't clear up," said De Courcy. "It's going to blow to-night. And that chap would go out in a thunder-storm, if there was a game of nap at the end of it."

"He may have a message for us," said Courtenay.

"Bow-wow!" said the Caterpillar. "Don't you recognise him? It's Hazeldene—Ponsonby's pal. Pon's got his friends at Greyfriars as well as us. He does pretty well out of them, too. I know he's been rooking that silly ass, and it seems that he's going to rook him again this afternoon. Some silly asses are born to look for trouble, by gad!"

"It ought to be stopped!" growled Courtenay.

The Caterpillar chuckled.

"Our respected Mr. Mobbs keeps a blind eye on Pon's study," he remarked. "Tell you what, Franky, I'll strike a bargain with you."

"How?" asked Courtenay.

"You want to drag me over to Greyfriars in the rain to hear those frightfully energetic fellows talk cricket?"

Courtenay laughed.

"A walk will do you good, you slacker!"

"Well, I'll come, on conditions," said the Caterpillar. "The sight of that gay dog—looks remarkably gay, don't he?—makes me yearn for my old wicked days before I knew you, Franky. You remember I was a wild and woolly blade before you came along with the stern morality you learned from the workin' classes, and snatched me like a brand from the burnin'. It was a good deed, Franky—a good deed," said the Caterpillar solemnly. "It was a noble deed, and I forgive you freely. But this afternoon I have a yearnin' to be a blade again, to roll in baccy-smoke in Pon's study, and revel in the wild delights of bridge at a quid a hundred. I feel an irresistible impulse to be a dog once more, just as I was before you snatched me like a brand—"

"Oh, chuck it!" said Courtenay. "What have you got in your head now, Caterpillar?"

"A scheme," said De Courcy. "A scheme, my son—a scheme scheme. Why should you have a monopoly of noble deeds? Why shouldn't I take a leaf out of your book, and snatch a brand from the burnin'? You go away and study Virgil—entertainin' old buck, Virgil, for fellows who like him—and I'll go to Pon's study and revel in wickedness. No, don't argue, old chap; you know arguin' bores me."

The Caterpillar turned away before the puzzled Courtenay could reply, and greeted Hazeldene, who had reached the house, and was coming in.

"Good-afternoon, my young friend!" said the Caterpillar urbanely. "You've come over to see Pon—what? I'll take you to his study."

"Caterpillar!" said Courtenay, his brow clouding.

The Caterpillar shook a delicately-manieured forefinger at him.

"Go and worry Virgil, old chap. Go and revel in the Georgies. Follow the pious Aeneas through that thrillin' scene of the shipwreck, that Mobby was borin' us with this mornin'. For this afternoon," said the Caterpillar solemnly, "I am a blade, a nut, and a card. Positively for one occasion only. This way, Hazeldene, leave your

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coat here; you're rather wet—what? Don't scowl, Franky; it doesn't suit your style of beauty. Come on, Hazeldene!"

The Caterpillar disappeared with Hazeldene, leaving Courtenay perplexed and a little exasperated. The Caterpillar could be exasperating at times.

De Courcy knocked at the door of Ponsonby's study.

"Who's there?" called out the voice of the dandy of Highcliffe. The study door was locked.

"Little me," said the Caterpillar gently. "I've brought you a visitor—a bold and roarin' blade from Greyfriars, Pon."

Hazeldene made a gesture of annoyance. There was an indefinable air of mockery about the Caterpillar that irritated him, yet De Courcy was quite polite, and, in fact, urbanity itself. Somehow his manner had the effect of making Hazeldene feel that he, and his purpose in visiting Ponsonby, were both ridiculous.

The door was unlocked and thrown open, and the two juniors entered. There was a haze of tobacco-smoke in the study, and cards and money on the table—a sufficient explanation of the locking of the door. Even Mr. Mobbs, Pon's extremely indulgent Form-master, could not have been allowed actually to see what was going on in Pon's study.

Gadsby and Monson and Vavasour were gathered round the table. They gave the Caterpillar a shout of welcome.

"Come on, Caterpillar! Come back to the giddy fold!" said Gadsby.

"Welcome, my dear man," lisped Vavasour—"absolutely! By-gones are giddy by-gones! Come back to your old pals and be pally!"

Ponsonby closed the door and locked it again. He, too, was glad to see the Caterpillar there. It looked as if the slacker of the Fourth was breaking away from Frank Courtenay's influence at last.

"Thank you, dear boys!" said the Caterpillar urbanely.

"You overwhelm me. You really do. The sight of this bold and roarin' blade from Greyfriars has roused a cravin' in my breast for a really wild time. Let us be joyful, my young friends. Let us have a nobby time. Let us smoke till we are sick and seedy, and win and lose money till we feel inclined to throttle our best pals over it. In a word, let's be giddy blades."

"Oh, squat down, and don't jaw, old chap!" said Ponsonby. "You're just as fond of a game as anybody here. Sit down, Hazel. You look chilly. Try some of this coffee. It'll buck you up. Now, what's the game?"

"We're too many for bridge," drawled the Caterpillar. "Does our young friend, Hazel, whom we are initiating into our noble manners and customs, play the celebrated game of poker?"

"No, I don't," said Hazel sharply, not liking the Caterpillar's manner. "I'd rather play nap. That's my game."

"Nap it is," said the Caterpillar. "I'm sure all the gentlemen present wish to meet the wishes of our Greyfriars friend, who is settin' such a noble example to the other Greyfriars fellows—those frightfully energetic fellows who fag themselves at cricket, and bore a chap to tears talkin' about it. I'll sit out and watch; I'm rather good at watchin' any game."

"No; I'm not playin' for a bit," said Monson. "You pile in, Caterpillar."

"Soit!" said the Caterpillar, who had a way of dropping into French. "I suppose we are plugin'—what?"

"That depends on Hazel," said Ponsonby. "We're all pretty well heeled here."

Hazel frowned.

"I can keep my end up, I think," he said. "I suppose you can change some fivers for me: I haven't had time to get change. My pater turned up trumps this morning," he added, with a flush.

"Rely on Pon," said the Caterpillar. "He will change anything up to a hundred, or I could oblige you, if you like."

"Well, I haven't got ten quid in a lump," said Ponsonby.

"Then let me have the pleasure, Hazel. You don't mind if I call you Hazel? We shall be quite pally soon," said the Caterpillar. "In the cheery atmosphere of this

study, it's impossible not to get pally. Two fivers! Thanks! I think that's ten quid."

The Caterpillar negligently rolled out ten sovereigns from a little leather case, which contained a good many more. Hazel flushed uncomfortably again. The wretched black sheep of the Remove had meant to impress the Highcliffe nuts with his banknotes; but he was among a set of rich fellows, and what was wealth to him was nothing to the Caterpillar. He slid the ten sovereigns over to his side of the table, and nodded shortly. De Courcy took up the rustling notes.

"Here's a fountain-pen," he remarked. "You wouldn't mind signin' them?"

Hazel started back.

"Why should I sign them?"

"I always sign banknotes before I part with them," said the Caterpillar. "Don't you?"

"No, I don't."

"Then it's all serene," said the Caterpillar, slipping the notes carelessly into his pocket. For a moment his eyes, that looked so sleepy, dwelt on Hazeldene's face with a piercing look, but it was only for a moment. Hazel's face had gone as white as a sheet. "Let's get goin', dear boys. I'm yearnin' for it—simply yearnin'."

The young rascals were soon going. There came a tap at the door a few minutes later, and Courtenay's voice called out:

"Are you there, Caterpillar?"

"Sounds as if he's on the telephone, doesn't he?" said the Caterpillar. "Yaas, I'm here, Franky, goin' it hot and strong!"

"I wish you'd come, Caterpillar."

"Can't dear boy. I'm gamblin'."

"What!"

"Gamblin'!" shouted the Caterpillar.

"Shush!" said Ponsonby. "You duffer! Suppose somebody should come along and hear you?"

"My word!" chuckled the Caterpillar. "If Mobby came along he would have a deaf ear as well as a blind eye. Go away, Franky. Go and swoot over Virgil! Go and eat coke! Don't interrupt a fellow when he's gamblin'!"

Courtenay's retreating footsteps were heard. The nuts chuckled joyously. They settled down to their game in great spirits.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Caterpillar's Little Game!

THERE came no further interruption to the "little game."

Courtenay, angry or disgusted, or whatever he felt, had gone. The Caterpillar was free to go on "gamblin'" as long as he liked, so far as his chum was concerned.

The Caterpillar did not smoke. "Fags" were urged upon him, but he shook his head and declined. But he was certainly gambling. Nap for half-sovereign points meant a good deal of money on the table.

But—what did not always happen in Ponsonby's study—it was a fair game. For Pon knew that the Caterpillar, for all his sleepy looks and slacking ways, was as keen as a razor, and Pon had no desire to have his cards thrown in his face. While the Caterpillar was in the game, Ponsonby was careful to play "square." Certainly, the young rascals had intended to "skin" Hazeldene; but Hazel was so excited, eager, feverish that he had little chance, anyway. With the gaming fever burning in his veins, his head hot with excitement and greed, he was no match for the cool and calculating Ponsonby and his friends.

There were little heaps of gold and silver on the table, and faces grew hard and eager over the money and the cards. The atmosphere of the study was thick with the smoke of incessant cigarettes.

More than once a curse dropped from boyish lips as the cards came up unluckily. This was "enjoyment," as understood by the nuts of Highcliffe.

Hazel's face showed how "enjoyment" of that kind agreed with him. His looks were tense, drawn, almost haggard; his hands trembled on the cards. He lost, and lost again, and grew more reckless as he lost, more desperate, in the hope of winning back his losses—ever the fatal folly of the gambler. Ten pounds, to a Remove fellow at Greyfriars, was a large sum of money; but in Ponsonby's study it did not seem to go very far. When

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE MYSTIC CIRCLE!"

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

Hazel called nap, and failed to get it, he had to pay out five half-sovereigns, and his stock of cash was soon depleted.

But he did not even think of lower stakes. He was more inclined to increase them than otherwise.

The Caterpillar lost at first. De Courcy had plenty of money, and did not seem to care twopence whether he won or lost. That was, indeed, the frame of mind in which a gambler may win. And fortune soon favoured the Caterpillar. Money came over to his side of the table and stayed there.

When he was about level on the game he looked at his watch.

"Oh, you're not going?" said Ponsonby.

"Oh, no! But I have to leave at half-past four. Engagement, you know. Win or lose, I have to go, so I want that understood, dear boys."

"Done!" said Ponsonby.

"Then we'll run on," said the Caterpillar. "Rippin', isn't it? In surroundin's like these I feel my whole nature expandin'. Don't you, Hazel?"

"Eh—what? My deal," said Hazel.

A single sovereign lay before Hazel now. But fortune, as if to taunt him, changed in his favour, and soon there was a pile of half-crowns and half-sovereigns before him. His pale face flushed, the harassed look departed; his eyes gleamed with success and with insatiable greed. The Caterpillar's glance dwelt upon him with an amused smile. He would keep on and on in the hope of winning more, till fortune robbed him once more. Indeed, he could scarcely rise from the table a winner and refuse to play longer; it would not have been quite the game. But he did not want to; he wanted to play and play till he had cleaned out all his fellow-players—a result that he was certainly not likely to achieve. Even then he would not have been satisfied; for the gambler, greedy for more and more spoil, is incapable of satisfaction.

The Caterpillar's pile increased, and Hazel's went down in size. Vavasour was losing, too, and so was Gadsby. Twenty pounds were piled up before the Caterpillar when Hazeldene's last coin went. He sat, with a stunned look on his face. Ponsonby shuffled the cards.

"You needn't give me any," said Hazel, in a hollow voice.

"Not tired out already, old son?"

"I'm broke!"

"Hard cheese!" said the Caterpillar. "But you've had a roarin' time. Nothin' like bein' a sport and havin' a roarin' time, is there?"

Hazel gave him a look of hatred and staggered to his feet.

Without a farewell to the Highcliffians, he left the study, and his unsteady steps died away down the passage.

The wretched junior was gone—penniless. His new wealth was lost, and Hazel only knew where he had obtained it.

There was a chuckle among the Highcliffe nuts after he was gone.

"The roarin' blade seems a bit downhearted," remarked the Caterpillar.

"The silly ass!" said Ponsonby contemptuously. "He thinks he's a sportsman! Goodness knows where he dug up ten quid to-day. He's generally askin' for a game with about ten bob in his pocket. He'll go home and swear repentance now, and it'll last about a month. I know him—weak-kneed ass! Let's get on!"

The Caterpillar looked at his watch again.

"I've got another half-hour," he remarked. "I don't want to leave off a winner. I've bagged all that silly idiot's ten, and ten from you chaps, by gad!"

The Caterpillar slid ten sovereigns into his purse. It was the amount of Hazel's losses.

From that moment the Caterpillar played badly. Precisely when the half-hour was up he had lost the ten pounds that remained before him on the table. Then he rose to his feet with a yawn.

"Ta-ta!" he remarked.

"Oh, stick on a bit!" said Vavasour. "I'm a loser."

"Then you must take it out of Pon. I warned you that I had to clear at half-past four, win or lose," said the

Caterpillar urbanely; "as it happens, I've bagged our young Greyfriars friend's tenner, and I'm square with you fellows. Very favourable moment for gettin' off. Good-bye!"

De Courcy lounged to the door.

"Another little game another time?" said Gadsby.

The Caterpillar shook his head.

"No," he said; "I've satisfied the wild yearnin' for a wicked plunge, and I'm turnin' over a new leaf. Franky snatched me once like a brand from the burnin'. I'm goin' to let him snatch me again. I'm repentin' sincerely. Good-bye!"

And the Caterpillar, with a cool nod, departed.

Ponsonby looked puzzled as he closed the door after him.

"Blessed if I can make the Caterpillar out," he said. "I believe he lost that last ten quid on purpose. He seems to have come here specially to bag Hazel's money and let us have ours back. I can't see what he can have up against Hazel. Queer beggar."

Ponsonby & Co. continued their little game, and dismissed both the Caterpillar and Hazeldene from their minds.

The Caterpillar strolled along to No. 3 Study, where he expected to find his chum.

Courtenay was there.

He was not working. He was sitting by the window, gazing out into the rain, and there was a sombre, set look on his face.

"Franky, old chap," murmured the Caterpillar, "don't kill me with a frown. I've come back, repentant, and full of good resolutions."

"Caterpillar, old man," said Courtenay miserably, "I don't want to interfere with you, you know that; but—but I did think you'd chucked that kind of thing."

"So did I," said the Caterpillar, "ever since I had the inestimable blessin' of learnin' somethin' of the stern morality of the workin' classes from you, old scout. But ain't you goin' to kill the fatted calf for the returnin' prodigal? Or do you feel that you can't be pally with a blackguard like me any longer?" The Caterpillar sighed. "Break it gently, Franky. Don't hit too hard all at once!"

Courtenay smiled.

"Whatever you did, Caterpillar, you'd be my best pal all the same, so long as you want to be. But—but—Well, least said soonest mended. Goodness knows, I don't want to preach at you."

"Thanks, old chap," said the Caterpillar, unmoved. "You despise me in your heart, but you pity me for havin' had the horrid misfortune of bein' brought up among a set of blackguardly aristocrats, so you won't be hard on me. I understand, Franky. I've shocked you and pained you. But look at the loot, Franky. Two fivers, my boy! Just look at it, and rejoice with me in the spoil of the Egyptians!"

De Courcy fluttered the two five-pound notes in the air.

"From Pon?" asked Courtenay.

"Oh, no! They won back all I cleared them out of. This is the plunder of the young hero from Greyfriars—the brother of that nice girl at Cliff House. All he had, you know," said the Caterpillar negligently. "You should have seen his face when he went: looked as if he were goin' to execution, by gad! White as chalk, Franky, and tremblin' like a—a—what's that tree in the poems that trembles?—oh, an aspen, you know!"

Courtenay sprang to his feet.

"Caterpillar! Either you're pulling my leg, or you're a dashed blackguard!" he broke out, hotly.

The Caterpillar chuckled.

"Fortunately, I'm only pullin' your leg, you thumpin' old ass, Franky! How could I forget all the sermons you've given me, all the morality you've instilled into me since you snatched me like a brand from the burnin'? I really think you owe me an apology, Franky. I've done a good deed—a noble deed—though I say it myself, it was a noble deed, a regular corker!" chuckled the Caterpillar. "You see, that miserable ass was comin' here to be rooked. So I chipped in, an' took his money, and saved it from the clutches of the Philistines—see? My idea is that he's been gamblin' with money he's not

allowed to spend, and he'll get into a row. He doesn't look like a fellow with ten quid to spare, does he?"

"Ten quid! I should say not."

"And he turned as white as a sheet when I suggested that he should sign these notes on the back," grinned the Caterpillar. "I did it to test him. He looked as if he was scared out of his wits. I believe he was. Now he's had a really valuable lesson from Pon & Co. on the subject of bein' a giddy goat and a bold, roarin' plunger, an', by gad, he looks as if the lesson had been well rubbed in! Are you ready to come over to Greyfriars, Franky? If I take these notes back to their owner personally it will save a penny stamp."

Courtenay felt a lump in his throat.

"I'm sorry I doubted you, Caterpillar. I ought to have known—"

"Of course you ought," assented the Caterpillar at once.

"But—but will the chap take his money back?"

"I fancy he'll be glad to. I rather surmise he'll get into some frightful scrape if he doesn't get those bank-notes back; he looked like it. Shouldn't be surprised if the money wasn't his own own at all, judging by his looks, the miserable ass!"

"But suppose you had lost, Caterpillar; you wouldn't have got the money then?" said Courtenay.

"Yes, I should, my son. I only wanted to win his money, an' I was prepared to lose my own," explained the Caterpillar. "I shouldn't miss a few quid; I've been rollin' in money ever since you stopped me puttin' it on gee-gees. But, as it happened, I had good luck. You see, the good Pon didn't dare to try any rookin', under my glitterin' eye. Come on; let's go and get rid of the stolen goods. I've done a noble deed, an' it bucks me up no end, and I really think I could walk to Greyfriars."

Courtenay laughed, and they started through the rain for Greyfriars. And all the way the Caterpillar purred with glee, and a dozen times at least drew Courtenay's attention to the fact that he had done a noble deed—a regular corker.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Returned to the Owner!

"I SAY, you fellows, you look wet!"

Billy Bunter greeted the chums of Highcliffe as they arrived. Courtenay and the Caterpillar were dripping with rain. The weather was growing darker and wilder, and the fierce wind from the sea howled over Greyfriars.

The two juniors were glad to get into the shelter of the School House, and to get the big door closed behind them. They took off their dripping raincoats and caps.

"Yaas, it's a little wet, my plump young friend," said the Caterpillar; "that's owin' to the rain, you know. Anybody at home?"

"Those rotters are in the study, getting tea," said Bunter. "They're expecting you, though Bob Cherry said you were too much of a slacker to come out in the rain unless Courtenay yanked you out."

"How well he knows me, after a short acquaintance," said the Caterpillar urbanely. And Courtenay laughed.

"I say, you fellows," pursued Bunter, "it's going to be a ripping feed."

"How good!" yawned the Caterpillar. "By the way, Grunter—is your name Grunter?"

"Bunter."

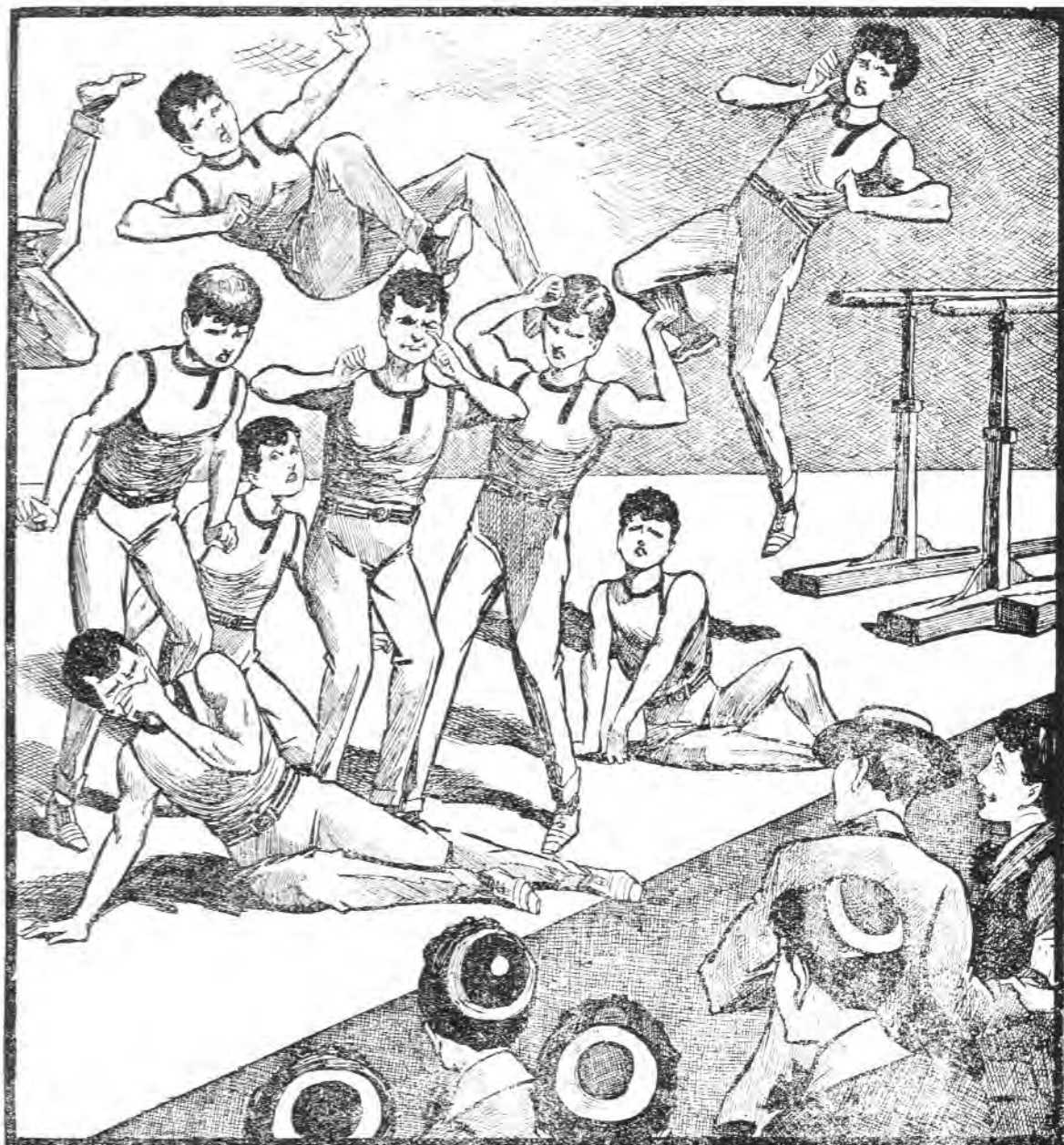
"By the way, Bunter, has Hazeldene come in yet?"

Billy Bunter grinned.

"Yes, rather. Looked like a ghost," he said. "He's had a bad time. Did you see him over at Highcliffe? I'll bet he's been there with Ponsonby again; he looked like it. I asked him if he'd lost, and he hit me, the beast! Punched my nose. I'd have mopped up the floor with him, but—but I thought I'd let him off, considering."

"You are a forbearin' and generous chap, Bunter."

"Yes, I am; I always was good-natured," said Bunter. "I'll come in to tea with you chaps, if you like. I was going to stand a big feed, and ask you fellows, only I've lost my five-pound note—I mean, Wharton lost it. He's lost his own, too, and serve him jolly well right, I say. If I came in with you chaps, those beasts wouldn't say



When Micky Desmond, in the middle of the bottom row, paused in his efforts to scratch his nose, disaster swiftly followed. There was a swaying and bumping and tumbling, and the juniors sprawled in different directions on the floor. (For this screamingly funny incident you should read "BL STEPS HUSH-MONEY!" the magnificent long complete 22,000-word story of Harry Wharton & Co. contained in our new companion paper "The Dreadnought," Now an only price one penny.)

anything, you know; that's why I was waiting to see you."

The Caterpillar gave Courteney a very queer look.

"You've lost a five; and Wharton's lost a five?" he asked.

The two five-pound notes in his pocket seemed to buzz him.

"Yes," said Bunter; "I don't mind telling you. You see, Johnny Bull's coming back, and he sent a letter here. Of course, he meant half of it for me, as he was my pal, but Wharton collected the lot, and lugged both the fives up in his desk. Of course, I wasn't going to

stand there. So I got some keys to open the desk to get my liver. You'd have done the same, wouldn't you?"

"My hat!" murmured the Caterpillar.

"But some other beast—I mean, some beast—had been there before me, and stolen both the blessed fivers," said Bunter. "Then those beasts actually accused me of doing it—me, you know! I was going to take my one, of course, but I should have left the others. They actually say they're going to take us to court unless I hand back the notes by to-morrow morning. Of course, I can't, as I don't know where they are. I suggested that perhaps Wharton had stolen them, and he said awfully nasty."

NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE MYSTIC CIRCLE!"

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

"Did he really?" gasped the Caterpillar. "Now I wonder why he got waxy?"

"Yes, I wonder?" agreed Bunter. "I was only trying to account for the notes being gone, you know. I know I haven't had them, and I'm five pounds out of pocket. You chaps don't mind if I come in to tea with you, do you? Those beasts won't let me come, because they think I burgled the desk. I didn't, you know. I hadn't time—I mean, of course, I wouldn't burgle a desk. That rotter, Cherry."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, coming downstairs three at a time. "You fellows have come all right? I was afraid the rain would keep you away."

"Yaas, Franky yanked me out, in spite of the rain—he had to yank me out, bein' such a slacker."

"So Bunter's been talking, has he?" said Bob Cherry, reddening a little as he remembered his remark. "You fat Owl—"

"Oh, really, Cherry— Look here, I'm coming to tea. These chaps want me to come to tea. De Courcy was just saying he wanted me—"

"Quite a mistake," said the Caterpillar. "You must be dreamin', Bunter."

Courtenay and the Caterpillar followed Bob up to Study No. 1, and Billy Bunter blinked after them furiously. The Caterpillar was in a very thoughtful frame of mind. Tea was ready in No. 1 Study, and the interior of the famous apartment looked very cosy and comfortable in contrast to the storm that was rising without.

"Will you fellows excuse me if I ask a personal question?" drawled the Caterpillar, "I'm a frightfully inquisitive chap."

"Go ahead," said Harry Wharton.

"I've just heard a yarn from Bunter about some bank-notes that were burgled—"

"You don't mean to say the duffer has told you?" exclaimed Nugent.

"Yaas."

"He can't have done it," said Peter Todd, who was in the party in No. 1. "I told you so, you fellows. Even Bunter would have sense enough to hold his tongue, if he had taken the notes."

"Blessed if I know what to think," growled Wharton. "The idiot ought to be kept gagged. Oh course, I don't mind you two chaps knowing, really; but the least said soonest mended, and it's an unpleasant subject. I suppose Bunter has told you we were keeping back a fiver that belonged to him, so I'd better explain."

Wharton told the story of Johnny Bull's big tip, in a few words. The Caterpillar listened with keen attention.

"Would you mind tellin' me the numbers of those notes that were boned?" he asked.

"Certainly," said Wharton, in astonishment. "I always take the numbers of notes, of course. I've got 'em here."

He opened his pocket-book.

"00066668, 00066669," he said.

"By gad!" murmured the Caterpillar.

He drew the two fivers from his pocket, glanced at them, and tossed them on the study table.

"There's your notes!" he said.

There was a shout of astonishment from the chums of the Remove.

"What the thunder!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"They're the notes," said Wharton, taking them up and looking at the numbers. "They're the two fivers right enough. In the name of all that's wonderful, how did you come to have them, De Courcy?"

"I've done a noble deed," exclaimed the Caterpillar. "Feelin' specially virtuous this afternoon, owin' to a sermon lately received from Franky—"

"Cheese it, you ass!" said Courtenay.

"Feelin' specially virtuous, I did a noble deed—a regular corker. These fivers are the result, and I have much pleasure in returnin' them to their owner," said the Caterpillar. "Pray excuse me from goin' into details, as I'd rather have tea, if you don't mind, and I get bored talkin'. Let's talk about cricket! Wonderful game, isn't it?"

"But—but how—"

"I've watched cricket matches with the greatest enjoyment—watched 'em till I fell asleep—"

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"But, really, you ought to tell us how you got these notes," said Wharton. "They were taken from my desk, and whoever took them is a thief!"

"Yaas. But talkin' about cricket—"

"You didn't get them from Bunter?" demanded Peter Todd.

"Bunter! Certainly not! Bunter doesn't know anythin' about 'em. You were quite wrong about poor old Bunter. He hadn't time to steal 'em, just as he told you."

"Then who did?" exclaimed Squiff.

"Talkin' about cricket—"

"We're not going to talk about cricket just yet," said Harry Wharton, half-laughing, and half-vexed, "we're entitled to know the facts about this. I put it to you, Courtenay."

"I leave it to the Caterpillar," said Courtenay, laughing.

"I make it spades," said the Caterpillar, "I mean, I'd rather talk cricket. Awful interestin' game—when you're watchin' it, and you've got a good book to read."

"We must know—in fact, I think I do know," said Wharton quietly. "Hazeldene has been over to Highcliffe to-day, and we know pretty well what he went for. That's the only way these notes could have got to Highcliffe. Unless you tell us differently, De Courcy, we shall have to conclude that you got them from Hazeldene."

The Caterpillar groaned.

"Why not talk cricket?" he murmured. "You're always talkin' cricket in this study. There's the notes. Least said, soonest mended."

The Caterpillar was evidently determined to say nothing, and the juniors sat down to tea. Harry Wharton quitted the study a little later, leaving his chums to entertain the visitors.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Thief!

Hazeldene was alone in his study when Wharton came in. The black sheep of the Remove was sitting in the arm-chair, in an attitude of the deepest dejection. He gave Wharton a ghastly look as he came in. The anger in Wharton's breast died away as he looked at him. Now that the fever of excitement was over, and Hazel realised what he had done, remorse and repentance were torturing the wretched boy.

"What do you want?" he muttered, as Wharton closed the door.

"Only a few words," said Harry. "The notes are found!"

Hazel might have asked "What notes?" and tried to brazen it out. But his nerves were in rags. He only stared blankly and dully at the captain of the Remove, with terror growing in his eyes.

Wharton looked at him steadily.

"Did you know that we suspected Bunter?" he asked.

"Bunter? No! Why should you?"

"I'm glad of that," said Harry, with a deep breath of relief. "I'd be sorry to think you were villain enough to try to put it on Bunter."

"I—I—I don't know what you are talking about," stammered Hazel, trying to pull himself together. "I—I—are your banknotes missing?"

"They were missing," said Harry, "but we have recovered them."

"You—you—you have recovered them?" stammered Hazel. "How—how? Impossible!" His dazed mind was almost giving way. He knew that he had left the banknotes an hour ago in Ponsonby's study at Highcliffe. How could Wharton have recovered them?

"De Courcy has brought them here," said Harry.

"De Courcy?" Hazel passed his hand over his damp brow. "De Courcy! Oh, I—I see! That was why he wanted them. How did he know?"

"He didn't know, till Bunter told him that some banknotes were missing. Then I suppose he guessed. There's only one way De Courcy could have got them, Hazeldene. You have been gambling at Highcliffe, and you had those

banknotes with you. You opened my desk with Tom Brown's key, and took them!"

"You'll have to prove that," said Hazel, with dry lips.

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't want to prove it. I know it, and that's enough. I'm not going to give you away—for Marjorie's sake. She shan't know that her brother is a thief, if I can help it."

Hazel sank back in the chair groaning.

"I—I wasn't going to keep them," he stammered. "I—I'll explain. You—you see, I'd lost my money, and Pon wouldn't play on tick. And—and I was certain of winning next time. I felt sure of it—you know, you have that feeling sometimes—you feel you're going to win, and you do win. So I—I thought I'd borrow those notes as capital, and try my luck again. I didn't mean to keep them. I hoped you wouldn't miss them before to-morrow."

"What then?"

"I—I came down from the dorm last night, and used Brown's key to open your desk—and I was going to do the same again to-night," stammered Hazel. "I was going to put the notes back, just where I found them, and there'd have been no harm done."

"How could you put them back when you'd lost them?"

"I—I thought I was going to win."

"You utter fool!" said Wharton contemptuously. "You took the banknotes to gamble with, and you were going to return them if you won. I suppose any thief would return his plunder on the same terms."

"You're no right to call me a thief. I—I swear I meant to put them back, if—if I'd won. Only—only I lost. They were too sharp for me," groaned Hazel. "I—I suppose I was a fool!"

"Not only a fool—a criminal, too!"

Hazel sprang to his feet. Like all weak natures, he passed very quickly from utter dejection to passionate anger.

"Well, have it as you like!" he exclaimed. "I'm not asking any favours from you, Harry Wharton! Go to the Head, if you like. Get me sacked from the school! I don't care much. It's pretty rotten for me here, anyway. I don't ask anything at your hands. Only get out of my study."

"I shan't go to the Head. I won't let Marjorie know what you've done, if it can be helped," said Wharton grimly. "But you've broken all your promises, and you're a thief, and we don't want a thief in the Remove. I want you to get out of Greyfriars."

"What!"

"It's up to you. If we keep this dark, it's up to you to clear out. Your people will let you leave if you ask them—I know that. You needn't tell them the reason. There needn't be any scandal. But you've got to go. You are a thief, and we very nearly took Bunter up before Quelchy to accuse him. If we'd done it, and he'd got the sack, I don't believe you'd have said a word. You wouldn't have had pluck enough to own up. You'd have let that fat fool suffer for what you did. We're not going to risk anything of the kind again. You can't expect it. We'll keep this dark, on condition that you ask your people to take you away from Greyfriars. And I think you'll be getting off pretty cheaply."

"And if I don't?" said Hazeldene defiantly.

"If you don't, you'll go up before the Head," said Wharton quietly. "Unless you get out, this can't be kept dark. It wouldn't be decent to shield you and let a thief stay here among decent fellows."

"Well, I—I won't!"

"You can take your choice. But unless you write to your father this evening, and show me the letter to prove that you've done it, you'll have to face the Head. We're fed up. You robbed Vernon-Smith once, for your filthy gambling, and we hushed it up. Now you've done the same thing again. You've got to go!"

Wharton quitted the study without another word.

He left the wretched black sheep of the Remove in a stunned state. Hazel was, indeed, getting off cheaply. But it was a heavy price to pay, all the same, for his act of criminal folly. For Marjorie's sake, the ohms would save him from open disgrace if they could. But to pass the matter over without a word was impossible. He had to go.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY—NOV 376.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE MYSTIC CIRCLE!"

EVERY
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ONE
PENNY.

"I say, Wharton——"

Billy Bunter bore down on the captain of the Remove in the passage. He was lingering about No. 1 Study like a very fat Peri at the gate of Paradise.

To his surprise, Wharton gave him a nod and a smile.

"It's all right, Bunt. Would you like to come to tea?"

"Oh, rather! I suppose you've found out your mistake now," said Billy Bunter, with dignity.

"The banknotes have turned up," said Wharton shortly. He did not feel inclined to give Billy Bunter any further information than that.

"Well, I must say you're awfully careless with money, Wharton," said Bunter. "However, I am willing to overlook the occurrence, and come to tea in a friendly way. I suppose you're going to give me my fiver now?"

"I'll give you a thick ear if you talk rot, you silly ass!" said Wharton. "You can come in and guzzle if you like, but if you jaw you'll be slung out!"

"That isn't a very civil way of putting it, old chap, but I'll come. I never bear malice," said Bunter.

"Not at meal-times, anyway," grinned Wharton. "Roll in!"

Hazeldene's door opened, and the black sheep came out. He did not look at Wharton. He stumbled, rather than walked, downstairs, and Wharton heard him go out into the Close—out into the driving rain. Where was he going? To Cliff House, probably, to see Marjorie—perhaps to tell her all. Wharton knitted his brows at the thought. But he was helpless to interfere.

He rejoined his comrades in No. 1 Study. Billy Bunter dragged a chair up to the table, and started operations on the feed, with smiling contentment in his fat face. He was hungry, and the feed was topping. Bunter enjoyed himself. But some of the other fellows, though they tried to be cheerful, could not help looking a little glum.

The mystery of the banknotes had been cleared up; but the discovery that it was Marjorie's brother who was the thief worried and depressed them. They all felt that Hazel would have to go; but they felt, too, that the reason of his going must be hushed up, for his sister's sake.

The Caterpillar was talking cricket, determined not to notice the gloom that irresistibly spread itself over the little party. That study tea could not be quite called a success, and all the juniors felt it, though they laboured to be cheerful. But there came a sudden interruption.

The study door was thrown open, and Tom Brown looked in with an excited face. He had his cap and macintosh on.

"You fellows coming?" he exclaimed.

"What's on?" asked Wharton.

"Haven't you heard—Coker's just brought in the news. There's a steamer on the rocks—a giddy wreck. They're taking out the lifeboat."

The New Zealand junior scudded away. In a moment all the fellows in No. 1 Study were on their feet.

The impulse of the Famous Five was to rush off at once; but there were their guests to be considered. But Courtenay was as keen as they were.

"Let's get down to the shore!" he exclaimed. "We may be some use. Come on, Caterpillar."

"Awful fag, Franky——"

"Come on, you ass! You fellows are coming, surely?"

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific!"

"I say, you fellows, I'm not going out in the rain," said Bunter, "and I haven't finished my tea——"

"Finish it, and finish ours, too," said Bob Cherry. "I know there won't be a crumb left when we get back. Come on, you chaps; race down to the beach!"

The juniors hurriedly sought their coats and caps, and there was a rush down the stairs. A crowd of other Greyfriars fellows were going. Billy Bunter remained alone in No. 1 Study. He grinned a fat grin, and blinked with great satisfaction over the well-spread board. From that moment the jaws of William George Bunter were not idle for a moment. And when Billy Bunter had

finished, there was, as Bob Cherry had foreseen, hardly a crumb left on the table; and Billy Bunter groaned a little as he crawled from the study. He had overdone it.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

From the Jaws of Death!

RAIN and wind—wind and rain! The heavy roar of the surf boomed in the ears of the juniors, as they struggled against the fierce wind towards the shore. The sea was rolling and tossing—the great mass of the Shoulder was hidden in mist. It was not yet night, but the black clouds that shrouded the sky made it dark almost as midnight. Harry Wharton & Co. came out on the beach, beaten and buffeted by the wind.

There was a crowd of fishermen and longshoremen gathered there, and women with their shawls over their heads. Harry Wharton caught a glimpse of Hazeldene in the crowd on the beach.

Old Trumper, the pilot, was gazing seaward, with a grim look on his weatherbeaten face. The wreck was wrapped and hidden in mist, and could not be seen from the shore. Only at intervals, when the mist was torn by the wind, the dim shape of a ship loomed up for a moment, far out on the rocks, thumped by the heavy seas.

Bob Cherry caught the old pilot by the arm.

"Are they saved, Dave?"

"Nearly all, Master Cherry," said the old man. "The lifeboat have brought 'em off, but——"

"It's going out again?"

"It's been stove in."

"Oh, my hat!"

The lifeboat was a wreck. Most of the crew of the steamer had been saved, but others remained on board, and the lifeboat was stove on the rocks. The fishermen had sought to launch one of the big, heavy fishing-boats, but it had been overwhelmed instantly in the surf.

"And there are still some on board?" muttered Wharton, compressing his lips. "How did she get ashore, Dave?"

Old Dave Trumper gritted his teeth.

"German submarine," he said. "She was torpedoed; so the hands tell me—those that 'ave been took off. They're up at the Anchor now. Arter she was struck, the skipper ran for shore, and drove right on the rocks in the bay. It was all he could do; she was filling with a big 'ole in her side. She'd 'ave gone down like a plummet if the torpedo 'ad struck her fair and square. But they kept her afloat long enough to get to the bay. She was from a French port. They're all Frenchies we've saved. But the rest—God 'elp 'em!"

A light glimmered through the mist from the sea.

"That's on board 'er," said Trumper. "They're showin' a light to guide us. But we can't get at 'er. The lifeboat's smashed."

The fishermen were making another attempt to launch a boat. The juniors watched them with their hearts in their mouths. The boat was got afloat, but a thundering wave caught it and hurled it far up on the beach. The drenched and half-drowned crew were dragged away from the jaws of death.

"It's hopeless," said Wharton, between his teeth.

"By gad!" muttered the Caterpillar. "It's sickenin'. If a fellow could get out to them with a rope——"

"In that sea?" said Bob, with a shake of the head.

The light had disappeared.

Crash! Crash!

"She's breaking up!" said old Trumper. "God 'ave mercy on them, and punish the scoundrels what torpedoed a merchant ship."

Through the roar of waves and wind came the heavy crashing of the wreck, breaking upon the rocks.

The crowd on the beach watched the rolling surf with tense eyes.

"There might be a swimmer!" muttered Wharton.

In his anxiety for the doomed victims of Prussian ferocity he plunged knee-deep in the rolling surf, in

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danger of being sucked away into the boiling sea, striving to pierce the eddying mist with his eyes.

At moments he could see the roaring waves far out in the bay, then the mist closed again like a shroud, and all was shut off from view.

Suddenly Wharton's eyes gleamed.

He caught a glimpse of a dark object on the wild waters before the mist blinded him again—a strong and desperate swimmer striving shoreward. For an instant Wharton saw the dark bare head, and then it vanished.

But that instant was enough.

He knew that the swimmer was being sucked back by the returning wave, and with that wave, as it rolled seaward, went Harry Wharton, forgetting his own peril in his anxiety to help the helpless swimmer.

"Wharton!" shouted Bob, racing down into the surf.

But Wharton was gone.

With white faces the juniors stood staring into the mist. Their chum had ventured into an inferno of waters, and vanished from their gaze.

"He must have seen a swimmer," muttered Courtenay. "If we could only see him——"

"What has happened? Where is Wharton? It was Hazeldene's voice. "Has he gone out——"

Bob Cherry pointed silently to the sea.

"Good heavens!"

Where was Harry Wharton? Swimming desperately, his strong young limbs bearing him up, swept seaward on the rolling waters. Where was the swimmer he had seen? Could he find him? Could he—— His hand came into contact with something that floated, and he clutched; it was hair upon a human head.

He shifted his grasp to the collar at once, and brought the head above the water. A white, insensible face glimmered close to his own, but he could not see it. Supporting the unconscious castaway, the gallant lad struck for the shore. But the waves were whelming upon him again; they thundered over him. He was deep down in a mass of green waters; his breath was stopped. In those terrible moments he passed through the horrors of death. Yet not for a moment did his grasp relax upon the castaway he had seized. In that wild waste of waters he had found him, and he would save him or die with him.

He felt sand grinding under his feet. His brain was reeling, with the horror of suffocation, but with his free hand he clutched at the sand, striving to hold on, knowing that the whelming wave would roll back, and leave him ashore, if he could but find a hold.

But the soft sand slipped through his fingers. His head came up—up into the free air, and he filled his lungs again, but he was being carried back—back into the maelstrom of waters.

He struggled and fought with all his strength, digging his fingers into the sand, but he felt that he was going, and he knew that, once torn back into the sea, he would never reach the shore again alive; he would reach it only to be tossed there cold in death.

In that fearful moment a hand grasped his shoulder, and he felt himself held.

Someone, neck deep in the surf, had seen him, was holding him, dragging him back from the hungry sea.

One of his chums, perhaps; he could see nothing. Salt spray and mist blinded him. But he held on to the castaway, and he was held.

Back rolled the heavy wave, and Wharton staggered on the sand, still held by his rescuer. There was a shout, a rush of feet; a dozen hands grasped them, and dragged them up the shore into safety as the billows came thundering back. Fast and furious on their track came the sweeping waves. It drenched them; it rose above their knees as they struggled on, but it could not tear them away. In a struggling, dizzy bunch they reeled out of the reach of the waters, and Wharton sank gasping on the shingle.

Old Trumper picked up the insensible castaway, and rushed him away towards the inn in his strong arms. Wharton sat up dazedly.

His chums were round him.

"Who was it?" panted Wharton. "Who held me? Who helped me? I was just going. Was it you, Bob?"

"I didn't see you, old chap," said Bob. "It was Hazel."

"Hazel!"

"I—I saw you!" stammered Hazeldene. "The others didn't see you, but—but I spotted you. I'm glad I was able to hold on."

"Hazel!" repeated Wharton, in amazement. "You—you saved me! You, Hazel!"

A bitter look came over Hazel's wet, white face.

"Yes, I," he said. "It needn't make any difference, you know. I didn't run much risk, not so much as you did, and——"

"It must make a difference," said Harry quietly, and he held out his hand. Hazel hesitated a moment, and then took it in a shamefaced way. Wharton looked at his chums.

"I warned Hazel that he would have to go," he said.

"But—but after this——"

"By gad!" said the Caterpillar. "Will you give me your fist, Hazeldene? I never thought that a ramplin', rearin' blade like you would turn up trumps like this. I take back all the things I was thinkin' about you at Highcliffe this afternoon. We expect these giddy, heroic deeds from our friend Wharton, but from you—excuse me, I'm a little taken by surprise. I congratulate you!"

Bob Cherry thumped the black sheep on the back.

"Bygones are going to be bygones," he said. "It's no good saying that you didn't act like a horrible rotter, Hazel, because you did, you know. But I say that this wipes it out, and it's up to everybody concerned to forget all about what's happened."

"The esteemed Hazeldene has repented also," added Hurree Singh. "I have observed that the excellent Hazel always suffers the repentfulness after the misdeeds until the next time. My admired and respected Hazel, make up your resolution mindfully that there shall be no nextful time, and we shall regard you as an esteemed and ludicrous ornament to the honourable Remove!"

"Hear, hear!" said the juniors.

Old Dave Trumper came down the beach towards the juniors. There was a curious look on his bronzed face.

"How is he?" asked Wharton at once—"that chap who was pulled out?"

"The chap you pulled out, Master Wharton," said old Dave.

"Well, Hazel helped me. We should both have gone out to Davy Jones but for Hazel," said Harry. "I hope he's all right. He was insensible when I got hold of him; he never made a move. Is he still alive?"

"Alive and kicking," said Trumper. "He's just come-to. He's rather a tough young gentleman—very tough indeed. He wants to see you. I've told him who fished him out, and he wants to see you at once. It's somebody you know."

"Somebody we know!" exclaimed all the juniors at once.

They had hardly seen the castaway in the mist and surf, and Dave Trumper had taken him away the instant he was landed. The old pilot's statement that it was somebody they knew surprised them, and interested them, too.

"An old acquaintance of yours, young gentlemen," chuckled Mr. Trumper.

"Who the deuce can it be?" said Wharton. "It was a boy—I know that—not a man. But who?"

"Come and see him."

In a state of surprise and expectation, Harry Wharton & Co. followed the old pilot to the inn. The seamen rescued from the French steamer were there, ministered to by the kindly folk of Pegg. Dave Trumper led the way upstairs to a room where a lad lay in bed, his face pale, his hair still wet.

Dave Trumper held up the lamp and let the light fall upon the face of the rescued lad.

There was a yell from all the juniors at once:

"Johnny Bull!"

The rescued lad blinked at them from the pillow and grinned.

"Johnny Bull!" said Wharton dazedly. "Johnny, old man! This—is this is the chap I got hold of in the water, Trumper?"

"Ay, ay!" grinned old Trumper. "Somebody you know, Master Wharton."

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE MYSTIC CIRCLE!"

EVERY
MONDAY,

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ONE
PENNY.

"Johnny!" shouted Bob Cherry. "My only hat!"

"Johnny, old man!"

Johnny Bull sat up in bed and chuckled. He was already recovering from his rough experience. Johnny Bull was a hard nut to crack.

"Yes, it's me," he said, cheerfully and ungrammatically. "I'm told that somebody fished me out, and that it was you, Wharton. I started to swim, but the water was a bit too rough for me. Did you know me when you bagged me in the water?"

"Not from Adam," said Harry. "I got hold of you, but I couldn't see you. My only hat! Is it really you?"

"I fancy so," grinned Johnny Bull.

"Then that steamer was the Blackbird from Cherbourg," said Nugent. "You told us in your telegram——"

"That's it," said Johnny Bull; "and a blessed Hun torpedoed us at sea, and we ran for shore. So I've landed here instead of going on to London. I'm jolly glad you fellows came down; but the cream of the joke is that Wharton fished me out without knowing it was me! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hip, hip, hooray!" roared Bob Cherry.

It was past calling-over when the Co. returned to Greyfriars. The astonishment of the Head was great when they marched in with Johnny Bull among them. Dr. Locke and Mr. Quelch met them in the hall, and they stared at Johnny Bull as if he had been a ghost. He did not look much like a ghost, however; for, in spite of his perilous experiences, he was quite the old Johnny, and looking as sturdy and hearty as ever.

"Who—who—what!" ejaculated the Head. "Bull! Is—is that Bull?"

"Yes, sir," said Johnny. "Please I've come back!"

"But how—how—I am amazed!"

"Wrecked, nearly drowned, fished out by Wharton, come home to tea!" said Johnny Bull, in his terse way.

"Bless my soul!"

All Greyfriars welcomed Johnny Bull, and congratulated him on his escape. Johnny Bull's reply to all the felicitating remarks was that he was frightfully hungry, and the Co. carried him off to No. 1 Study and fed him.

The celebration came off the next day. The two fivers were nobly expended to the very last sixpence, and the Rag was crowded with guests in honour of Johnny Bull's return. All the Remove were there, and Courtenay and the Caterpillar from Highcliffe, and Marjorie and Clara from Cliff House, and Hazeldene. Hazel was looking unusually cheery. He had atoned for what he had done, and bygones were to be bygones, and the black sheep was to make a fresh start. This time he meant to keep straight, and Harry Wharton & Co. could only hope that he would keep his promise.

That celebration was a great success. Billy Banter distinguished himself in his usual way, and generously told Wharton that he was quite willing to contribute "his" five-pound note to the feed; so that matter was settled. And all Greyfriars might have heard the chorus that was roared out in the Rag by a hundred merry voices:

"When Johnny comes marching home again! Hurrah!
Hurrah!"

When Johnny comes marching home again! Ha, ha!
Ha, ha!

We'll let old Coker know who's who,

And give the Fourth the kybosh, too!

And we'll make things hum when Johnny comes
marching home!"

THE END.

(No Magnetite should miss next week's issue. It contains a really fine yarn by Frank Richards, entitled "The Mystic Circle"—a yarn that you should by no means miss. Don't risk being disappointed; ask your newsagent to reserve a copy specially for you!)

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

THE OPENING CHAPTERS OF OUR NEW SERIAL.



"THE STAR

OF

THE CIRCUS!"

A Magnificent
Story
of Thrilling
Adventure and
Circus Life.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

Sir Richard Batingley, 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.

Several plots which the two villains make, however, fail, but they do not give up their intention of injuring Clive when an opportunity occurs.

Ben Ellis, or Professor Durnette, the King of Lion-Tamers, to give him his stage name, tries to force his daughter, May Ellis, to marry Adrian Deering, in order that the latter may give him two hundred pounds to make good the circus funds, from which he has stolen that amount.

Clive Clare hears of the Professor's theft, and draws his entire savings—ninety pounds—from the savings' bank, so that May Ellis or her father may not be under any obligation to Adrian Deering.

In the meantime, Bononi, the clown, discovers that an old friend of his—the proprietor of a waxwork show, named Wickelford—is in the town, and decides, with the help of Roly-Poly, another clown, and Lieutenant Tremaine, the ventriloquist, to help give the show a free advertisement.

(Now go on with the story.)

Fun at the Waxworks.

"Oh, anything I can do," began Roly, "I will do. I'll dress myself up in fancy togs, and stand for royalty, if that's yer game, an' you wants a real attraction. Or I'll—"

"Roll yourself up in a ball, Joe," interrupted Bononi, "and give a life-like imitation of a suet-dumpling. I know you will, Joe—I know you will! You are one of the sort that is ever ready to do a good turn. I'll avail myself of your artistic assistance, Joe; I will tell you how after I've seen Tremaine. Come along, Joe, and help me to find him."

The two clowns were not long in running the ventriloquist to earth, and Bononi was not very much longer in explaining to the lieutenant and Roly-Poly his plan for giving Wickelford's Waxworks what he termed a "boost-up," after which the three together repaired to interview the celebrated Mr. Montague Wickelford himself.

That gentleman was discovered in his caravan, discussing a big, steaming basin of pea-soup.

"Ah, it's you again, Mr. Jenks!" was his greeting to Bononi. "Glad to see you and your friends, too, if I may say so. Professional colleagues, I presume?"

"Exactly so." And Bononi formally introduced his companions.

"You find me," went on Mr. Wickelford, "immersed, if I may say so, in my midday repast. Highly necessary part of the diurnal programme, the midday repast," he rattled on.

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"especially for a working man. And I am a working man—if I may say so, a wax-working man. He, he, you will pardon my trespassing on your preserves, Mr. Jenks?"

"Don't mention it," rejoined Bononi loftily. "The domain of humour is open to all; there are no preserves."

"Umph!" put in Roly. "There's plenty of poachers about, anyway."

"Times are different, Mr. Jenks," observed Mr. Wickelford—"immeasurably different, if I may say so—from what they used to be."

"That's just the point, my dear sir," said Bononi—"that's just the very point, I've come to talk to you about—the days that used to be. Since I left you this morning, Mr. Wickelford, all the old times have come back to me like a golden dream."

"Ah!" sighed Montague Wickelford. "If you were with us now, you wouldn't find it a golden dream; it would turn to copper—or bronze, if I may say so. Bad times, Mr. Jenks—bad times!"

"Mr. Wickelford, would you do me a favour?" inquired Bononi.

"Certainly, with the greatest of pleasure, sir, if it is within my power to do so. It is true the treasury at the present moment is rather low, but what I have—"

"No, no!" interrupted Bononi. "It's very good of you, Mr. Wickelford, but it's not that sort of favour I mean. I wish you, for the space of one afternoon, to let me resume my old occupation, that's all. We've no show at Cyrano's this afternoon, so, just for old acquaintance' sake, I'd like to take the—your audience round, and describe the figures."

Montague Wickelford opened his eyes in surprise.

"Why, certainly, my dear Mr. Jenks, if you like; but—"

"Oh, I won't do the show any harm, I promise you," Bononi hastened to explain; "in fact, I hope to do it a bit of good. As for the part, I can manage that all right, never fear. Without entering into details, I may mention that I've got a little scheme which I fancy will bring you a full house to-night."

"I—I'm very much obliged to you, Mr. Jenks. I confess you mystify me somewhat, and—"

"Well, well," broke in Bononi, "perhaps it's hardly fair to ask you to buy a pig in a poke. I'll give you a hint of my scheme."

And, so saying, Bononi took Mr. Wickelford on one side, and engaged him in earnest conversation for three or four minutes, the upshot of which was that Mr. Wickelford, with true showman instinct, saw business in Bononi's plan, and, with a merry twinkle in his eyes, gave a ready assent to the clown's proposal.

So it came about that a couple of hours later Bononi stood upon a platform outside the booth containing Wickelford's Waxworks, and harangued the crowd through a huge speaking-trumpet.

"Hi, hi, hi, hi! Walk up! Walk up! Be in time! By coming now, you secure front places. Ho-ho! Ha-ha! This is no good-for-nothing make-believe—no place to spend an idle hour—but a great educational exhibition, teaching you what's what about men and matters! Wickelford's World-Famous Collection of Moving Waxworks—patronised by the nobility and gentry! Admission, for a limited time only, twopenny; children under twelve, half-price! Walk up! Walk up! Come now! There is no waiting! Ho-ho! Ha-ha!"

Whether it was due to the persuasive eloquence of Bononi

cannot be said, but the fact remains that a goodly number of the natives did walk up, planked down their twopences like men and women, and their pennies like true British "under-twelvies," and passed inside. Bononi, who was to act as lecturer, soon followed.

It was a good many years since Bononi had been in the waxwork business, and in the meantime his knowledge of history and other matters necessary for the proper description of the exhibits had grown a trifle rusty. Nevertheless, his powers of ready invention stood him in good stead.

As Bononi paused before a figure of the Kaiser there were some hisses, and a fat old farmer, who was in the background with his wife, murmured something about it being a "rotten shame."

"What a wicked old feller he do look, to be sure!" observed the farmer's wife.

"Well," rejoined her spouse, "what canst thee expect from a man wi' a moustache like that? I wish 'twere the ole Kaiser hisself, 'stead of a wax effigy of 'un! I'll dashed soon show 'un what I think about 'un!"

And the farmer shook his brawny fist at the figure. On hearing the threat, Bononi instantly turned to the figure of Kaiser Bill.

"Did you hear that, su?" he asked severely.

Everybody looked at the wax figure, and, as they looked, the whole crowd were instantly spellbound by what followed. For from that waxen model, although its lips remained unmoved, there proceeded the sound of a voice—a harsh voice.

"Y-yes," it said, "I hear, but I don't care!"

"You don't care!" repeated Bononi indignantly. "Why, you ought to be ready to melt away with shame, you naughty old man!"

"Shame!" creaked the voice, with a mocking, guttural laugh. "Not I! Why should I be ashamed?"

"Why," retorted Bononi, "for causing the horrible war, of course!"

Another mocking peal of laughter proceeded from the figure; then the voice said:

"What do I care about the war? I don't run any risk of being killed, do I?"

This callous remark was a little too much for the old farmer. He fumed inwardly, went purple in the face, and as quickly as his ponderous build would allow, pushed his way forward, with fists doubled, squared up ferociously at the Kaiser, and challenged him to "come on!"

Whereupon, to everybody's amazement, the right hand of the effigy moved round like clockwork, dived beneath the long coat, and jerkily drew therefrom an Iron Cross!

Then followed a tremendous roar of laughter and shouts of admiration. Such a wonderful automatic achievement the natives of Petsbury had never before witnessed. The farmer's wrath forsook him, and he gave loud vent to the opinion that he was "durned if that warn't a good 'un!"

"That be ohe of 'em theer talkin'-machines inside 'un, I reckon. Loramusy, but 'tis wunnerful what these Lunnon fowks thinks on, to be sure—wunnerful! Doan't 'ee think so, sir?"

The stout old farmer, who was mopping his brow, damp from his preparations for a fistic encounter, addressed a grave-faced old gentleman, seated in a chair near by, and holding a snuff-box in his hand.

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The old gentleman addressed did not answer a word, nor did he even acknowledge the farmer's presence.

"I axed 'ee, mister," repeated the farmer resentfully, "if ye don't think that old Kaiser theer wunnerful?"

Still the old gentleman did not reply.

"Spec's 'e's deaf," muttered the farmer to himself; "but, hang me! I will make 'un 'ear!" And, with wrath in his eye, he bent down, and roared right into the old gentleman's ear: "Say, mister, don't 'ee think that theer old Kaiser feller wunnerful, eh?"

Not a muscle of the old gentleman's face moved; but, with startling suddenness, there issued from his mouth and nose the sound of a violent sneeze, that caused the farmer to stagger back in amazement.

"Why, you rude, vulgar ole feller, you!" exclaimed the farmer. "Wotcher mean by sneezin' at me like that? I axed 'ee a civil question, and, hang me! I—"

"Go away! You don't know what you're talking about!"

The interruption came distinctly from the old gentleman in the chair, but he did not so much as deign to look at his questioner.

"No! You're a silly old fool, that's what you are!"

"Dunno what I'm talkin' about, doan't I?" wrathfully demanded the farmer.

"Silly ole fool? Me, a silly ole fool?" roared the farmer. "Looke 'ere, you ole jesser, what d'ye mean?"

"Just what I say," answered the gentleman in the chair, still immovably; "you're a silly old fool, that's what you are! You can't help it; it's your misfortune! Go home and fry your face!"

There were sundry giggles at this from the crowd, which was now gathering round, and the farmer's face began to assume something of the colour it would have done had he essayed to carry out the old gentleman's behest; it seemed really to begin to bubble and frizzle with rage.

"Fry me face, eh?" he bellowed. "Why, if I 'ad a pasty face like yours, I—I'd nail 'un on a wall, an' chuck turmuts at 'un! Your face is only fit to go to a dog-fight with!"

"Bow-wow-wow! Bow-wow-wow! Bow-wow-wow-wow-wow!"

The farmer half turned round, and then gave a sort of ponderous jump away, for, as he mentioned "dog-fight," there suddenly came the sound as of a terrier barking at his heels.

"Bow-wow-wow! Bow-wow-wow-wow-wow-wow!"

Again the sound. Right behind him it was, and he spun round like an overweighted weather-vane, kicking out all around him with his heavy boots.

"Bow-wow-wow-wow! Gr-r-r-rh! Bow-wow!"

"Where is that theer dog?" yelled the farmer, gazing wildly round for a sight of his canine tormentor.

But no sign of the dog could he discern.

"Ho, ho, ho, ho!" laughed the old gentleman on the seat. "Why, you look a sillier old fool than ever! Why don't you get home and look after the pigs? Good gracious me, here's one of the pigs come to look after you!"

And, as he finished speaking, there was plainly audible close by the farmer, the sound of a pig grunting angrily.

"Loramussy!" exclaimed the farmer, lurching round again, "if it ain't 'towed sow!"

Grunt, grunt, grunt!

"Where be 'er now?" queried the mystified farmer, peering round among the people, who by this time were in convulsions of laughter. "Where be that owd sow?"

"There ain't no sow 'ere, maister," observed another countryman in the crowd.

"But I heerd 'er, didn't I?"

"Not you!" interrupted the old gentleman in the chair. "Your mind's gone, farmer. You'll be seeing cows and hearing snakes next!"

"I tells 'ee I—"

"Moo-oo-oo! Moo-oo-oo!"

Once more the farmer turned and gazed at the crowd in speechless astonishment.

"Moo-oo-oo! Cluck-k-k, cluck-k-k! Cock-a-doodle-doo-oo!"

From the perfect babel of sounds that now assailed the farmer's ears, it seemed as if the occupants of a veritable farmyard had suddenly been let loose. There were grunts, moos, cluckings, crowings, yelps, and baas seemingly all around, but absolutely incomprehensible; for, although the bewildered farmer jumped, waltzed, polkaed, jiggled, and galloped about in his endeavours to trace the source of the queer sounds, he could discover nothing. And all the time the crowd of onlookers roared with laughter till their sides ached.



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NEXT MONDAY—

"THE MYSTIC CIRCLE!"

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

"Maria!" shrieked the farmer to his wife. "Come on 'ome! This 'ere place be 'aunted!"

"Yes, that's right, ma'am," chimed in the gentleman on the chair. "Take the silly old man home, and in future keep the drink away from him."

"Drink!" yelled the farmer, literally dancing with rage in front of the old gentleman. "I'll teach 'ee to slander a sober man! I'll show 'ee! Now, then, you ole vill'in, stand up an' face me like a man!"

With which challenge the farmer flung off his coat, rolled up his shirt-sleeves over arms that resembled legs of mutton, and struck a fighting attitude.

Still the old gentleman in the chair moved not a muscle.

"Stand up an' fight!" he demanded.

"I can't stand up," said the old gentleman, "and I can't use my dooks. I'm one of the wax figures!"

"What! Thee a wax figure?"

"Y-y-yes; touch my face and see."

The farmer's lower jaw dropped about a couple of inches; then slowly, as he peered close into the old gentleman's face, he put out a big finger and thumb, and touched it.

"Well, I—"

But the rest of the farmer's exclamation was drowned in a great roar of laughter from the assembled company.

"Ah, it be all very well to laugh," yelled the farmer, after a minute. "I've been took in, I 'ave. I allows I thowt the ole jossar was a real 'un, an' in another 'alf a minute I'd 'ave knocked the bloomin' stuffin' out of 'un, that I 'ud! But 'ow's 'e manage to talk—that's what I want to know? An' what about the pigs an' cows an' poultry?"

As for these unaccountable sounds, the crowd were for the most part as mystified as the farmer; but they, putting it down to some wonderful mechanism in connection with the show, attempted no explanation, but only laughed at the ludicrous attitude of the farmer.

"Lookee 'ere now!" at length yelled the infuriated man of agriculture. "If I 'ears anybody a-laughin' at me agen I—I'll throw 'un clean out o' this durned show, whoever 'un may be!"

At this point one quiet-looking individual in the crowd, standing close by Bononi, deliberately gave vent to a loud guffaw. Spurred to anger by this acceptance of his challenge, the farmer, with his great arms outstretched, advanced to put his threat into execution.

But as he closed with the scoffer he was, to his utter amazement and mortification, suddenly enveloped in a grip like that of a vice, and, before he knew where he was, found himself carried as if he had been a child right to the other end of the show, and dumped unceremoniously down on a vacant pedestal labelled "Guy Fawkes."

This was the signal for another loud and prolonged outburst of laughter from the onlookers. At the same moment the farmer's wife, indignant at the treatment her husband had received, struggled through the crowd, laying about her vigorously with a huge green umbrella, and screaming at the top of her voice: "Murder! Thieves! Fire! Police!"

And then, from right under the pedestal upon which the farmer sat, unable as yet to realise what had happened, there issued once more, in quick succession, the grunting of a pig, the baa-a of a sheep, the crowing of a cock, and finally the yelping of a terrier. Hearing these sounds, the farmer, having slowly regained his bewildered senses, leapt up from the pedestal, uttered a yell, and fled precipitately from the booth, followed by his shrieking spouse and the loud laughter of the other sightseers.

What a talk did Wickelford's Waxworks occasion in Patsbury that day! Everybody was full of it—in the streets and in the hostleries it formed the all-absorbing topic of conversation. Wonderful stories about the lifelike talking figures in Wickelford's show were rife, and became greatly exaggerated in the telling—with the result that on that night, right up to the last minute, the waxwork exhibition was packed to overflowing, the people watching and waiting for a repetition of the afternoon's unusual performance.

But they watched and waited in vain. For Bononi, who had planned the thing; Roly-Poly, who had acted so cleverly the part of the Kaiser; Lieutenant Tremaine, who had, by his marvellous ventriloquial powers, occasioned all the excitement; and Sando, who had performed the crowning act by carrying the farmer through the booth and setting him on the Guy Fawkes pedestal—all these persons were, of course, engaged at Cyrano's. It mattered not, however. The natives of Patsbury were ignorant of these things; and the upshot of it all was that Mr. Montague Wickelford received the much-needed "boost-up"—so much so, indeed, that on the

two following days, when Cyrano's Circus was no longer in Patsbury as a rival attraction, the waxwork exhibition continued to be patronised by bumper audiences.

Durnette's Depression—A Message, and its Results.

The knowledge of his defalcations in connection with the circus accounts had lain on Professor's Durnette's mind like a load of lead. Hard drinker as he was, and given, in his moments of intoxication, to the utterance and performance of words and deeds of which, in his sober moments, he would never have been guilty, he yet had not wholly lost his self-respect. In earlier days he had been a decent enough fellow; while his wife had lived he had been everything that a husband and father could be; and even now, when drink had worked its evil influences, and had, to some extent, distorted his moral sense, he still retained some vestige of respectability. That was why the embezzlement of the money worried and depressed him so. It had burdened his mind for weeks and months past. The knowledge of his dishonesty had hurried him along the downward path, to the bottom of which drink was fast leading him. It had oppressed him till it became a veritable haunting idea. And when, on that day some little time before, he had raked together the remnants of his moral courage, making a clean breast of the whole business to his daughter, and she had refused to fall in with his plan for the salvation of his character, all hope seemed to have fled from his breast, and abject despondency take firm hold of him.

Such feelings inevitably preyed upon his nerves. He grew to be apprehensive of every stranger he met—nervous of every footstep he heard. Hence the strange condition into which he fell on the occasion about to be recorded.

It happened on the day following the journey of the circus from Patsbury to Oldchester. Durnette was seated in his lodgings that afternoon, when Jimmy Tribbles, one of the boys attached to the circus, arrived with a message to the effect that Mr. Cyrano wanted to see the professor immediately on very important business indeed.

Durnette turned pale as he received the message.

"What does he want to see me about?" he asked nervously.

"Sure, I couldn't tell you, Mister Durnette," answered the boy, a little surprised at the tamer's demeanour.

"But didn't he say anything? Didn't he—What sort of temper is he in?" faltered the professor.

Jimmy Tribbles opened his eyes wide.

"Temper, Mister Durnette?" he repeated. "Why, 'bout the same as usual. The guv'nor allus is a bit 'ot-temper'd, you know. All he sez to me was, 'Tribbles, jist run down to Perfessor Durnette's lodgin's, and tell him as I wants ter see him immejit.' Them was his very words."

The professor stifled a deep sigh, and dismissed the lad.

"Cyrano wants to see me on important business," he murmured to himself. "He's been examining the books, no doubt, and has discovered what I've done. Well, then, in that case, the game's up. If I go and see him, he'll turn on me, expose me, give me in charge very likely. I shall be ruined, anyway; and May, poor girl! she'll be ruined, too. For what's a girl's life worth when her father's name is branded with dishonour such as mine?"

His head sunk upon his breast as he uttered the words; then suddenly he drew himself erect, and his eyes gleamed with a strange brightness.

"If I go and see Cyrano," he murmured again, "the knowledge of my crime will be made known to everybody within an hour. If I don't go—if I—"

He paused, and gulped down half a tumbler of neat whisky, which he had poured out. Then, for a moment or two, he remained still, as if lost in contemplation of something which had just occurred to him. Then once more he braced himself up.

"It must not be," he said with emphasis—"it must never be! Living, I should receive no mercy at Cyrano's hands; dead, I should be forgiven, and the secret of my crime be kept in mercy bury with me, and thus spare my poor dear May!"

His teeth snapped together as he finished speaking; his jaw remained firmly set. Briskly he stepped across to a corner of the room, opened a tin box, and from it drew out a six-chambered revolver. He closed his eyes; his lips for a moment quivered, as if with a last prayer to Heaven for what he was about to do. Then, with a firm hand, he raised the revolver and pressed the gleaming barrel against his right temple.

As Professor Durnette stood with the shining barrel of his revolver pressed against his temple, it looked as if it would be over with him in another moment. Death by his own hand

seemed inevitable. Yet it did not happen. For even while his forefinger began to press against the trigger there came a rattle at the doorhandle.

The lion-tamer's right hand fell instantly to his side, and he had just time to slip the revolver out of sight when his daughter, May Ellis, entered the room.

One inquiring glance at her father's face told her only too plainly that something was amiss. She went up to him at once, taking his arm gently.

"Father," she said, looking up into his fixed eyes, "what is the matter?"

He turned his head away without answering.

"Father—dear father," she supplicated, "tell me what is wrong. There is something—I can see it in your face."

Durnette gulped down the lump which the tenderness of his daughter's voice and manner had caused to rise in his throat.

"It is all wrong, May," he said. "Everything's wrong. I am nearing the end."

"Nearing the end! Father, what do you mean by that?"

"It's all over. My sin has found me out."

He seemed quite cool and collected, although he was pale to the lips as he uttered those words. May, on the other hand, was trembling with agitation. Anxiously she gazed at her father for further enlightenment. He continued:

"You know, my girl, what I told you about being short in my accounts? Well, for weeks the fear of discovery has hung over my head like a terrible sword suspended by a thread. And now—now the thread is about to break, and the sword must fall! Cyrano has sent for me. He wants to see me immediately on important business. It's easy to guess what that means."

"And you will go to him?" the girl inquired, the look of frightened apprehension passing out of her eyes now that she knew the extent of her father's trouble. "You will go to him, father dear, for my sake?"

Durnette heaved a sigh.

"May," he said brokenly, passing a weary hand across his brow, "a few minutes ago, when I received Cyrano's message I felt that I could not face him. In that moment I determined—oh, how can I tell you, my girl?—I—I determined to put an end to my miserable life."

"Father!"

"Yes, it is true, May," he said, slowly and gently. "I did so determine; but the sight of you coming in at that door—the sight of your sweet face, the sound of your gentle voice—shook my purpose. Yes, May, I will see Cyrano. I'll go to him, and I'll confess everything I've done. The knowledge of my guilt is torture, confession may relieve me. Yes, I'll go to him."

He pressed a kiss on his daughter's forehead as he spoke, and then, putting on his broad-brimmed sombrero, strode from the room. As he disappeared, May sat down in a chair and buried her face in her hands.

"Ah! Good-afternoon, Durnette—good-afternoon! You don't look well. What's amiss?"

And Mr. Adolph Cyrano rubbed his hands together, and briskly paced up and down the office-tent attached to the circus.

"Good-afternoon, sir," returned the lion-tamer gravely but firmly. "No, I'm not feeling very well, Mr. Cyrano. The fact is"—the professor drew himself up for a great effort—"I—I have a confession to make to you, sir."

Mr. Cyrano whipped round.

"Ah!" he ejaculated.

"It's about the money, sir," Durnette continued courageously. "For some years past you have trusted me with the circus accounts. I never violated your trust till recently."

Once more the circus proprietor turned sharply, and repeated his previous ejaculation.

"During the last few months," the tamer proceeded, "I have abused your confidence. It is a heavy load on my mind, and I want to confess it. I have misappropriated money of yours amounting to over two hundred pounds."

Mr. Cyrano did not turn round now. He paced the office reflectively for a minute without speaking, a pondering hand stroking his chin.

"Durnette," he said presently, and his voice and manner, although serious, were not unkind, considering the circumstances, "I need hardly say I'm extremely sorry that this thing has happened. You've always been a man I trusted, and when I find my trust misplaced it causes a pain here." And Adolph Cyrano placed a bejewelled hand over his heart. "You have, as you confess, misappropriated over two hundred pounds of my money. It's a big sum, Durnette—a very big sum—far more than a man with my heavy expenses could afford to overlook."

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MONDAY—

"THE MYSTIC CIRCLE!"

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LIBRARY. ONE
PENNY.

"You have broken your trust, but you have proved yourself man enough to confess it, and that's a good deal towards reparation. Now, Durnette, I've got something I want to tell you." The circus proprietor stopped suddenly in his walk, and looked the lion-tamer full in the face. "Durnette," he went on, "you've got an angel for a daughter!"

The professor started.

"Yes, you're surprised," Mr. Cyrano continued. "You don't seem to know it, but, all the same, your daughter May is an angel! Do you know what she has done? No? Well, she came to me yesterday, and she told me all about your defalcations. Now that was very brave of her; but, in addition, she handed me the sum of ninety pounds as part payment of your debt."

"Great heavens!" the tamer gasped the words out, and something like tears filled his eyes.

"Yes," resumed Cyrano, "that's what she did, Durnette; and she offered to pay off the rest by handing me so much per week off her salary. She's a noble girl, Durnette—a noble girl, and for her sake I'm going to give you another chance. I'm going to let you retain your old position as treasurer. That may be a foolish and unbusinesslike thing to do, but I'm going to risk it. A man with a daughter such as you've got, and a man, moreover, who's been brave enough to confess his wrong, isn't likely to repeat his offence. You will, therefore, continue to hold the post."

Professor Durnette trembled—this man of steel nerves and iron strength actually trembled. The tears that had gathered to his eyes fell now, trickling down his heavily-lined face. At length he spoke.

"Mr. Cyrano," he said, his voice hoarse with emotion, "how can I ever thank you? You are more than—"

"There, there! Don't say anything, professor," interrupted the circus proprietor. "The past is done with; we're making a new start now. Don't say another word about it. All is forgiven. Give me your hand, Durnette. That's right. And now you'll excuse me, as I'm very, very busy. Good day!"

The kind-hearted Adolph Cyrano wrung the tamer's hand, and half-pushed, half-led him out of the office-tent.

Choked with emotion, Durnette could say no word. He walked away like a man in a dream. A moment later these words fell on his ears from Mr. Cyrano, who had once more come to the tent-door:

"Don't forget, Durnette—never forget all your life—that your daughter is an angel!"

Upon the tamer's ears the words fell, but they sank deep into his heart, seeming to mix with his very life-blood, and to course through and through every vein in his body. "Your daughter is an angel! Your daughter is an angel!"

"Hallo, my bonny blue-eyed boy!" cried Roly-Poly, bounding into Bononi's sitting-room. (The clowns were lodging apart in Oldchester.) "Why this glumness, Billyn?—You look about as happy as a man what's lost two bob and found a bad 'arf-crown!"

Bononi heaved a deep sigh, and leaned forward in his chair, a perfect picture of melancholy contemplation.

"Joseph," he replied after scrutinising Roly for about thirty seconds, "I am in no mood for hilarity."

"Hilarity? It sounds all right, Bill, whatever it is. You never was pertickler gone on these long-named furin dishes, though. Pork-chops is more your form. But wherefore this broodin' dismalty, me worthy Thane?"

"Joseph," responded the other, in a tone of the utmost gravity, "I think I am in love."

"Great Jee-hosaphat!" exclaimed Roly, and then burst into song:

"Yer face is yer forchin, sir, she said,
Sir, she said, sir, she said;
Yer face is yer forchin, sir, she said."

"Watcher think o' me voice, William? Exquisite timbre, eh?"

"Timber?" repeated Bononi. "Well, it always does remind me of sawing wood. But enough of this frivolity. Unconsciously, Joseph, you have hit the mark. My face, my figure, my whole manner and deportment—these things certainly are my fortune. I think I told you once, Joseph, that I was the shrine at which hundreds of the fair sex worship in secret. Well, Joseph, here is proof."

Bononi's right hand dived into his breast-pocket, from which, over his heart, he drew out a perfumed letter, written on pink paper.

(Look out for next Monday's instalment of this most amusing yarn. Order your MAGNET early!)

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



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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Every Saturday.

had on coming to Greyfriars, and the many courageous actions and fearless escapades which stamp him for all time as the most popular schoolboy character ever created."

The letter from which I have just quoted comes from a nineteen-year-old reader, who goes on to say that, in spite of the possible chaff of his colleagues, he will continue to take in the "Magnet" for many years to come.

Time was when Harry Wharton was not the hero he is to-day. His temperament was different, and his passionate and self-willed nature often led him into serious trouble. Other "Magnet" favourites, too, have changed since that time, either for better or worse. If my chums would like to read for themselves how the characters of the various Removites were built up, they cannot do better than buy "The Dreadnought," which contains a superb story of the Greyfriars chums in every issue. "The Dreadnought" is on sale at all newsagents' throughout the kingdom every Thursday, and if you are interested in the early adventures of Harry Wharton & Co.—and what boy is not?—order your copy of our famous companion paper to-day!



FOR NEXT MONDAY:

"THE MYSTIC CIRCLE!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.

The central figure in next week's grand story of Greyfriars School is Loder of the Sixth, who evinces sudden alarm on seeing a mysterious circle chalked on the wall near the school gates. The prefect's alarm is well-founded, for shortly after the incident referred to he falls foul of an old and rascally associate, whom he betrays to the school authorities. In return for this action, the man makes things very warm for the Sixth-Former; and Harry Wharton & Co. find themselves thrown among many exciting adventures as a result of

"THE MYSTIC CIRCLE!"

"WHO IS YOUR FAVOURITE CHARACTER?"

It is very interesting, and often amusing, to note some of my reader-chums' comments on certain "Magnet" characters. Nearly every boy or girl who writes to me has something to say about the Greyfriars fellows, and not a few have their own particular favourite, whom they have come to look upon as an actual friend.

Before me, on a desk which is already crowded to excess, lies a sheaf of letters, and the communication which I first take up tells me, in bold, clear handwriting, that "Bob Cherry is the finest boy who ever breathed! He is the soul of honour, sunny as the day, and as true a picture of a British schoolboy as was ever drawn!"

The boy who writes this hails from Exeter, and I must agree with my Devonshire chum that Bob Cherry is indeed a splendid specimen of British boyhood. Cheerful and courageous, ever looking on the bright side, and up to any larks that are going, it is small wonder that he ranks as first favourite with so many Magnetites.

The next letter I look at is from Charlie W. (of Wolverhampton), who says he wants to see Vernon-Smith, the Boulder of Greyfriars, go back to his bad old ways. "Smithy used to be my favourite character," writes my correspondent, "but I don't like to see him reform. Can't you persuade Mr. Frank Richards to make him a black sheep again, and play poker and smoke cigarettes in the study, and let your artist draw him with flashy waistcoats, as of yore?"

Charlie W. seems to possess all the spirit and enthusiasm of the true "blade." He is of the nuts nutty.

Yet another reader writes: "I consider Harry Wharton to be out of all sight the finest character your clever author has ever conceived. He will live long after your Squiffs and Boulders had ceased to be, in the words of Byron—

"A schoolgirl's tale—the wonder of an hour."

"I notice Harry has not been in the limelight so much lately, being somewhat overshadowed by Peter Todd and others; but one cannot forget the uphill fight which Wharton

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

H. W. Heaton (Manchester).—I am afraid your requirements are too lengthy to insert on this page.

P. M. (Norfolk).—As I have said over and over again, the interest in the stories would be spoiled were Harry Wharton & Co. to be moved into a higher Form.

C. F. Cook (Battersea).—"Bob Cherry's Barring-Out!" has long since gone out of print, and I therefore cannot help you.

"Two Loyal Readers" (Egremont).—There is every possibility of your suggestion being put into effect in the near future. Thank you very much for the idea.

L. E. Such (South Norwood).—I do not think the artist is to blame in the matter you mention.

W. I. N. (Lambeth).—Thank you very much for your complimentary remarks, which were highly appreciated.

N. G. K. (Bayswater).—Authors cannot live for ever, and one cannot expect the leading writers of the period you name—twenty years ago—to be still flourishing. New blood is always essential to the welfare of a boys' paper.

Cecil S. Smith (Manchester).—The character you name is still at Greyfriars.

R. K. (Tooting).—I will see what can be done towards meeting your wishes in the near future.

"Regular Reader" (Streatham).—Yours was a difficult position; but I think you were unwise to make a martyr of yourself simply to gratify a hastily-made resolution. The season of Lent may demand certain sacrifices, but not to such an extent as you seemed to think.

W. R.—I must congratulate you on your fine sense of humour.

Horace Taylor (Birmingham). Loder is seventeen years of age, and Bolsover is the senior boy in the Remove Form. Best wishes.

Fred Wrighton (Rugby).—Thank you for your ripping letter extolling the "Magnet."

S. Blackmore (Newport).—Your poem falls somewhat short of publication standard. Nevertheless, I admire your patriotic sentiments.

G. S. (Salisbury).—I am glad our double numbers were held in such high esteem by yourself and friends.

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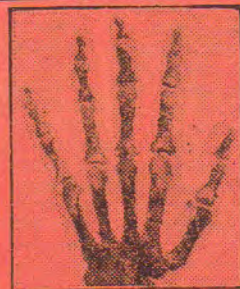
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