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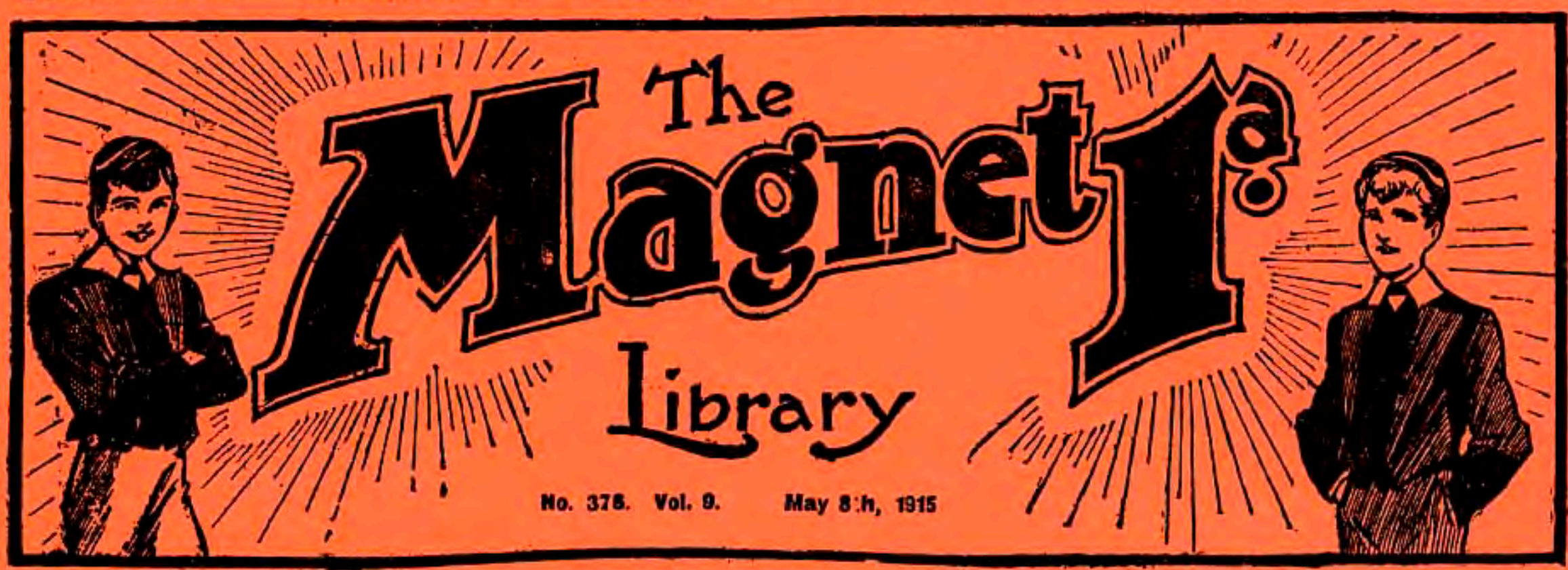

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(An Amusing Scene in the Magnificent Long Complete School Tale, entitled "The Schoolboy Acrobats," contained in this Issue.)

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THE SCHOOLBOY ACROBATS!

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"Yarooh!" yelled Coker minor, as he went soaring through the air again. "Keep it up! Keep the ball rolling!" chuckled Squiff. (*See Chapter* 10.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bunter Borrows the Bike!

BILLY BUNTER was wheeling Wharton's bicycle out of the shed, when Harry Wharton & Co. arrived on the scene. It was Wednesday afternoon, a half-holiday at Greyfriars, and the Famous Five intended taking their bikes out for a spin. They arrived just in time to see William George Bunter in possession of Wharton's machine.

They stared at him. The short-sighted Owl of the Remove did not observe the five juniors. He was busy with the bike. Harry Wharton's indignant glare was quite lost upon him. Billy Bunter had a little way of borrowing other fellows' property without the formality of asking permission.

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"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "What are you doing with that bike, Bunter?"

Bunter blinked at him.

"I'm going down to Friardale. The rotten saddle's too high. I haven't spindle-shanks like Wharton. Put it down for me, will you?"

Billy Bunter's little fat legs were about six inches shorter than Wharton's, so he found certain difficulties in mounting the bike.

"But you can't have Wharton's jigger," said Bob.

"Oh, yes, that's all right! He's lent it to me."

Harry Wharton's frown changed to a grin. The Owl of the Remove had not perceived him yet.

"Lent it to you, has he?" said Bob Cherry. "You asked him, of course?"

"Certainly! Help me get this rotten saddle lowered, will you?"

"You fat Ananias!" shouted Wharton.

Bunter jumped.

"Oh, really, Wharton, I didn't see you! What I meant to say was, I was going to ask you to lend me your bike. I knew you wouldn't mind."

"That's where you make a mistake," remarked Wharton. "I want it myself."

"I'm going down to Friardale to meet a new kid," said Bunter. "New chap coming into the Remove. I want to do the civil thing. I suppose you'll lend me the bike now."

"No fear! What's the matter with walking?"

"Oh, really——"

"I haven't heard about a new kid coming, either," said Wharton.

"You haven't happened to be hanging round any keyholes," remarked Johnny Bull, with his expressive snort.

"Oh, really, Bull! It was quite by chance I heard the Head mention to Mr. Quelch that Chumgum was coming this afternoon——"

"Who?"

"Chumgum. That's the new chap's name."

"Ye gods, what a name! It was quite by chance you happened to be at Mr. Quelch's keyhole, I suppose?" said Frank Nugent sarcastically.

"'Twasn't Mr. Quelch's—it was the Head's—I—I mean, I wasn't near a keyhole at all. I'd scorn to do anything of the sort. Now, this new chap's coming, and it would be only civil for a fellow to meet him at the station," urged Bunter. "I know you chaps won't go—you're too selfish. I'm going."

"How do you know he's got any tin?" asked Bob Cherry.

"The Head said so——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I mean, of course, I don't care whether he's rich or not. That's a matter of indifference to me. I'm not like some chaps."

"Well, you're not going on my jigger," said Wharton. "Try Shanks's pony. A walk will help to reduce your avoirdupois a little. Hand over the bike."

"Oh, really, Wharton!"

Wharton took hold of the handle-bars, but Billy Bunter held on to the saddle.

"Let go, you fat duffer!" exclaimed Wharton impatiently.

"Don't be so selfish, Wharton," urged Bunter. "I think you might lend me your bike, after all I've done for you. If there's any accident, I'll pay for the damage."

"You owe me fifteen bob for the last one."

"I'm going to settle that up out of my next postal-order. Now, don't be selfish. You can easily put off your ride till another afternoon."

"Well, of all the blessed cheek!" exclaimed Wharton indignantly. "We're going out for the afternoon, tubby. Why can't you walk a mile to the station? Let go!"

Billy Bunter blinked angrily at the captain of the Remove through his big spectacles.

"If you're going to be a selfish rotter, Wharton——"

"Well, I am—if it's selfish to want my own bike," grinned Wharton. "I'm hardly likely to give up an afternoon's ride to save you walking a mile. Leggo."

"I'll have your bike, Bob."

"Your mistake," grinned Bob Cherry. "You won't."

"I say, Franky!"

"Nothing doing!" chuckled Nugent.

"Johnny, old man," said Bunter persuasively, "I know you'll lend me your bike, especially after the way I looked after it while you were away. I used to come down to the bike-shed every day and oil it, and——"

Johnny Bull almost gasped.

"Why, you fat rotter, I gave my old bike to Linley when I went away, and this is a new one."

"I—I mean, of course, I should have looked after it, if—if—if—— If you won't lend me your bike, Johnny Bull, I think you're a selfish beast, considering that I'm going to do a good action by meeting the new chap. I know Inky will lend me his, though, won't you, Inky?"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh grinned.

"The knowfulness is a mistake, my esteemed Bunter, for the lendfulness will not come off," he replied.

"Well, of all the rotters!" said Bunter in disgust. "I'm jolly glad there's a puncture in your bike, Bob Cherry!"

"A puncture! My hat!" Bob Cherry rushed into the bike-shed at once, and his chums went with him, anxious to see that puncture. They had planned a long spin for the afternoon, and it was annoying to find that there would be delay in starting.

Bob Cherry jerked his bike off the stand and up-ended it and felt over the tyres. They were full and hard.

"The duffer!" said Wharton "The bike's all right."

"One of his idiotic jokes, I suppose," said Bob. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! He's off!"

There was a sound of a clatter outside. The juniors rushed out of the bike-shed, to see Billy Bunter disappearing round the corner of the School House on Wharton's bike.

"Stop thief!" roared Bob.

"Why, the fat rotter!" howled Wharton. "Spoofed, by gum!"

The five juniors rushed after Bunter. They understood now that the Owl of the Remove had invented that puncture to get them off the scene for a moment while he borrowed Wharton's bicycle. William George Bunter had not been brought up at the feet of the late lamented George Washington, and he departed from the straight line of veracity with as little scruple as a Berlin journalist.

It was not really permitted for the juniors to mount their machines within gates. They were supposed to wheel them sedately down to the gates, and mount in the road. But necessity knows no law. That Prussian maxim was fully agreed with by William George Bunter. He went spinning down the drive on Wharton's bike, with the Famous Five whooping in pursuit.

He rode with difficulty, for his feet would not reach the pedals. He had to let them spin round, and catch them as they came up. But even under this handicap he was faster than the juniors on foot. He went whizzing down to the gates, puffing and blowing with exertion. Gosling, the porter, was in the gateway, and he had the narrowest escape of his life, jumping aside just in time as the short-sighted Owl thundered down on him.

"My heye!" gasped Gosling. "My honley 'at! Wot I says is this 'ere——"

But Bunter did not stop to hear what Gosling had to say—he couldn't. He shot across the road, and very nearly cannoned into the hedge on the other side. Fortunately, he dragged the machine round just in time, and whizzed away towards Friardale.

"Stop!" yelled Wharton. "Come back, you fat burglar!"

Bunter did not heed. He was busy catching the whizzing pedals as they came up, and driving them down again and letting them fly. The Famous Five halted in the road. Harry Wharton was frowning, and his chums were grinning.

"Going—going—gone!" said Bob Cherry.

"The gonefulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Singh. "But do not look frownful, my esteemed Wharton. You can mountfully stand behind me on my jiggerful machine, and we will chasefully follow the esteemed fat rotter."

"I suppose that's all we can do," said Wharton. "The cheeky porpoise! We shall run him down in Friardale."

The juniors returned for their machines, and wheeled out four bicycles. Wharton mounted behind Inky on the

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step, resting his hands on the Indian junior's shoulders, and they started. Billy Bunter had disappeared.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Surprising New Boy!

"GROOOH! I'm out of breath! Grooh! Beasts, to make me hurry like that!" growled Billy Bunter, as he rolled off Wharton's bicycle outside Friardale Station.

The train was signalled, and the fat junior was only just in time. He jammed the pedal on the pavement, and rolled into the station. He was feeling very warm and very exasperated after his unaccustomed exercise. He had not intended to ride as if for his life. But he had had no choice, for he guessed that the Famous Five would be following on his track.

It was necessary to tip the porter to get on the platform, and Billy Bunter was in a state not uncommon with him—stony. So he remained outside the barrier, watching with eager eyes for the outcoming passengers.

It was not merely politeness that drew Bunter to the station to meet the new boy. Bunter was always very attentive to new boys—in fact, quite affectionate. New fellows, naturally feeling a little lonely and lost, had felt quite grateful to Bunter for his kindly attentions, sometimes, till they found that the Owl of the Remove was not quite disinterested. They were generally requested to cash in advance a postal-order which Bunter was expecting that very day, and the amount of the postal-order varied according to the look of the new boy, whether he seemed wealthy or otherwise. Bunter had a marvellous gift for discovering whether a fellow was in funds, and a still more marvellous gift for extracting a share of the funds.

A plump youth in Etons came out among the passengers from the newly-arrived train, and the porter followed him with a box. Billy Bunter did not need telling that this was the new junior, Master Charles Chumgum. He was a plump, good-looking lad, with a good-humoured face and bright, twinkling eyes. Billy Bunter bore down on him at once, and, as he planted himself full in the new boy's path, the latter had to stop.

"Chumgum—what?"

"That's my name."

"I'm Bunter."

"Oh, you're Bunter, are you?" said Master Chumgum, a little puzzled.

"I've come to meet you and take you to Greyfriars," explained Bunter. "I'm going to look after you a bit."

"You're very good!" said Chumgum.

"Not at all," said Bunter airily. "I'm a kind-hearted chap, you know. Are you in a hurry to get to the school? If not, we might drop in at Uncle Clegg's."

"Relation of yours?"

"Nunno! It's the tuckshop. I dare say you'd like a snack after your journey. I'm standing treat."

"My eye!" said Master Chumgum.

Master Chumgum could not help being surprised. Billy Bunter did not look at all like a benevolent philanthropist, and his exceeding kindness to a new boy he had never seen before was surprising.

"Come on!" said Bunter. "I'm taking you under my wing, you know. Tell them to send on your box. We'll have a cab after we've had a bit of a feed."

"Right-ho!"

They left the station together, Master Chumgum looking, and feeling, quite grateful and pleased.

"That your bike?" he asked.

"Yes. Never mind that. I dare say it will be quite safe there," said Bunter. "This way."

Bunter led the way down the old High Street to Uncle Clegg's little shop. Five cyclists, mounted on four bicycles, came whizzing into the street from the lane just as Bunter and Chumgum reached the tuckshop. In a moment they had jumped down, run the bikes up to the old tree outside the shop, and surrounded Bunter and his companion.

"Where's my bike?" roared Wharton.

"Collar him neckfully!"

"You fat bounder!"

"I say, you fellows," stammered Bunter—"I—I say, you know—— Don't be beasts, you know. Oh, my hat! Yarooooh!"

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Charles Chumgum looked on in astonishment.

It was his first experience of Greyfriars fellows, and it was surprising. He beheld his kind new friend grasped by five pairs of hands at once, whirled into the air, and planted on the pavement with a heavy concussion. Then he heard him roar:

"Yarooh! Yah! Beasts! Help! Fire!"

"Now, where's my bike?" demanded Wharton.

"Yow-ow-ow! I left it outside the station! I don't want your rotten bike! Yow!"

"You've left my bike in the street!" howled Wharton. "How do you know it won't be pinched, you villain?"

"Yow! I don't care if it is! I hope it will be! Yaaaaaawwwwp!"

"Oh, my eye!" ejaculated Chumgum.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry. "You the new chap, Chewing-gum?"

"Chumgum."

"My mistake! I knew it was some kind of gum," said Bob affably. "I suppose Bunter—this prize porker is Bunter—I suppose he has palled on to you, and taken you under his wing—what?"

"He was very civil," said Chumgum.

"No doubt. And he's brought you along here for a feed?"

"Yes."

"He's standing treat?"

"Yes."

"Ha, ha! Well, I'll give you a tip——"

"Shut up, Bob Cherry, you beast!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If Bunter stands treat, the fellow he treats has to stand the bill," explained Bob Cherry. "Now, if you're done, it's your own look-out!"

"Oh, my eye!"

"Come on, you chaps!" said Wharton. "I want to see if my bike's safe."

The Famous Five hurried on to the station. Billy Bunter picked himself up, and blinked doubtfully at the new boy through his big glasses. After Bob Cherry's warning he was dubious.

"Who are those fellows?" asked Chumgum.

"Rotters!" said Bunter. "They're Wharton, Cherry, Nugent, Bull, and Hurree Singh—the worst cads in the Remove! I hardly ever speak to 'em. They're too low, really. They're always borrowing money from me."

"Without your speaking to them?"

"Well, I take notice of them sometimes. They're jealous of me, too, because I'm a good cricketer, and they're only so-so—very so-so. But come on! I'm hungry—I mean, you must be hungry after your journey!"

Chumgum grinned, and followed Bunter into the village shop. Bob Cherry's kindly warning had not been lost on him. Uncle Clegg came out of his little parlour.

"Order what you'd like!" said Bunter magnificently.

Chumgum chuckled.

"Oh, you order, as it's your treat!" he said.

"I'd really rather you gave the orders, old chap."

"No; I'll leave it to you."

"Ahem! I—I say, Mr. Clegg, I—I'll have some jam-tarts—a dozen to begin with."

"You owe me four shillings, Master Bunter! I've told you that I don't serve you till you've paid it!"

"I'm expecting a postal-order shortly, Mr. Clegg—this evening, in fact."

Mr. Clegg grunted. He had heard of Bunter's postal-order before; indeed, he had cashed it once, in the days before he knew Bunter so well.

"I—I say, Chumgum, it's very unfortunate, but I've left my purse in my study," said Bunter.

"On the grand piano?" asked Chumgum.

Bunter blinked at him. Chumgum looked quite serious.

"We—we don't have grand pianos in our studies," said Bunter feebly. "The fact is, I've lent most of my money to Peter Todd. He's my study-mate, you know. I suppose you couldn't lend me half-a-quid?"

"Quite so. I couldn't."

"Well, half-a-crown would do. I'll return it out of my postal-order. I say, Chumgum, where are you going?"

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"To Greyfriars."

"But—but we haven't had our feed yet," urged Bunter, following the new junior anxiously out of the tuck-shop.

"Bow-wow!" said Chumgum cheerfully.

"Well, look here, if you like to cash my postal-order——"

"Certainly—when you hand it over!"

Billy Bunter snorted with wrath. He began to realise that the new boy was not to be victimised, and he was naturally wrathy. He had taken the trouble to come down to Friardale specially to victimise him.

"Look here, you new kid," said Bunter, "I don't want any of your cheek. See? How would you like me to tell the fellows all about you?"

"Eh?"

Bunter grinned.

"Oh, I know all about you!" he said. "I heard the Head telling Mr. Quelch. Your father owns a circus. You've been a circus performer yourself. How would you like all the fellows to know that?"

"Why shouldn't they?"

"Well, of course they won't speak to you. We bar cads at Greyfriars," said Bunter loftily. "I was willing to take you up, if—if——"

"If I'd lend you money."

"If you'd be decent, I mean. I'm not a snob, and so long as you keep your circus connections dark, I'd be willing to speak to you."

"You needn't trouble," remarked Chumgum.

"Well, you can expect to be sent to Coventry. I certainly shall not take any notice of you!"

"Good!"

"Why, you—you rotter——"

"Good-bye!"

"Look here, you circus cad!" roared Bunter. "I've a jolly good mind to give you a licking, to teach you manners to begin with!"

"Oh, don't!"

"Well, I will!" said Bunter, who was always warlike when he found no resistance. "I can tell you I've licked Fishy, and he's bigger than you. I'll jolly well give you a jolly good hiding! Don't back away, you rotten funk!" roared Bunter, as the new boy eluded him.

Chumgum backed away, smiling, and Bunter made a rush at him, lashing out with his fat fists. He was suddenly grasped, and, to his astonishment, he found himself whirled up into the air. There was hardly a fellow at Greyfriars who could lift Bunter's terrific weight, but Charles Chumgum whirled him into the air as if he had been a bag of potatoes.

Earth and sky swam round Billy Bunter. What was happening he did not know.

But it suddenly dawned upon him that he was standing on his head—on Chumgum's head, upside-down in the air, with his fat legs lashing wildly, and his jacket curling round his ears.

With the fat junior upside-down on his head, Charles Chumgum walked down the village street. There were howls of amazement and merriment from the village folk, who had certainly never beheld such a weird sight in the quiet old High Street before. It was Bunter's first experience as a circus performer, and it was striking.

"Yoooooooooh!" spluttered Bunter. "Lemme down! Yaroooop!"

How Charles Chumgum supported Bunter's weight was a mystery. Doubtless it was the knack of the acrobat.

Certainly it did not seem to trouble him.

Unheeding the stares and exclamations on all sides, Charles Chumgum walked on, with the fat junior balanced upside-down on his head. Harry Wharton & Co.—fortunately, having found Harry's bicycle safe outside the station—came riding back through the village to take the lane to Redclyffe. At the sight of Chumgum and Bunter they nearly fell off their bikes.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" stuttered Bob Cherry. "Look at that!"

"What the dickens——"

"Oh, my hat!"

"The hatfulness is terrific!"

Harry Wharton & Co. jumped off their bicycles. They could scarcely believe their eyes.

"Hallo!" roared Wharton. "What's the name of this game?"

Chumgum gave a sudden start. He let Bunter slide down so suddenly that it made the fat junior's head swim. Bunter sat on the pavement and roared. Chumgum coloured as he met the astounded glances of the Famous Five.

"Only—only a little joke!" he stammered. "I—I forgot."

"Are you a steam derrick, disguised as a silly ass?" demanded Bob Cherry. "If not, how did you get Bunter up into the air? I thought he was unliftable."

"It's a knack, you know," stammered Chumgum. "I—I—I forgot."

He walked away quickly.

"He's a rotten circus performer!" stuttered Bunter. "A low beast, who's lived in a circus! Yow! I say, you fellows, I feel quite ill. You'll have to help me back to Greyfriars. Yow!"

"Right-ho! We'll look for you as we come back," said Bob; "we shall be along here again in about four hours."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The cyclists rode away in a state of great astonishment at the weird performances of the new fellow.

Bunter decided not to sit on the pavement for four hours, till they came to help him home. He scrambled up, and rolled away towards the school, grunting with wrath.

— —

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Booting Out a Bounder!

"TODDY, old man!"

"'Tain't tea-time yet."

"Look here, Toddy——"

"Shut up, I'm busy!"

Peter Todd was in No. 7, busy at the study table. Big law books were open on the table before him, and he was wrinkling his brows over them. Peter was going to be a lawyer when he grew up, following in his father's footsteps in that respect, and he often improved the shining hours on holidays by digging deep into the weird mysteries of English law.

He did not like being interrupted. But Bunter was determined to interrupt him. He had something important to say.

Peter's study-mates—his Cousin Alonzo and Tom Dutton—were in the study, Alonzo perusing a big volume on entomology and Tom Dutton busy with his stamp collection. Nobody had any time to waste on Bunter. But Bunter was determined to be heard.

"You can put that rot away, Toddy," he said. "This is important. I suppose you know there's a new cad come into the Remove."

"I didn't know," said Todd. "Relation of yours, Bunter?"

"Certainly not, you ass!"

"Then how do you know he's a cad?"

"Oh, really, Toddy!"

"Well, shut up!" said Todd. "I'm busy."

"I've seen this new rotter," said Bunter. "His name's Chumgum."

"I've heard that name before," remarked Todd.

"I daresay you've seen it on a circus," sneered Bunter. "The cad's pater keeps a circus."

"Well?"

"Well, I want this whole study to back up on the subject," said Bunter. "If we put our foot down, the whole Form will follow suit. I think it's time we drew a line. I'm getting fed up with the cads who come to this school. A line ought to be drawn somewhere."

Peter Todd looked at him fixedly.

"What are you burbling about?" he inquired.

"We've got all sorts of cads here," went on Bunter. "There's a blessed cobbler come here on a scholarship, and then there's Linley—it's well known that Linley worked in a factory; the chap has actually worked for his living. You know that as well as I do, Toddy."

"Awful!" said Toddy. "There ought to be a law passed to stop chaps from working for their living. It's

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"You clumsy ass! Keep off! Yarooh!" howled Bunter, as Johany Bull's toe came upon his fat waistcoat, and almost doubled him up. (*See Chapter 7.*)

really horrid. A proper state of affairs would be, nobody doing any work at all. Think how the country would flourish!"

"Oh, don't be an ass, Toddy!"

"It's a thing you'd never do, isn't it Bunter?"

"No jolly fear!" said Bunter.

"Nothing would make you work, would it?"

"Certainly not!"

"You'd rather sponge than work any day, wouldn't you?"

"Look here——"

"Well, I'm looking," said Toddy. "I'm looking at a fat, silly, greasy, stupid monkey. Have you got anything else to say before I boot you out?"

"Why, you rotter——"

"My dear Bunter," said Alonzo Todd, looking up mildly from his big volume, "your remarks on the subject of Linley are somewhat foolish. My Uncle Benjamin would be shocked at you—nay, disgusted. It is very much to Linley's credit that he is able to support himself, and that he has done so."

"Oh, rats!" growled Bunter. "I'm not a snob, but I draw the line somewhere. Still, as I was saying, I can put up with Linley——"

"That's really good of you," remarked Peter; "for Linley can't put up with you!"

"But I draw the line somewhere," roared Bunter; "I draw it at having a circus bounder shoved into our Form! The Head oughtn't to let him into the school. My idea is that this study should protest. What is Greyfriars coming to, I'd like to know, when all sorts of blighters are let into the place?"

"Well, after letting you in, I can't see that Greyfriars has a right to be particular," remarked Peter.

"Me? Why, you—you ass——"

"What's the matter with this new chap? Won't he lend you any money?"

"Oh, really, Toddy! He's an awful beast; a rank out-

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sider; a fearful cad! He has performed in a circus before he came here. Now, you can see as well as I can that it's a disgrace for Greyfriars to have him here. My idea is that this study is down on it from the start. We've got to get the fellows to send him to Coventry, to show that we disapprove of cads coming here. We might get up a protest to the Head, too."

"My hat!"

"Why, they might plant him in this study!" said Bunter. "Fancy associating with a circus performer! Now, you'll admit that if an out-and-out cad is shoved into this study, Toddy, it's up to you to boot him out."

Peter Todd nodded thoughtfully.

"That's right enough," he admitted.

"Well, you see," went on Bunter, encouraged, "that's what I'm getting at. Just think of it—having a frightful cad and bounder in this study! I want you to promise to boot him out if he comes here, Toddy."

"I don't mind," said Peter. "I'll undertake to boot out a cad and a bounder."

"Good! That's what I want. Here, I say, wharrer you at?" roared Bunter.

Peter Todd had jumped up from the table, seized Bunter by the collar, and spun him round. He was applying his boot behind Bunter, and really the Owl's question was unnecessary.

"Yow-ow-ow!" roared Bunter. "Stoppit! Wharrer you at, you beast?"

"Isn't this what you wanted?"

"Eh! What? No! Wharrer you mean?"

"Didn't you ask me to boot out a cad and bounder if he came into this study?" demanded Peter.

"Why, you rotter! Leggo! Yarooooh!"

"Well, you asked for it!" said Peter.

Biff! Biff! Biff!

"Yoooop!"

A regular goal-kick sent William George Bunter spinning into the passage. He sat down there with a roar.

"Oh! Oh! Ah! Yah! Groooh! Beast!"

"Always ready to boot out a bounder!" smiled Peter. "Come in again if you want some more, Bunty!"

The door slammed.

Billy Bunter picked himself up mumbling. He shook a fat fist at the study door. But he did not come in again. He did not want any more.

— —

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Very Serious!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. came in rosy and cheerful from their ride. They trooped into No. 1 Study in the Remove passage, Wharton and Nugent with packets of tuck under their arms. It was past teatime, and the Famous Five had come in hungry. No. 1 Study belonged to Wharton and Nugent, but Johnny Bull and Bob Cherry and Inky came in to tea.

A youth, who was seated in the armchair, rose to his feet as they came in. The Co. looked at him in some surprise. They recognised Charles Chumgum, the new fellow who had performed so extraordinary a feat in the old High Street of Friardale, with the unwilling assistance of Billy Bunter.

"Hallo!" said Wharton.

"Good-afternoon!" said Chumgum seriously. There was an expression of great solemnity on Chumgum's face, and he did not look like the merry youth the juniors had seen in Friardale.

"This is my study," explained Wharton.

"I trust that we shall get on nicely together," said Chumgum, with the same air of owl-like seriousness.

"You—you've been put into this study?"

"Mr. Quelch has told me that I am to have No. 1 Study."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I sincerely hope that it will not annoy you in any way."

"Well, you're welcome," said Wharton. "Quelchy is monarch of all he surveys, and I suppose we couldn't expect to keep the study for we two for ever. There used to be four in it at one time."

"Make yourself at home," said Frank Nugent, with rather an effort. The two chums were not looking for a study-mate, as a matter of fact. They would have preferred to keep No. 1 to themselves; but it was up to them to be civil to the new-comer.

"Thank you very much!" said Chumgum.

"You may as well have tea with us," said Harry.

"I shall be very pleased."

"Well, suppose you fill the kettle for a start? There's a tap at the end of the passage."

"I am entirely at your service. My wish is to live on peaceful terms with my schoolfellows."

"Eh?"

"I mean to avoid horseplay and monkey-tricks, and to obey my kind teachers, and to improve my mind in this seat of learning."

The Famous Five gazed at Chumgum speechlessly. Such a remark would not have surprised them from Alonzo Todd, who was a solemn and serious youth, and given to making grandfatherly remarks. But they had hitherto believed that Alonzo was the one and only of that variety.

"What are you getting at?" asked Bob Cherry at last.

"Getting at?"

"Yes. Are you trying to pull our leg?"

"I am trying to be serious, sober, and sedate."

"Which?"

"This respectable and ancient foundation of scholarly learning is very different from the surroundings I have been accustomed to. I desire to be worthy of my new environment."

"Great Scott!"

The Famous Five blinked at one another as Chumgum went out with the kettle. Bob Cherry tapped his forehead significantly.

"Bit weak in the upper crust," he murmured. "Poor chap!"

"The weakfulness of the upper crust is gammon, and the esteemed bounder is pulling our honourable leg," said Hurree Singh.

"He seems to have changed a bit since we saw him in Friardale," said Wharton, considerably puzzled.

Chumgum came back with the kettle. The chums of the Remove proceeded to get tea, Chumgum assisting them cheerfully, but with a solemnity of manner that was worthy of Alonzo Todd at his very best.

He puzzled the Removites considerably. From what they had seen of him at their first meeting, they would have taken Chumgum for anything but a solemn youth. Now he was solemnity itself.

"Is it true what Bunter said about your having been in a circus?" asked Bob Cherry, when they were having tea.

"My early days were passed in a circus," said Chumgum sadly. "I mingled thoughtlessly in the throng of the happy and the gay."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"But that is all over. I am serious now—I am devoted to learning—my one desire is to imbibe knowledge."

"Good heavens!"

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter blinked in at the doorway. "My hat! You've got that circus bounder here! Have they planted him on you?"

"They have," said Wharton.

"Well, you're welcome to him. I wouldn't have him in my study. I draw the line somewhere," sniffed Bunter.

"Bunter," said Chumgum, "I beg your pardon for playing a trick on you in the village. It was thoughtless of me."

"It was rotten cheek!" said Bunter.

"Forgive me."

"Eh?"

"Forgive me," said Chumgum.

"Who are you getting at?"

"I am asking your forgiveness."

"Oh, don't talk out of your neck!" growled Bunter. "You can't pull my leg. I say, you fellows, if you turn that rotter out, I'll have tea with you."

"Go hon!"

"Well, I'll have tea with you, anyway," said Bunter. "I can stand the cad, if you can. I sha'n't speak to him, of course. I draw the line at circus performers."

The juniors looked at Chumgum. After that remark they naturally expected to see him rise and mop up the floor with the Owl of the Remove. But he didn't. He

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gazed at Billy Bunter with an expression more of sorrow than of anger.

"I have already asked your forgiveness, Bunter," he said mildly.

"Oh, shut up! Are you going to pass that cake, Wharton?"

"No!" said Wharton.

"Oh, really——"

"And if you don't beg Chumgum's pardon for your beastly rudeness, I'll sling you out of the study," said Wharton wrathfully.

"Oh, really, I beg your pardon, Chumgum!" said Bunter hastily. "Now pass that cake."

Wharton passed the plate to Chumgum to pass on to Bunter. Chumgum absently balanced it on the tip of his forefinger, a proceeding that was watched in amazement by the Removites.

Chumgum started, and coloured, and the plate slid from his finger and crashed on the table, and broke into several pieces.

"Well, my hat!" said Bob Cherry.

"I am really sorry," said Chumgum distressfully. "I forgot."

"Well, of all the fatheads!" said Bunter, collaring the cake.

"Please allow me to pay for the damage," said Chumgum.

"Rats!" said Wharton. "Never mind the damage; and there's nothing to look like a boiled owl about."

"I suppose you know lots of circus tricks?" said Nugent.

"I am sorry to say I do."

"What are you sorry about?"

"It is my object to forget my early thoughtless and flighty life, and to devote myself to the acquisition of serious knowledge."

"Great Christopher Columbus!"

"Is there are more cake, you fellows?"

"There isn't."

"Then I'm off!" said Bunter discontentedly.

"Thank goodness!"

Billy Bunter rolled away in search of other fellows at tea.

"Bunter has not forgiven me," said Chumgum distressfully.

"Well, what does that matter?"

"I have erred."

"You have whatted?"

"Erred."

Harry Wharton rose to his feet.

"I don't know the name of this game," he remarked. "But as you're going to be in this study, it's up to us to show you, quite plainly at the start, that you can't pull our leg. Collar him!"

"I say——"

But Chumgum had no time to say anything. He was promptly collared, and bumped on the hearthrug. He gave a yell as he landed.

"Now," said Wharton, "we don't want to hurt you. But if you don't explain what you've been playing the giddy goat for, you'll get some more."

"Oh!"

"What game have you been playing, you fathead?"

"Yow! I—I was only trying to be serious! gasped Chumgum "Ain't you fellows serious here? Ain't you all in pursuit of valuable knowledge?"

"My only hat!"

Chumgum rose rather limply to his feet. He backed round the table as the juniors made a movement towards him.

"Hold on!" he ejaculated. "I'll explain. I wasn't pulling your leg, really."

"Then what were you doing?"

"I was only trying to be serious. I'm not a very serious chap really," confessed Chumgum. "But my father told me I should have to be serious here, and not play any tricks, and not to keep on giving it away that I was brought up in a circus. I forgot myself when I played that little joke on Bunter in the village. I really meant to be serious all the time."

"Well, you blessed ass," said Bob Cherry in amazement, "did you think we were all boiled owls at Greyfriars, grubbing over books, and not thinking of anything else?"

"Well—yes."

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'll find things a bit different," grinned Nugent. "Don't give us any more of your blessed seriousness, you thumping ass! Can you show us some circus tricks?"

"My father said it would be wiser not to play any circus tricks. He said that I should make a bad impression."

"Your father hasn't been in the Greyfriars Remove," said Wharton, laughing. "You'd better not start turning somersaults in the Form-room, or walking Mr. Quelch about on your head, of course. But if you draw a long face, and talk like a Dutch uncle, you're liable to get ragged."

"Oh, good!" said Chumgum, in great relief. "I really don't think I could have kept it up long It was a great strain. If you fellows would like to see some tricks——"

"Go ahead! Here, what are you up to?" roared Bob Cherry, as the new fellow suddenly seized him, and whirled him into the air.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry found himself upside down on the new boy's head, and he roared.

"Yarooh! Lemme down, you ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Chumgum obligingly let him down, and Bob rubbed his head and grunted.

"Come down to the gym," said Wharton. "There isn't room in the study. And if Bob's feet landed on the furniture there would be on earthquake."

"Why, you ass——" began Bob.

"Let's get down to the gym."

And Chumgum, not at all serious now, cheerfully walked down to the gym with the Famous Five.

———

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
Fish is Fed Up!

"GREAT Scott!"

"My hat!"

"Look, by Jove!"

A crowd had gathered in the gym. Charlie Chumgum, having entirely cast off his newly-acquired seriousness, was giving an impromptu performance that amazed the Greyfriars fellows. Chumgum's early days had been passed as an acrobat in his father's establishment, Chumgum's Celebrated Circus, and he was a master of all the tricks of the ring. His looks showed how delighted he was to be at the old game again. Harry Wharton & Co. were very active in the gym, but they had to admit that they were not a patch on Charlie Chumgum.

That cheery youth's limbs seemed to be made of elastic, judging by the extraordinary contortions he was capable of. He tied himself up into a knot, he walked backwards on his hands, he swung on the horizontal bar by his chin, he stood upon it on his head.

"I guess that galoot is some acrobat," remarked Fisher T. Fish, the American junior, who was not wont to admit that anybody could do anything that he couldn't do.

Chumgum was evidently "some" acrobat, as Fishy expressed it in his own language.

"That's ripping!" said Johnny Bull. "Now walk somebody on your head, Chummygum. Not me!" he ejaculated, as Chumgum grasped his hands suddenly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here, mind what you're at!" roared Johnny Bull. "Oh, crumbs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yoooooop!"

Johnny Bull found himself whirled into the air by his hands, and his feet floated in space, and the circus youth danced along, with Johnny Bull soaring in the air over him, his head upside down a few inches over Chumgum's head.

"Groooooooh!" came from Johnny Bull.

"Hurrah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here, lemme down——"

But Chumgum did not let his victim down so soon He danced round in a circle, with the unfortunate Johnny

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soaring above him, the juniors roaring with laughter, Johnny Bull's face was worth a guinea a box at least.

Johnny came down with a sudden rush at last, and the juniors jumped, expecting to see him crash on the floor.

But he did not land on the floor. He disappeared under Chumgum's arm, and reappeared on his shoulders behind, and rolled along Chumgum's left arm, and then was gently seated upon the floor.

He sat and gasped.

"Oh, my hat! Oh, crumbs! Yoooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess I could do that," remarked Fisher T. Fish.

"Go it, Fishy!"

"Keep off, you ass!" growled Johnny Bull, as Fisher T. Fish grasped his hands.

But Fish did not keep off. He was determined to show that what Chumgum could do was nothing to what they could do "over there." He dragged at Johnny Bull to yank him into the air.

But the sturdy junior was a good weight. He sat tight, and Fisher T. Fish yanked and yanked, but Bull did not come off the floor.

"Go it, Fishy! We're waiting," grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Kim up!" gasped Fish. "I—I'll do it if I bust! Kim up, hang you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Johnny Bull did not rise to the occasion. Fisher T. Fish dragged and dragged, and suddenly his hands slipped from their hold as Johnny Bull jerked his hands away, and Fish went flying backwards. Bump!

"Hurrah!"

"Oh, my hat! Oh, jiminy! Oh, Jerusalem!" gasped Fish, sitting up dazedly.

"Do that again, Fishy!"

"I—I guess that galoot's too heavy for me," stuttered Fish. "I guess he weighs about twenty stone."

"Try me!" said Chumgum.

"He'll break your neck," said Bob Cherry warningly. "Fishy can't do it."

"I guess I can," growled Fish. "You watch me."

He took the obliging Chumgum's hands, and tried to whirl him into the air, as he had seen Chumgum do with Johnny Bull. To the surprise of the juniors, Chumgum flew into the air. But he landed on Fish's shoulders on his feet, and then sat on his head.

Fish staggered under his weight.

"Hyer, I say, gerroff!" he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Chumgum made a spring, and stood on Fish's head on one foot. As he was wearing boots, his foot came on Fish's head with a loud crack, and there was a still louder yell from Fisher T. Fish.

"Yarooh! Gerroff! I guess I'm fed up with this!" yelled Fish.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fish made a rush along the gym, to displace his burden. But Chumgum kept his balance wonderfully. The Yankee junior plunged forward on his hands and knees to hurl him to the floor. Chumgum slid along his back, and stood between his shoulders. Fish rolled over, and Chumgum stood on his chest, on one foot all the time. The juniors were yelling with laughter. Fish had taken on the schoolboy acrobat of his own accord, and now he was as difficult to get rid of as the Old Man of the Sea, when that cheerful old gentleman was planted on the shoulders of Sindbad the Sailor.

"Draggimoff!" yelled Fish. "Oh, my hat! Oh, Jerusalem!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fish sat up; Chumgum stood on his shoulders. He rolled desperately along the floor, and Chumgum stood alternately on his chest and his back. He jumped to his feet, and found Chumgum's legs curled round his neck, and Chumgum leaning over and smiling upside down into his face.

"Yankimoff!" shrieked Fish. "He ain't human!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Chumgum dropped off the exhausted and flustered Fish at last. Fisher T. Fish stood and gasped, and gasped, and gasped, as if he would never finish gasping.

"Waal, I swow;" gasped Fish. "Oh, dear! That—the centipede ain't human! I guess I've had enough of this!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll show you some more tricks if you like," grinned Chumgum.

"I guess you won't!"

And Fisher T. Fish fled.

"Chumgum, you are a corker, and no mistake!" said Squiff, the Australian junior. "I've got an idea, you chaps—a topping, gilt-edged stunt, as Fishy would say. We've done amateur theatricals no end of times; but what price an acrobatic show?"

"What?"

"The Schoolboy Acrobats!" said Squiff. "We'll make this johnny give us lessons in his circus tricks, and get up a troupe of acrobats, and give a show—a really ripping show!"

"Hurrah!"

Sampson Quincy Iffley Field's idea was greeted with acclamation.

"I—I say, you know," murmured Chumgum, "my father told me that circus tricks would be unpopular here, and advised me to be serious, sober, and sedate."

"Seriousness, sobriety, and sedateness are off," said Bob Cherry. "It's a ripping wheeze, and will take the shine out of the Fourth, too. Temple, Dabney & Co. have never thought of an acrobatic troupe. It's the catch of the season. All we want is lessons from Chumgum."

"Now, Chummygum, it's up to you——"

"Any old thing," said Chumgum.

"Hurrah!"

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THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

In Great Demand!

BILLY BUNTER was disgusted.

The Owl of the Remove had proposed that the circus bounder should be sent to Coventry.

Certainly his proposal had not been accepted very graciously in his own study. And so far from being sent to Coventry, the circus bounder seemed to be on the way to becoming one of the most popular members of the Remove.

Wharton and Nugent were quite satisfied to have him in their study.

And half the Form, at least, were anxious to know him, and to get him to teach them some of his weird knowledge acquired in Chumgum's Celebrated Circus.

There was evidently to be no "Coventry."

Fellows like Skinner and Snoop might have shared Bunter's aristocratic prejudices, but for the fact that the new fellow was rolling in tin. Chumgum's Celebrated Circus was a paying concern, and Charles Chumgum, senior, kept Charles Chumgum, junior, well supplied with cash. And Skinner and Snoop were never down on anybody who had plenty of money. They weren't down even on Bunter, when that fat youth was in funds. So Bunter was disgusted, and seemed likely to remain in a perpetual state of disgust, for the new boy, during his first week at Greyfriars, grew more and more popular.

The great Coker of the Fifth condescended to notice his existence, and to watch him perform tricks; and Temple, Dabney, & Co. of the Fourth would gladly have borrowed Squiff's "wheeze" of an acrobatic troupe, if they could have bagged Chumgum.

But Chumgum was not to be "bagged" by any rival show.

Bunter would have recovered from his disgust, and indeed would have treated the circus bounder with great distinction if he could have gained access to Charley Chumgum's cash supplies. But Chumgum was not taking any. When the fat junior made any advances Chumgum always met him in a humorous spirit, tossing him into the air, or standing him on his head, before he could even get the word "postal-order" out of his mouth.

Bunter's disgust, therefore, remained unabated.

But nobody bothered about the disgusted Bunter. Harry Wharton & Co. were busy in their spare time now in getting Squiff's new idea into working order. Even

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The donkey came to a sudden halt, planted his forefeet firmly on the ground, and elevated his hind legs high in the air. "Look out!" yelled Squiff. Chumgum shot over Teddy's head like a stone from a catapult, with Peter Todd clinging to him behind. *(See Chapter* **11.**)

cricket languished for the time, so keen were the Removites about the new "wheeze."

Many ambitious youths wished to be members of the acrobatic troupe of the Remove, and Chumgum was kept very busy. The serious manners and customs that cheery youth had adopted on his first day at Greyfriars had disappeared. To his surprise he found that his abilities as a circus performer constituted his chief value in the eyes of his Form-fellows.

"It's a stroke of luck you coming here, Chummygum," Bob Cherry remarked one day. "The Remove Acrobatic Troupe will simply knock 'em. When we get into going order we'll give a big performance in the gym, and charge for admission—help some giddy fund, you know."

"Jolly good idea," agreed Wharton. "How do you like Greyfriars, Chumgum?"

"First-rate," said Chumgum, hesitating a little. "You fellows have treated me awfully decently. I was afraid some of you, at least, would turn up your noses at a circus chap."

"Bow-wow!" said Bob.

"Bunter does," remarked Chumgum.

"That isn't Bunter's fault. Nature turned his nose up, and he's never been able to get it down," explained Bob.

Chumgum grinned.

"Oh, I don't mind Bunter! Of course, I'm quite satisfied with the circus myself, but I thought some of the fellows here would look down on it. But the pater was dead set on sending me to a public school, and I gave in. To tell you the truth, I'd rather stay in the circus. You see, I had a pretty jolly life there, and got used to it, and it's a bit of a change to stick in a school-room."

"But you've been to school before?" said Wharton.

"No. The pater had a tutor for me in the circus. He was an old johnny who'd been a Cambridge man, and came down through drink. The pater employed him as a general utility man, and he gave me lessons. He prepared me to come here; he used to be a tutor before he came down in the world, and he can still teach when he's sober. I used to mug up lessons on the caravans when we were travelling, and in the mornings it was pretty easy, compared with my work. But I liked the work best. It's jolly nice here, especially as you chaps are so decent. Only I do miss the circus," confessed

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Chumgum. "If it wasn't for disappointing the pater I'd ask him to let me go back to the ring."

"Well, there's no accounting for tastes," grinned Bob Cherry. "As you can't go back to the giddy circus, the best thing you can do is to make up a first-class acrobatic troupe in the Remove."

The chums of the Remove were chatting in the Close. Billy Bunter was standing outside the tuckshop, gazing in at the window through his big spectacles. He looked round as the Removites came sauntering by.

"I say, you fellows," he began, "Mrs. Mimble's got a new lot of tarts in. Just look in here. I say, Chumgum, old chap——"

"Old what?" ejaculated Chumgum.

"Chap!"

"How long have I been an old chap?" demanded Chumgum.

"Ever since Mrs. Mimble had her new tarts in!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry! I've been thinking it over, and I'm going to speak to Chumgum. I don't see being down on a fellow because he was brought up in a circus."

"Nobody but a fat worm like you would ever have seen it, Bunty."

"I say, you fellows, don't walk away while I'm talking to you. I've got something to tell you," howled Bunter, rolling after the juniors

"We know about the postal-order. We know about the remittance. We know it all from start to finish," said Johnny Bull. "Don't tell us all over again, for goodness' sake."

"Tain't that! Those Fourth-Form chaps are laying a scheme," said Bunter. "I felt I ought to tell you. I happened to hear Temple talking to Dabney."

"Oh, cheese it!" growled Bob Cherry. "You fat Paul Pry——"

"It was quite by chance, of course. If you'll step into the tuckshop I'll tell you all about it," urged Bunter.

"Bow-wow!"

"They're going to bag Chumgum, and cut you out with a Fourth-Form acrobatic troupe," said Bunter. "I'll tell you——"

"You seem to have told us already," said Wharton, laughing.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here come their royal nibs!" said Bob Cherry.

Cecil Reginald Temple and Dabney of the Fourth bore down on the Removites. They nodded very civilly to Chumgum, and took no notice of Harry Wharton & Co. Cecil Reginald could be very lofty sometimes.

"Been looking for you, Chumgum," said Temple urbanely.

"Well, now you've found me," said Chumgum, with equal urbanity

"Come for a little stroll."

"I'm strolling with these chaps."

"Oh, never mind those Remove fags," said Temple. "We want you."

"Sorry!"

"Look here, you just come," said Temple testily. "I want to speak to you."

"Go ahead!"

"By ourselves."

"Oh, rats!"

"Why, you cheeky fag!" howled Temple, quite forgetting that he had come there to be very nice to the valuable new boy. "Don't give me any of your circus cheek. I've a jolly good mind to pull your nose!"

Chumgum grinned, and stretched his head towards Temple, holding out his nose invitingly.

"Pull away!" he remarked.

Cecil Reginald Temple made an angry stride forward, and Chumgum made a sudden movement. Before Temple knew what was happening he was in the air.

"Oh, my hat! By gad!" gasped Temple. "Rescue, Dab!"

Dabney made a rush forward. Temple slid down and stood on his head, and the next moment Dabney was standing on his head beside him, hardly aware of how he had got there. There was howl of laughter.

Bump! Bump!

Temple and Dabney rolled along the ground, and sat up, and blinked at one another in a dazed way.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Dabney. "W-w-w-was that an earthquake?"

"Oh, by gad!" stuttered Temple. "The cheeky cad! Why, I'll mop up the ground with him for this! We were going to take him up, too—take notice of him! The cheek!"

"I—I'll scalp him!"

"I'll slaughter him!"

The Fourth-Formers scrambled up and blinked furiously after the Removites, who were strolling away, grinning. They decided not to do the scalping and slaughtering just then. They were feeling quite giddy, and just for the moment they did not feel quite equal to tackling the schoolboy acrobat.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.
Bolsover Major Chips In!

"WE can do some practice now," Bob Cherry remarked.

"Good!" remarked Nugent. "Let's practise throwing Bunter into the air and catching him."

Billy Bunter backed away in alarm.

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry heartily. "Mind, whenever he comes down on the ground, that doesn't count."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass!" roared Bunter. "You're jolly well not going to throw me into the air. Besides, you couldn't do it!"

"We should have to begin with a lighter weight," said Wharton, shaking his head. "We could start with a young elephant, and then after that a full-grown elephant, and then we should be in form for Bunter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The schoolboy acrobats were very keen about their new exercises, and they were always full of energy. Bob Cherry grabbed Nugent, who was the lightest weight in the party, and whirled him into the air. He was already getting into the way of it, for he swung Frank up above his head. Johnny Bull began to turn somersaults. He turned them round Bunter. His boots "biffed" upon the fat junior, and the Owl of the Remove roared.

"You clumsy ass! Keep off! Yarooh!" Johnny Bull's toe came upon Bunter's fat waistcoat and almost doubled him up. "Oh, crikey! Yoooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here, look out!" roared Bob.

The enthusiastic somersaulter was bearing down upon him. Johnny Bull was exceedingly pleased with his newly-acquired skill in turning over on his hands. Unfortunately, he did not see very clearly where he was going, and he charged feet first into Bob Cherry, who had Nugent on his head.

As Johnny Bull's boots, which were of a good size, smote Bob, he staggered, and Nugent came down with a rush. He grabbed wildly at Bob to save himself, and succeeded in getting a grip upon his hair. Bob came over with him, roaring. Fortunately, for both of them, they landed on Johnny Bull. But it did not seem at all fortunate to Johnny Bull. He was nearly reduced to the shape of a pancake

"Ooooooch!" came in a muffled roar from the unfortunate Johnny. "Ooooooch! Gerroff! I'm killed!"

"He, he, he!" yelled Bunter.

"Oh, my hat!" stuttered Bob Cherry, as he rolled off his chum. "Are you hurt, Franky?"

"Hurt!" yelled Nugent. "You burbling ass. I'm fractured in nine or ten places! Ow, ow!"

"Are you hurt, Johnny!"

Johnny Bull sat up blankly.

"Hurt? Yow-ow-ow! Yarooh! Oh, no, I'm enjoying my-self!" he yelled. "I'm not hurt—it doesn't hurt me for a blithering idiot to whop on me like a sack of coke! Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"Well, you biffed into me, you know!" gasped Bob.

"You were in the way!" howled Johnny Bull. "What did you fall on me for?"

"How could I help falling on a burbling jabberwock who biffed me over?"

"Oh, you ass—you chump—you fathead——"

Words failed Johnny Bull, and he leaped to his feet and charged at Bob Cherry like the animal whose name he rejoiced in.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Hold on!" yelled Bob, dodging round Wharton and Chumgum, who were doubled up with laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Johnny Bull did not hold on. He had an ache in every bone of his body, and he was anxious to pass on a few aches to Bob. Bob fled, and Johnny Bull fled after him, and they disappeared across the Close.

"Ha, ha, ha! Oh, my hat!" gasped Wharton. "Still hurt, Franky!"

"Wow-ow-wow!" gasped Nugent.

"You had better have a bit more practice before you start!" grinned Chumgum. "You want a net, too. The ground is rather hard to fall on. Ha, ha, ha! Why didn't you fall on Bunter? He's soft."

"He he, he!" cackled Bunter. "I hope Cherry and Bull will give each other a jolly good hiding. He, he, he!"

The juniors, who did not at all share Bunter's benevolent wishes on that point, hurried in search of their two chums.

The chase had already come to an end. Bob Cherry had fled down to the cricket field, where a crowd of the Remove were looking on at the practice. Johnny Bull, bursting with rage, was hot on his track. Bolsover major, the bully of the Remove, caught Bob by the shoulder and stopped him. Bob was going so fast that he spun right round Bolsover as he was caught, and clutched hold of Bolsover to save himself from falling. It was Bolsover's nose that he laid his grasp on, and Bolsover gave a yell of anguish.

"Groooooop! Led go by dose!" shrieked Bolsover.

"Sorry!" gasped Bob. "I had to catch hold of something, and your nose was handy—and it's an easy thing to catch; just like a door-knocker, you know!"

Bolsover glared at him and rubbed his nose.

"You funk! Running away from Bull, are you?" he snorted. "Why don't you have it out? I'll jolly well stop your running away! Here he is, Bull—I'll hold him for you!"

It was just like Bolsover to chip in like that; but his chipping in had the contrary effect to that intended by the bully of the Remove. Johnny Bull came up panting, but his wrath evaporated at the bare idea of the Remove bully trying to fix upon him a fight with his chum.

"Now, you pile in!" said Bolsover. "Give 'em room, you chaps!"

"You two are not going to fight, surely!" exclaimed Mark Linley.

"Shut up, Linley!" said Bolsover major, in his most truculent manner. "They're going to have it out, and I'm going to see fair play."

Bob Cherry closed one eye at Johnny Bull; Johnny Bull closed an eye in return. They had not the slightest intention of fighting one another to afford amusement to the bully of the Remove.

"Now, pile in!" exclaimed Bolsover. "Get going!"

"Don't be duffers!" said Vernon-Smith. "What have you two fellows got to fight about?"

"Shut up, Smithy! Don't you interfere here. They're going to fight, and I'm going to see that they do," said Bolsover major. "Now, then, are you ready, Cherry?"

"Quite ready, my lord," said Bob Cherry meekly.

"Are you ready, Bull?"

"Yes."

"Then start!" said Bolsover major, stepping back.

"Right-ho!"

Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull started at once. They rushed forward together, but instead of rushing at one another they rushed at Bolsover major.

The astonished Bolsover found himself suddenly grasped and dragged over in the grass and bumped down there with a mighty concussion. There was a howl of laughter from the onlookers.

"Go it!" yelled Mark Linley. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pile in!"

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Harry Wharton & Co. arrived on the scene. They had intended to chip in if Bob and Johnny were scrapping and frog's march both of them till they made it pax. But there was no occasion for interference now.

"Lemme go!" roared Bolsover. "Why, you rotters—you funks—you're afraid of one another! Yoooop! Oh, my hat! Yah!"

Bump, bump, bump!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry and Johnny released the bully of the Remove at last. Bolsover major lay in the grass and gasped. He hadn't an ounce of breath left in his big carcase, and he could only lie and gasp for it.

The chums of the Remove strolled away, leaving him gasping.

"What are you going for Bolsover for?" inquired Wharton.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"He had an idea that Johnny was going to fight me, and he fixed it up nicely for us!" he exclaimed. "He told us to start—so we started!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a favourite amusement of Bolsover major's to egg on two fellows to fight one another and see fair play himself, as he called it. On this occasion he had not found it amusing at all. The amusement was on the side of his intended victims.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.
Mr. Quelch Does Not Approve!

CRASH!

Mr. Quelch jumped.

Crash!

"Bless my soul!" said the Remove master.

That terrific din proceeded from the direction of the Remove passage. It was indeed terrific, for Mr. Quelch could hear it from his study door.

Crash! Crash!

Mr. Quelch's lips came tightly together, and he stayed only to pick up a cane from his study table, and then he proceeded with long strides towards the staircase. He went up the stairs two at a time.

There was a sound of many voices in No. 1 Study as he approached the door of that famous apartment.

"I'm getting this blessed cask balanced at last!" That was Bob Cherry's voice. "The beastly thing will fall every now and then."

"This inkpot is going a treat!"

"I say, this blessed twisting gives me a pain in my inside."

"Oh, keep it up!"

Mr. Quelch, utterly amazed, opened the door of the study.

The sight that greeted his eyes almost made him fall down.

He gazed dumbfounded into the study.

Nugent was on the study table apparently trying to tie himself up into a knot. He was bent over backwards, and looking through his knees.

Harry Wharton was standing near the table, his head bent back, and a ruler balanced upright on his nose. On top of the ruler was an inkpot nicely balanced.

Bob Cherry was on his back on the study carpet, his legs in the air. His feet supported a small cask, which he was tossing into the air, and catching on the soles of his feet as it came down, balancing it there and tossing it into the air again.

The three juniors were too busily occupied to see the astounded Form-master in the doorway. Bob Cherry was nearest the door, but his eyes were on the cask.

Mr. Quelch wondered for a moment whether he was dreaming. It was his first experience of the schoolboy acrobats. No. 1 Study was in training!

He understood now the cause of the terrific crashes he had heard. When Bob Cherry's feet missed the descending cask it landed on the floor with a crash that might have been heard all over Greyfriars. But Bob was keeping it going at last. Practice makes perfect.

"Bless my soul!" murmured Mr. Quelch.

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"This is going a treat!" said Bob Cherry. "I shall be able to do this trick all right. Makes rather a row when it falls."

"Boys!"

"Oh, my hat!"

The cask was just coming now. Bob Cherry jumped as he heard Mr. Quelch's voice in the doorway, and naturally he missed the cask coming down.

Crash!

Nugent, on the table, untied himself with wonderful quickness. Harry Wharton started, and the ruler slid from his nose, and the inkpot descended on his head with a crack that made him yelp. The ink spurted out on all sides, and streamed over his hair and down his face, and the inkpot crashed on the floor.

"Grooooooooh!"

But Mr. Quelch had no time to look at the inky and dismayed face of the captain of the Remove.

Bob Cherry's cask had descended with a terrific crash at his very feet, and the Remove master jumped back, narrowly escaping the complete crushing of all his favourite corns at one fell swoop.

The cask, full of impetus, rolled after him through the doorway.

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch, skipping backwards with an agility surprising in a gentleman of his years.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob.

Mr. Quelch leaped back in the passage as the cask rolled out after him. The cask had way on it, as a sailor would say. It followed Mr. Quelch down the passage to the head of the stairs, as if it were endowed with life and were deliberately pursuing him.

Bob Cherry made a desperate rush into the passage and clutched at the cask. But his fingers slipped off the rounded exterior, and he only succeeded in giving it a push, which accelerated its roll. Right after the dismayed Remove-master it rolled, and Mr. Quelch bolted into the open door of a study just in time. The cask rolled over the top stair, and then it gathered force.

Crash, crash, crash, crash!

"Bless my soul!"

"Look out!" yelled Bob.

The cask crashed from stair to stair half-way down, and then it took a sort of leap and cleared the rest at a bound. There was a final terrific crash as it landed on the landing below, and was stove in by the shock.

"Oh, my only Aunt Judy!" groaned Bob Cherry. "Now there's going to be a row."

Bob was right.

Mr. Quelch came striding back to No. 1 Study, his very gown rustling with wrath. He glared in upon the dismayed juniors with the glare of a Medusa, or a basilisk at the least.

"What does this mean?" he thundered.

Wharton gave him an inky blink.

"This!" he stammered—"th-i-i-is——"

"We—we—we——" began Bob Cherry feebly.

"What does it mean? Answer me at once!"

"Ahem!"

"We—we—we were practising," stammered Wharton. "Healthy exercise, sir—acrobatic tricks, sir—good for the muscles—ahem——"

"Hold out your hand, Cherry!"

"M-mum-mum-my hand, sir?"

"At once, you utterly reckless young rascal."

"Oh, dear."

Swish, swish, swish!

"If a cask, or a barrel, or any object of a similar nature, is found in this study again you will be flogged!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "You will take two hundred lines each, and you will stay in on Wednesday afternoon to write them."

"Oh!"

The Remove-master rustled away in great wrath.

The schoolboy acrobats looked at one another in a sickly way.

"Oh, dear!" murmured Bob Cherry, hugging his hands. "Oh, yow! Old Quelchy doesn't seem to be fond of acrobats—yow! I was getting on rippingly with that cask—grooh! We shall have to cut that out—wow-wow!"

"And we were going to invite him to the show, when we're ready," said Nugent indignantly. "Serve him right not to invite him now."

"Wow-wow!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There he goes again!"

Mr. Quelch's voice thundered from the stairs.

"Cherry!"

"Yow—I mean, yes, sir!"

"Take this cask away at once."

"Yes—yow-ow!"

Bob Cherry bore away the damaged cask dolorously. He had been getting on nicely with that balancing trick, but it was only too clear that that telling item would have to be "cut." The chums of the Remove could not help feeling that they were not receiving the encouragement that was their due, considering that they were taking all this trouble to entertain their Form-fellows—and Mr. Quelch. But the Remove-master, of course, was not yet aware of the joys in store for him.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Spiders and the Fly!

CECIL REGINALD TEMPLE, the captain of the Fourth, looked round his study with considerable satisfaction. Dabney and Fry and Scott looked equally satisfied.

The chums of the Fourth had been making preparations. They were expecting a guest to tea, and apparently it was a distinguished guest, to judge by the preparations Temple & Co. had made.

"The cheeky young cad is sure to be pleased," remarked Temple, referring in that disrespectful way to the expected guest. "It's an honour for any Remove fag to be asked to tea by the Fourth."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"And we've got a ripping tea for him," said Temple. "I fancy we shall bag him. Of course, it's all rot those Remove kids thinking they can give an acrobatic performance. They would only make a muck of it. It's a good idea in itself, but it wants fellows to carry it out who can really do it. That's us."

"Hear, hear!" said the loyal Co.

"And it's a ripping wheeze," said Fry. "Fellows are fed up with amateur theatricals."

"That's because they're above their heads."

"Oh, quite so; but they're fed up all the same! But a really good acrobatic show will bring down the house. That's why those cheeky Remove cads have thought of it. But if we bag Chumgum——"

"What a name!" grinned Scott.

"Never mind his name," said Temple. "I don't care if his name's Blue Gum, or Chewing-gum, or Dum-Dum, or any old thing, so long as we get him as acrobatic instructor, and he promises to stick to us and give the Remove the go-by."

"But will he?" said Dabney doubtfully.

"If he doesn't, he will be scragged."

The Co. looked at Cecil Reginald a little doubtfully. To ask a fellow to tea and butter him up was all very well, that was in the game; but to "scrag" an invited guest seemed to them a little Prussian, to say the least.

"I—I say, we can't scrag him if he has tea with us," murmured Scott.

Temple sniffed.

"I suppose I know what's due to hospitality as well as you, Scott," he retorted. "I shouldn't be likely to suggest scragging a fellow who's had tea with us. We're not going to give him tea if we scrag him. As soon as he trots in we'll give him his choice—a really ripping feed, or a scragging. We'll talk to him nicely first."

"Oh, all right!"

"Shush! Here he comes! Come in!" called out Temple.

There was a knock at the door.

Charley Chumgum of the Remove entered the study. He came in with a cheerful, smiling face. If he suspected that anything was hidden under Cecil Temple's invita-

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tion to tea, his looks did not betray his suspicions. Perhaps the one-time acrobat of Chumgum's Celebrated Circus felt that he was able to take care of himself in all circumstances.

"Oh, here you are!" said Temple cordially. "Trot in, old chap!"

"Tea's ready!" remarked Dabney.

"Jolly glad to see you," said Fry.

Chumgum nodded agreeably.

"You're awfully good," he said.

"The fact is we mean to be good to you," said Temple loftily. "Some fellows might draw the line at a circus chap. But, bless you, we don't mind!"

"That's really kind of you," said Chumgum.

"You see, you will be useful to us," said Fry.

"Oh, I see! You'd draw the line, only you can make me useful," said Chumgum. "I understand perfectly. I don't know whether most to compliment you on your manners or on your tact."

"I—I mean——"

"Shut up, Fry!" said Temple. "Fry has an unfortunate way of putting things, Chumgum. The fact is, we're prepared to be very pally with you."

"Thanks!"

"To tell the whole truth," said Temple, "we've noticed the way you do acrobatic tricks and things. Now, we can't do that."

"Not really?"

"Not without much practice, I mean, and some instruction. Of course, there's a knack in doing those things. I'm going to take you into my confidence, Chumgum. The real fact is, that we feel it's up to us to —to—to give you a real chance of showing the whole school what you can do. We're going to get up an acrobatic troupe in the Fourth Form, and we want you to join us, though you're really only a Remove fag. We're willing to overlook that."

"Same as they're doing in the Remove?" remarked Chumgum.

"Oh, their acrobatic troupe would be all rot, of course," said Temple carelessly. "That's mere rubbish. We're going to do the real thing, and cut them out entirely."

"Oh, rather!"

"And we want you to join us, Chumgum, and promise to have nothing whatever to do with the Remove kids, so far as acrobatics are concerned."

Chumgum chuckled.

"I fancy they'd scrag me if I did," he remarked.

"Oh, we'd protect you, of course! If that's all——"

"That isn't all," said Chumgum cheerfully. "The fact is, I'm sticking to my own friends. No offence, you know."

"Now, look here——"

"Wasn't there going to be a feed?" inquired Chumgum.

"Yes, if you do the right thing," said Temple, lounging between Chumgum and the door; "not otherwise. We can't scrag a fellow who's eaten at our table. So if we have to scrag you, you can't have tea—see? But, of course, we want to be friendly. You've only got to chuck up the Remove nonsense, and back up our really good idea."

"Rats!"

"Now, look here, kid——"

"Bosh!"

"Will you or will you not?" roared Temple, beginning to lose his temper.

Cecil Reginald never could stand being argued with.

"No, I won't!" said Chumgum. "To tell you the whole truth, I don't think you Fourth Form chaps have brains enough for the bizney."

"What!"

"And, anyway, I'm sticking to the Remove chaps. So if there's not going to be a feed, I'll get off," said Chumgum.

Temple put his back to the door.

"You won't get off just yet," he remarked. "We don't want to be rough; we really object strongly to any roughness. But if you don't come to our terms at once you're going to get the scragging of your life—see?"

"No, I don't quite see."

"Then we'll jolly well show you!" exclaimed Temple angrily. "I can't stand cheek from Remove fags. Collar him!"

The four Fourth-Formers closed in on the new fellow.

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As all of them were bigger than Chumgum, they had no doubt about handling him quite easily. It was not a fight, of course. It was to be a punishment, administered by the lofty young gentlemen to a recalcitrant fag, of whom they had been willing to take notice, and who had rejected their condescending advances with black ingratitude.

But it was not quite so easy to collar Charley Chumgum.

The schoolboy acrobat made a sudden bound as they reached out at him, and seemed to soar into the air, and the four juniors grasped at one another, instead of at the elusive Chumgum.

Crash!

There was a terrific smash of crockery. Chumgum had landed in the middle of the tea-table, on his feet, after turning a somersault in the air, and the state of the crockery, after Chumgum's boots had landed in the middle of it, was simply indescribable. He stood amid the wreck and gazed at the four astonished Fourth-Formers with a smiling face.

"Try again!" said Chumgum sweetly.

Temple & Co. gazed at him speechlessly for a moment. Cups and saucers and plates and dishes were in fragments. One of Chumgum's boots rested on the cake and the other in a dish of jam-tarts. The havoc was terrific.

"Collar him!" shrieked Temple.

The infuriated four made a bound at the junior on the table.

Charley Chumgum turned a somersault over their heads and landed on his feet, but went into the air again like an elastic ball. The Fourth-Formers swung round after him almost dazed. Chumgum was seated on the top of the bookcase, smiling down at them, far out of reach.

Temple, Dabney & Co., gasping, stared up at him in breathless wrath, and the schoolboy acrobat genially kissed his hand to them.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Coker Minor Comes in Useful!

CHARLEY CHUMGUM smiled down at the infuriated Fourth-Formers. Temple, Dabney & Co. shook their fists wildly at the schoolboy acrobat, perched out of their reach.

"Come down, you rotter!" yelled Temple.

"Come down, you sweep!"

"Come down, you worm!"

"Are you going to make it pax?" asked Chumgum sweetly.

"We're going to squash you!" yelled Fry.

"Then I'll stay here, thanks!"

Cecil Reginald was almost raving. He made a jump to the grate and secured the poker, and lunged up at the acrobat. Chumgum squeezed back out of reach.

"Gimme a chair here!" hissed Temple. "I'll brain him!"

Temple mounted on a chair. Chumgum was within reach of the poker now, and Cecil Reginald was thrusting out quite recklessly. Chumgum gave a yell as he caught the end of the poker with his ribs.

"Go it!" yelled the Co. "Pitch him down, and we'll collar him!"

Chumgum did not wait to be pitched down. He suddenly flew through the air, turning a somersault, and landed on his feet on the table. The table rocked and shot over, and the acrobat made another bound, and disapeared through the open window.

In a flash he had vanished from sight.

Temple dropped the poker with a clang to the floor. His eyes almost started from his head.

Fry and Dabney and Scott blinked at the window, their jaws dropping.

"Mum-mum-my hat!" stuttered Temple.

"Oh, dear!"

"The idiot! He must be killed."

All the wrath and excitement was gone now, and the chums of the Fourth felt quite limp. There was at least thirty feet between that window and the ground.

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Temple was white as a sheet.

"The mad idiot!" he murmured. "Did the lunatic think we were on the ground floor? 'Tain't our fault."

"He must be killed!" whispered Fry.

"Oh, crumbs!"

Temple ran desperately to the window. He looked out with starting eyes into the Close. He fully expected to see the body of the schoolboy acrobat stretched on the ground below.

Then he gave a yell of mingled relief and wrath.

"Oh, the rotter!"

"Ain't he killed?" gasped Dabney.

"Look! Oh, the sweep!"

The Fourth-Formers craned their heads out of the window in a bunch. Half-way to the ground the schoolboy acrobat was visible, holding on to a rain-pipe clamped to the wall. How he had reached that pipe was a mystery. Temple knew that he must have caught the sill as he flew out of the window, and then reached out with one hand to the pipe; but he had done it with marvellous quickness, and certainly no one but a trained acrobat could have done it.

The four Fourth-Formers shook their fists down at Chumgum, as he dropped lightly from the rain-pipe and stood in the Close.

Chumgum smiled up at them and kissed his hand affably. His startling experience, which had chilled Temple & Co. with dread for some moments, did not seem to have affected Chumgum at all. Probably it was nothing compared with his old experiences on the flying trapeze in Chumgum's circus.

"Gimme something to chuck at him, quick!" breathed Temple.

But Chumgum did not wait for something to be "chucked" at him. He strolled away, and disappeared into the Close, grinning.

He walked round the house, and found the Famous Five in the big doorway.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Weren't you gone to tea with Temple?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, looking at him with amazement.

"The feed didn't come off," explained Chumgum. "It was a plant! Bribery and corruption to get me away from the Remove Acrobatic Troupe!"

"But how did you get out?" demanded Wharton. "We saw you go to the study."

"I came out of the window. There was trouble, and it was the nearest way."

"My only hat! Didn't you break your neck?" ejaculated Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha! Do I look as if I'd broken my neck!" grinned Chumgum. "You fellows had tea yet? I haven't."

"Come along to No. 1 Study, then," said Wharton.

Chumgum, whose appetite for his old performances had apparently been whetted by his late experience, proceeded along the passage in a series of somersaults. A youth came round a corner and collided with him, and Chumgum rolled on the floor, and the new-comer staggered against the wall and gasped. It was Coker minor of the Sixth form—that preternaturally wise and sage youth who was in the Sixth Form while his big brother Horace Coker of the Fifth.

Coker minor was too young and too slight to be very "Sixth-Formy," as the juniors called it; but he was indignant now. After all, he was in the Sixth, and these fellows, though bigger than himself, were only Remove fags. Coker minor stared wrathfully at Chumgum.

"You clumsy young ass!" he said.

"Hallo!" said Chumgum. "Who's that kid?" Chumgum had not yet come across the little Sixth-Former.

"I've a jolly good mind to wallop you!" said Reggie Coker.

"Wallop me?" ejaculated Chumgum. "Oh, my hat! Hit one your own size, you ferocious little tomtit, and spare small fry like me."

Then he gave a gasp as Reggie Coker pulled his ear.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "Tomtit on the warpath! Don't squash him, Chummygum; he's a good little ass."

"None of your cheek, Cherry!" said Reggie Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I won't squash him," said Chumgum, rubbing his ear. "I'll give him a circus turn. Stand by to catch. This nipper is just the right size and weight."

"Leggo, you fag!" howled Coker minor, as Chumgum grasped him, and he struggled.

But Reggie was not an athlete. He was an infant in the grasp of the acrobat of the Remove.

Bob Cherry grinned and stood ready to receive him. This was one of the "turns" planned by the schoolboy acrobats, but there was generally a difficulty in getting the third party to take his "whack." Fags somehow did not like being tossed into the air, to take their chance of being caught as they came down. But Coker minor had no choice.

Chumgum tossed him up, and Bob Cherry caught him like a ball and tossed him back. The chums of the Remove roared, and Coker minor yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat! Help! Horace! Yow!"

Whish! went Coker minor through the air again.

"Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Keep it up! Keep the ball rolling!" chuckled Squiff.

Coker minor sailed into the air again.

But his voice had been heard, and Horace Coker, of the Fifth, arrived on the spot. Coker of the Fifth was always on the look-out for fags who checked his minor in the Sixth.

Coker of the Fifth did not stay to argue. He rushed right at the howling Removites; he smote them hip and thigh.

It was very brotherly of the great Coker, but it was a little unfortunate for Reggie. For as Chumgum and Bob Cherry were floored by the mighty swipes of Coker there was no time to catch Reggie as he came down.

He landed on the floor with a bump and a fiendish yell.

"Yooooooooo!"

"You cheeky young villains!" roared Horace Coker. "I'll teach you to check a senior! I'll——"

"Yoooowwwl!" came from Reggie. "Wow-wow! Yow!"

The juniors fled, yelling with laughter. Horace Coker picked up his minor.

"Hurt?" he asked affectionately.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow!" was Reggie's reply. It seemed to imply that he was hurt.

"The cheeky young sweeps!" fumed Coker.

"Yow! What did you make them drop me for?" gasped Reggie.

"Eh? I was licking them for ragging you," said Coker.

"Whoooooop! You made them drop me on the floor!" wailed Reggie. "Yoooooop!"

"Oh, I say——"

"You are an awful ass, Horace!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Reggie Coker limped away, grunting, leaving his major staring after him.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.
Two of Them!

CLATTER! Clatter! Clatter!

"Look out!"

"Toddy, by Jove!"

The Famous Five were chatting in the road outside the school walls, when Peter Todd came in sight.

Peter Todd was one of the keenest members of the Remove Acrobatic Troupe. Peter's fixed belief was that it was "up" to No. 7 Study to go one

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

—By—

FRANK RICHARDS.

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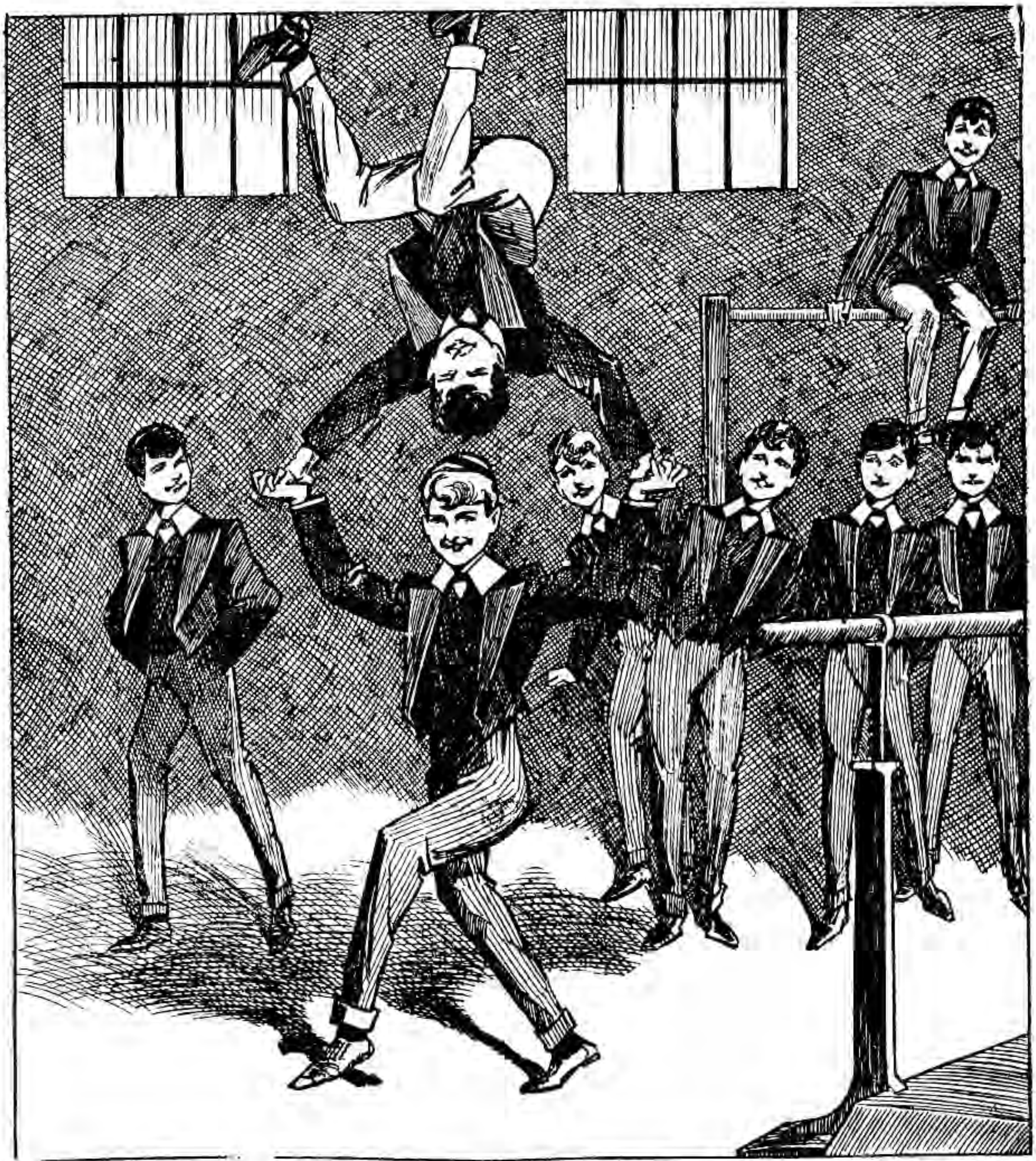

Johnny Bull found himself whirled into the air by his hands, and his feet floated in space, then the circus youth danced along, with Johnny soaring in the air over him. *(See Chapter 5.)*

better than the Famous Five. Hence Peter's new move. The slim and somewhat lanky chief of No. 7 Study was careering down the lane towards Greyfriars on the back of Mr. Snooks's donkey.

Peter Todd was not one of those individuals who are born, as the immortal bard expresses it, to witch the world with noble horsemanship. Still less was he born to witch the world with noble donkeymanship.

He had succeeded in hiring the donkey from Farmer Snooks. That part of the business was easy; "moyennant," as the French say, a certain sum in silver. Farmer Snooks often let out that donkey, sometimes with painful results to the hirers. For Teddy was an animal with a will of his own.

That magic moment of perfect horsemanship, when "the will of the steed and rider are one," never seemed to come about when Teddy was the steed.

Certainly Peter Todd was quite correct in thinking that an acrobatic and equestrian turn would "go down" like anything in the coming performance of the Remove acrobats. If it was well worked, that is. Peter Todd had no doubts about working it well. Teddy might have inspired doubts in any breast less sanguine than Peter Todd's.

Judging by Toddy's present appearance, the donkey was the manager of the performance.

Toddy was clinging to his neck. Teddy was coming down the road in a series of gavottes.

"Get out of the way, for goodness' sake!" ejaculated Chumgum.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Some of the juniors scrambled on the school wall. The others dodged. Teddy was not quite safe at close quarters.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Is that the new turn, Toddy?" roared Bob Cherry, as the chief of No. 7 Study came clattering up.

"Kim in, you beast!" gasped Todd, dragging at the reins.

Teddy halted suddenly, with the result that Todd was very nearly pitched over his head. He just managed to stick.

"The beast's rather obstinate," gasped Todd, "but I'm getting him in hand. I shall bring off the turn all right—in the long run!"

"Looks as if you're going on the long run now!" grinned Bob Cherry, as Teddy started off again like an arrow, with Toddy dragging furiously at the reins.

"Ripping turn!" chuckled Squiff. "We'll bill it as the Brothers Toddy and Teddy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat! Here they come back again!"

The donkey had taken a dislike to a motor in the road, and turned back. He seemed to be trying to dance a polka, if not a can-can, as he came along. Toddy was clinging to him desperately.

As the donkey careered by, Chumgum made a sudden spring.

To the surprise of his comrades, he landed on the donkey's back in front of Peter Todd.

"Hurrah!" chirruped Bob Cherry. "We call this turn the Triplets—Toddy, Teddy, and Chummy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The donkey halted as he felt the new weight on his back, and then bolted off again with a snort. Teddy was in his most restive mood.

"Here, what are you at?" gasped Peter Todd, surprised to find himself riding double.

"All serene! Gimme the reins!"

"Yes; but——"

"I'll manage him!" said Chumgum.

"I was managing him all right!"

"My hat! Were you?" said Chumgum, in astonishment.

"Yes; I was!" roared Peter Todd. "Don't you be a cheeky ass, Gluegum. This is my new turn. It will simply knock the rest of the troupe."

"It will," agreed Chumgum—"knock 'em flying, I should think, if you get near 'em on this donkey!".

"My hat! He's off again!" gasped Peter, clinging to Chumgum's shoulders.

Teddy appeared to be annoyed.

He went down the road in a series of jumps, which the recalcitrant animal evidently intended for the purpose of unseating his riders. The fact was that Teddy had been feeding in the field when Peter Todd hired him from Mr. Snooks, and Teddy did not like being interrupted at meal-times. For his owner's business arrangement with Peter Todd he did not care a wisp of straw. His only idea was to leave Peter strewn somewhere along the road, and get back to his pasture.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Chumgum. "What a jibbing beast! Hold on!"

"Great Scott!"

"I'll manage him!" gasped Chumgum. "You hold on!"

"I'm holding on!"

"Yow-ow! Not to my hair, fathead!" shrieked Chumgum.

"Well, I can't get at your nose, as I'm behind you. It will have to be your hair, unless you face round."

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"It's all right. I'm safe," said Todd. "Your hair won't come out. Nothing to worry about. I sha'n't fall."

"I wish you'd fall and break every blessed bone in your blessed body!" shrieked Chumgum. "Leggo my hair!"

Chumgum could not let go the reins, for Teddy was buck-jumping like a wild broncho on the plains of Texas. Peter Todd held on to his hair with a firm grip. He did not mean to fall. However, he changed the grip of one hand to Chumgum's ear, for additional security. So long as Chumgum kept his seat Peter was safe, unless Chumgum's ear came off, and his hair came out. Chumgum felt as if they were doing so, certainly, but it did not happen.

A motor-car came hooting by; the two acrobats trembled for their lives. But Teddy was too wise to tackle a motor-car at close quarters. He backed into a hedge, and the low branches of a tree jammed in Peter Todd's back.

"Get him into the road, for mercy's sake!" gasped Peter, as the motor disappeared in a cloud of dust. "I—I think I sha'n't have an equestrian turn after all. I think I shall cut it out of the programme."

"Kim up, you brute!"

Chumgum was a past master in managing circus steeds, but Teddy the donkey was a new experience for him.

Teddy was in the habit of calling the tune, as it were, and his riders danced to Teddy's tune.

"There he goes again!" stuttered Peter Todd. "I—I say, I'm fed up!"

"Stop yanking at my ear, you villain!"

"Must hold on!"

"Yarooh!"

Teddy was careering away towards Greyfriars again. Harry Wharton & Co. greeted the equestrians with a yell of laughter.

"Go it, Toddy! Ha, ha, ha!"

"What do you call this game, Toddy?"

The donkey came to a sudden halt, planted his forefeet firmly on the ground, and elevated his hindlegs high in the air.

"Look out!" yelled Squiff.

Chumgum shot over Teddy's head like a stone from a catapult, with Peter Todd clinging to him behind.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump!

Teddy threw up his head, and, apparently satisfied, disappeared down the road with a clatter of hoofs and a jangling of stirrups. Teddy evidently thought that the performance was over, and intended to get back to his interrupted lunch.

Chumgum sat up in the dust, and blinked. Peter Todd sat up, and snorted. They stared at one another, while the Removites howled with laughter.

"Oh, my aunt!" said Chumgum.

"You fathead!" roared Peter.

"Why, you ass, it was your fault!"

"You dummy!"

"You lunatic!"

"Is that part of the game?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Peter Todd picked himself up limply. He had a variety of bumps, and every sort of an ache, distributed over his lanky person.

"What are you cackling at?" he demanded. "Look here, there's not going to be any equestrian turn in the programme, after all."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm fed up with it," said Peter; "and there's nothing to cackle at—nothing at all, you gurgling hyenas!"

Peter Todd limped away painfully.

Although generally a very humorous youth, Peter failed to see anything to cackle at on this occasion. But the other fellows seemed to see something to cackle at, and they persisted in cackling, till they had no breath left to cackle with.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Little Bit!

"WHAT part am I going to have?"

Billy Bunter propounded that query, with a frowning brow and a determined blink.

The Remove Acrobatic Troupe were discussing matters in the Rag. The programme of the coming per-

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formance was under discussion. Somehow or other, nobody had thought of assigning a prominent and important part to William George Bunter.

"I say, you fellows, I suppose you understand that I'm not being left out of this?" said Bunter.

"My dear elephant," said Wharton, "there's nothing you can do. Besides, you're too aristocratic to mix with us circus chaps."

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"The noble blood of the Bunter de Bunters would boil at the thought," said Squiff. "You must think of your aristocratic reserve, Bunter—remember the repose that stamps the caste of Beer de Bere, and don't think of bringing discredit on the family public-house. Think of the honour of Bunter's Entire!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you kangaroo!" said Bunter furiously. "You know my pater don't keep a public-house!"

"Doesn't he keep it?" asked Squiff, in surprise. "My mistake. I wasn't aware that he was merely employed in it!"

"You rotter!" howled Bunter. "He isn't in a pub at all. He's on the Stock Exchange, and I can tell you he's making pots of money now, too. But I don't want to jaw to you. Look here, Wharton, I'm in this! I decline to be left out. I refuse. I'll put up with Chumgum."

"You are willing to put up with Chumgum?" asked Wharton.

"Yes, for this occasion only."

"Good! Chummy, are you willing to put up with Bunter, for this occasion only?"

Chumgum chuckled.

"No jolly fear! Not for this occasion, or for any other occasion!"

"Why, you—you circus bounder!" stuttered Bunter, in wrath. "Look here, Wharton, talk sense! What part am I going to have?"

"We might give him a chance," said Nugent thoughtfully. "Suppose we use him instead of a mattress to fall on?"

"Hear, hear!"

"Good! That's your little bit, Bunter. Come and practise now."

"You rotters!" howled Bunter. "I tell you——"

"Or we might introduce a performing porpoise turn!" said Squiff. "Performing porpoises are rare. What tricks can you do, Bunter?"

"I can jolly well beat anything you duffers can do," said Bunter, with a snort. "I'm a dab on the horizontal bar!"

"There never was a horizontal bar that would bear your weight," said Wharton, with a shake of the head.

"Except the bar in the paternal pub!" remarked Squiff. "Is that the bar you are thinking of, Bunter?"

Billy Bunter shook a fat fist at the Australian junior.

"Nothing doing, Bunty," said Wharton. "Common circus fellows like us don't want any aristocrats around. We should feel put out of countenance."

"You would make us feel smallfully diminished, my esteemed fat Bunter."

"Kick him out, and let's get on with the practice," said Tom Brown. "We haven't done the human pyramid yet."

"I think this is disgusting," said Bunter, with a sniff. "If you're jealous of a chap you needn't show it like that."

"Bunter would make a good foundation for the pyramid," suggested Johnny Bull. "It would be like standing on an elephant."

"I could do the top of the pyramid," said Bunter.

"My hat! Why, the Egyptian pyramids couldn't stand that!"

"Look here——"

"Oh, let's give him a trial in the pyramid," said Chumgum. "Stand here, Bunter!"

Chumgum was managing-director, and the juniors followed his lead. Billy Bunter was planted in the middle of the Rag, and the Removites gathered round, grinning. They did not think that Chumgum was taking Bunter seriously as a performer.

"Lie down!" said Chumgum.

"That's your part."

"Look here——"

"Oh, lie down!" said Bob. "That will come easy. You're used to lying, Bunter."

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Chumgum twirled Bunter over, and he sat down. Then he was rolled over on his chest, and lay blinking at the floor.

"You stand on his shoulders, Bob."

"Right-ho!"

"Take your boots off first!" roared Bunter.

"Oh, bosh!"

"You stand on his back, Nugent."

"Here you are!"

"I say, don't squash me, you know!" roared Bunter.

"Can't be helped. The base of a pyramid has to bear the weight of the structure," said Chumgum. "Now you get up here, Squiff."

Squiff mounted lightly, with a foot each on Bob and Nugent.

Billy Bunter gave a breathless gasp.

With the weight of three juniors on him, the Owl of the Removites felt as if they were being reduced to a flat pancake.

"I—I s-s-say, you fellows, gerroff! Oh, dear!"

"Keep still! Pyramids are not supposed to wriggle, you ass!"

"Groooh!"

"Now you climb on Squiff, Wharton and Brown."

"Right you are!"

"And Bulstrode stand on Bunter's head, and Hazeldene get on Bulstrode's shoulders."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't cackle; this is serious business!"

"If you s-s-stand on my head, I—I'll scrag you!" shrieked Bunter. "Lemme gerrup! I'm not going to take this part."

"Too late! Bull and Linley stand on his legs, and take Desmond and Morgan on their shoulders, and then Wibley gets on their shoulders."

If Chumgum's instructions had been carried out, William George Bunter would certainly have expired in great anguish.

But Bunter did not give the performers a chance to carry out the instructions of their managing director.

He executed a wild wriggle, and escaped from underneath the grinning juniors, and sat up, blinking furiously.

"You beasts!"

"You're spoiling the pyramid," said Chumgum. "Get into position again."

"I won't!" roared Bunter. "I'm going to be at the top, if I'm in the pyramid at all. I think pyramids are all rot, anyway. I'm all dusty, you beasts! And I'm hurt!"

"Leave the pyramid for a bit," said Chumgum. "Let's practise the human barrel turn. Bunter is the barrel. We have to roll him over——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you rotter——"

"As fast as he will go, using our feet for the purpose," said Chumgum. "Now, pile in!"

"Yarooooh! Leave off! Yah!"

The human barrel rolled over, in the direction of the door. As a dozen feet were rolling him, he rolled fast enough, and he rolled out of the Rag, and the door was closed on him. Bunter's performance was over.

Then the grinning juniors got on with the practice. The most active members of the Remove Acrobatic Troupe had been selected to form the human pyramid, and they were progressing well in that somewhat risky performance. They formed up now, and took up their positions. Chumgum and Johnny Bull and Squiff stood in line, and Bob Cherry and Wharton mounted on their shoulders. Then Nugent and Inky climbed up and mounted on their shoulders, making three stories. This was as far as the performers had got, but a fourth storey was to be added to make the pyramid complete.

"That's ripping!" said Peter Todd. "Blessed if I shan't want a ladder to get on your shoulders, Inky."

"Ladders not allowed," said Chumgum. "You've got to climb it. If you fall and break your neck, that doesn't count, and Brown can try."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The pyramid swayed considerably as Peter Todd

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clambered up over the human structure. It was just then that the door of the Rag opened again, and Billy Bunter reappeared, with a crimson and infuriated face, and a cushion in his hand

"Yah! You rotters!" roared Bunter, and he hurled the cushion and fled.

"Oh!"

"Yow!"

"Look out!"

The flying cushion struck the pyramid in the middle, and the juniors swayed in the air and collapsed.

Inky and Nugent jumped clear, and landed on their feet, but the other fellows were strewn on the floor in a very mixed condition.

"M-m-my hat! Wh-a-a-at was that?" stammered Bob Cherry. "Oh, my legs!"

"Ow! My eye!"

"Yow! My arm!"

"Gerrroooooh! My nose! Yow!"

"Bunter!" yelled Johnny Bull. "The—the fat idiot biffed a cushion at us! My hat! I'm going to slaughter him!"

The gasping members of the pyramid picked themselves up, and acrobatic practice was suspended, as they rushed forth in search of Bunter. But Billy Bunter had wisely locked himself up in his study, and bangs and yells at the door failed to induce him to unlock it. He was deaf to the voice of the charmer. Only his fat chuckle was heard from within. And the juniors, after breathing sulphurous threats through the keyhole, returned to the Rag.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Pax!

BILLY BUNTER blinked out of the study cautiously when the silence in the passage warned him that the besiegers were gone.

"Beasts!" he murmured.

The Remove passage was deserted. The schoolboy acrobats were all in the Rag again, at practice; all the members of the upset pyramid with bumps and bruises, which they fully intended to repay with interest when they were at close quarters with Bunter again.

But Billy Bunter was quite aware of his danger, and he had schemed a scheme. After ascertaining that the coast was clear, he crept cautiously out of the study, with Todd's cricket bag in his hand.

He rolled into No. 1 Study, laid the bag open on the table, and proceeded to clear out the study cupboard. Wharton and Nugent and Chumgum's supplies for tea were quickly transferred to the bag.

Then Billy Bunter bore the bag along to No. 13, which belonged to Bob Cherry and Inky and Linley and Wun Lung. Little Wun Lung, the Chinee, was there, and he blinked inquiringly at Bunter.

The fat junior hastily closed the door, and went to the next study, which was the apartment of Johnny Bull and Fisher T. Fish and Squiff. The study was empty, and Bunter speedily emptied the cupboard, cramming the stolen goods into the bag.

Several more studies were visited, before the Owl of the Remove returned to No. 7.

With a fat chuckle, Bunter deposited his plunder there, and relocked the door, and jammed the back of a chair under the lock for additional security.

It was nearly tea-time now, and Bunter was quite ready for tea. He had ample supplies now for several teas, even for Bunter.

He was getting quite busy when there was a trampling of feet in the Remove passage. The acrobats were coming up to tea

The door of No. 7 was tried, and then there was a roar from Peter Todd.

"My hat! Still locked in! Open this door, Bunter!"

"Go and eat coke!"

"What?"

"Coke!"

"Why, you cheeky young oyster!" shouted Peter, greatly incensed. "Open this door at once, or I'll—I'll——"

"Is it pax?"

"Pax!" yelled Peter. "Is it pax? No, it isn't pax, it's whacks, and smacks, and thwacks! Will you open this door? I want my tea!"

"He, he, he!"

"What are you cackling at now?"

"I've eaten your tea."

"You—you—you've eaten my tea!" howled Peter Todd. "You fat cannibal!"

"He, he, he!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the row?" asked Bob Cherry, in the doorway of No. 1. Wharton and Nugent and Chumgum had uttered a shout of wrath that rang along the Remove passage.

"The grub!"

"It's gone!"

"Who's been in my study?" shouted Squiff, coming along from the end of the passage. "Somebody's been burgling my cupboard."

"I guess some rustler has cleared out all the tommy!" shouted Fisher T. Fish. "Where is that galoot? I guess I'm going to give him a sockdolager."

"Who's been in my study?"

"Where's my grub?"

"We've been burgled!"

"Bunter!"

"Must be Bunter! Scrag him!"

A wild and excited crowd joined Peter Todd outside the door of No. 7. They kicked and hammered and banged on the door.

"Will you open that door, Bunter?" roared Bolsover major.

"No fear!"

"We'll bust it in!" yelled Tom Brown.

"You'll have Quelchy after you if you kick up that row," chuckled Bunter.

"Order!" murmured Nugent. "We don't want Quelchy up here."

"Why, I'll—I'll smash him——"

"I'll spiflicate him!"

"I'll boil him in oil!"

Open this door, you oyster!" shouted Wharton. "We want our tea."

"You can go on wanting," said Bunter coolly. "I've bagged all the grub, and I've got it all here. I'm eating it as fast as I can. Unless you make it pax, honour bright, I'm going to go on eating it, and I'm willing to stay here till bedtime, if you like."

"You—you—you——"

"He, he, he!"

Bang! Bang! Bang!

"Shut up, Bolsover! You'll have Quelchy here."

"I don't care! I——"

"Less noise there, please!" came a sharp voice from the staircase, the voice of Wingate of the Sixth. "Do you want me to come there with a cane?"

"No thanks, Wingate!" said Bob Cherry meekly.

The assault upon the door of No. 7 Study ceased; but the enraged Removites continued to make sulphurous remarks through the keyhole.

Billy Bunter was quite unperturbed.

For once the Owl of the Remove was master of the situation. He had commandeered nearly all the provisions in the Remove passage, and he was eating away as fast as his powerful jaws could move. He felt assured that the Removites would give in before he had travelled through that mountain of provisions.

"Bunter, you fat beast," said Peter Todd, through the keyhole, "if you don't open this door, we'll skin you!"

"He, he, he! You mean you'll skin me if I do," chuckled Bunter.

"I suppose it amounts to that," grinned Bob Cherry. "We'd better make it pax with the fat rotter. I want my tea, and all our grub was in No. 1."

"And it's all gone," said Nugent. "Make it pax."

"I jolly well won't!" said Bolsover major.

"Your grub's all right, Bolsover," chuckled Billy Bunter; "I've got it all here—the rabbit-pie, and the sardines, and the cake, and the honey, and the jam. I haven't started on it yet. I'm finishing Wharton's chicken now."

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"You young villain!" shouted Wharton.

"I'm taking a whack from each lot first, so as to leave some for all of you if you make it pax," said Bunter. "I've finished Toddy's sardines——"

"You cannibal!"

"And Fishy's beefsteak-pie——"

"I guess I'll scrag you, you galoot!"

"And Bull's ham and tongue——"

"Oh, my hat!"

"And Brown's jam——"

"Good heavens! Haven't you burst yet?" ejaculated Tom Brown.

"Oh, I can keep it up for a long time yet!" said Bunter cheerfully. "I've really had a good tea, but I'm keeping on. I'm just starting on your cake, Bulstrode."

"Let my cake alone!" roared Bulstrode. "I'll make it pax."

"Oh, all right! I'll have Desmond's cream-puffs instead——"

"Sure, I make it pax!" howled Micky Desmond. "Pax, pax, pax! Let my cream-puffs alone, you thafe of the world! Pax!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're a sensible chap, Desmond. I've only eaten two, and now I'll go on with Bolsover major's jam."

"I'll skin you!" shrieked Bolsover.

"I say, Bolsover, this is good jam. How much did you give for it?"

"Let my jam alone!"

"I always did like strawberry jam. This is really spiffing; I can finish the pot. I'll have the honey next; I've got rather a sweet tooth!"

"Pax!" yelled Bolsover.

"Oh, good! Perhaps I'd better have something a bit more solid now, Chunguum's cold rabbit will do a treat."

"Pax!" yelled Chunguum.

"He, he, he!"

"Pax all round," said Harry Wharton, bursting into a laugh. "It's all right, you Owl, you can open the door; it's pax all round."

"Oh, all right, Wharton! I rely on you, you know. I suppose you're going to ask me to tea? I really haven't quite finished yet."

"Why, you—you——"

"Are you going to ask me to tea?"

"Yes," said Wharton.

Billy Bunter opened the door, grinning. There was a rush of the juniors into the study. But "pax" had been proclaimed, and pax it was. The juniors shook their fists at Bunter, and reclaimed their provisions—what had been left of them. They had to content themselves with telling Bunter what they would do next time.

The Owl of the Remove cheerfully accompanied the Famous Five and Squiff to No. 1 Study, to join them at tea. The looks he received might have made his flesh creep, but they didn't. Billy Bunter had done pretty well already, but he made a very good tea in No. 1, all the same, and when he departed he assured Harry Wharton & Co. affably that he would come to tea with them again soon.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.
The Kybosh!

"BLESS my soul!"

Mr. Quelch was turning into the Form-room passage, when he stopped dead.

Afternoon lessons were over that day, and most of the fellows were out of doors, and Chunguum and Wharton and Bob Cherry had the Form-room passage to themselves—or, rather, they thought they had.

They were at practice in the wide passage. Bob Cherry had Wharton on his shoulders, and Chunguum was on Wharton's shoulders, and they balanced themselves perfectly, a proof of the skill that the schoolboy acrobats were already acquiring.

Chunguum, the topmost of the three, was, indeed, standing on one foot, with the other leg in the air.

The three juniors walked down the passage in that pyramidal form, Bob Cherry picking his steps very carefully.

No wonder the Remove-master halted, and murmured "Bless my soul!" Certainly he had never beheld so astonishing a sight in the Form-room passage before.

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But Mr. Quelch was not the only spectator. In the doorway of the Fourth Form-room four juniors were peeping out; they were Temple and Dabney and Fry and Scott of the Fourth. The Removites were too busy to notice them. But the chums of the Fourth noticed the Removites. They were there for that special purpose.

"Ready!" murmured Temple.

Temple, naturally, could not see along the passage to where Mr. Quelch was standing at the corner. He did not know that the Remove-master was there. Mr. Quelch was standing dumbfounded.

"Ready, aye, ready!" chuckled Scott.

"Let fly!"

The four young rascals were armed with catapults. It did not occur to them, for the moment, that it was rather dangerous to upset the three juniors in their acrobatic act. Chunguum, at the top, had quite a distance to fall if he was dislodged.

Four catapults were aimed carefully, and were discharged at the same instant. Four missiles smote upon the legs of the acrobats with sudden stinging effect, and the three Removites jumped at the same moment.

"Oh!"

"Ow!"

"Ah!"

Bob Cherry staggered. Wharton swayed and rolled forward helplessly, and Chunguum pitched off his shoulders.

Chunguum turned a somersault as he came down, and landed on his feet, but Wharton was not so lucky.

He went plunging wildly forward through the air, and he would certainly have had a very painful fall had not Mr. Quelch been there.

The Remove-master had stepped forward, and he was just in time to catch Wharton—quite unintentionally, however.

Wharton's arms closed round his neck in a wild clutch, and his fall was broken; it seemed to Mr. Quelch at that moment as if his neck was broken, too.

Mr. Quelch was not built to stand a shock like that. He staggered backwards, and went over sprawling, with the Removite sprawling over him, gasping.

"Oh!" panted Mr. Quelch.

"Ah!" gasped Wharton.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Temple. "Quelchy—they've fallen on Quelchy! Hook it!"

The four Fourth-Formers did not waste time. The unexpected result of their jape made a prompt retreat necessary. They disappeared down the passage like lightning.

But the unfortunate Removites could not escape so easily.

Harry Wharton rolled off Mr. Quelch, and sat up blinking, and the Remove-master sat up, too, blinking and gasping, and glaring. Mr. Quelch was in a towering rage. It was not surprising, under the circumstances.

"M-m-m-mr. Quelch!" gasped Wharton, in utter dismay, as he saw what it was that had broken his fall.

"Oh, dear!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Are y-y-y-you hurt, sir?"

"Goodness gracious! Bless my soul! Oh! Oh! Oh!"

"He looks hurt!" murmured Chunguum; "and my impression is we're going to be hurt, too!"

Mr. Quelch picked himself up, breathing hard. He had received several hard knocks, and he had some bruises. But the damage to his person was as nothing compared with the damage to his temper.

There was an awful silence. The three Removites looked at their Form-master as if they were mesmerised. A pin might have been heard to fall in the Form-room passage while Mr. Quelch was recovering his breath.

It was Mr. Quelch who broke the silence. His voice was like the rumble of thunder. His brow was like a thundercloud.

"Wharton! Cherry! Chunguum!"

"Ye-e-es, sir!"

"Awfully sorry, sir!"

"Quite an accident, sir!"

"You—you have caused me painful injuries!" rumbled Mr. Quelch. "I—I have never—never seen anything like this—never! What were you doing?"

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"Only pip-pip-practising, sir!"

"Practising what?"

"Acrobatics, sir!"

"Are you aware that you might have broken your limbs?"

"Ahem! We—we were all right, only—only some beast—I mean some fellow slogged us from behind with a catapult!"

"You fell upon me!"

"We—we're sorry, sir. We—we didn't see you."

"So you are practising acrobatics," said Mr. Quelch. "Chumgum, I presume, is your instructor?"

"Yes, sir," said Charles Chumgum meekly.

"Follow me into the Form-room."

Mr. Quelch limped into the Form-room. The three Removites limped after him. The Form-master selected a cane from his desk.

"Hold out your hand; you first, Wharton!"

Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish!

"Now, you, Cherry!"

Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish!

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Now you, Chumgum, I shall punish you most severely, as you are the ringleader!"

Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish!

"Ow-ow-ow-wow-wow-wow-wow!" moaned the unfortunate Chumgum. He was almost doubled up.

Mr. Quelch, still breathing fury, laid the cane on his desk.

"You will take five hundred lines each!"

"Ow! Ow!"

"You will stay in for Wednesday and Saturday!"

"Ow!"

"And if ever," said Mr. Quelch impressively, "if ever it comes to my knowledge that any boy in the Remove has played any acrobatic trick after this, I shall report that boy to the Head for a flogging!"

"Oh!"

Mr. Quelch swept towards the door. Harry Wharton blinked at his chums, and then called out desperately:

"Mr. Quelch!"

"Well?" snapped the Remove-master.

"If—if you please, sir," said the dismayed captain of the Remove, "we—we've been practising to give an acrobatic show in the gym."

"Nonsense!"

"We've done a lot of training, sir. If you would allow us to give the show——"

"What!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "Have you already forgotten what I said to you only a few minutes ago?"

"Nunno! But——"

"But you are asking me to give you permission to do what I have just forbidden you to do," said Mr. Quelch, taking up his cane again. "Hold out your hand, Wharton!"

"Oh!"

Swish! Swish! Swish!

"Now," said Mr. Quelch grimly, "have you any more requests to make?"

"Oh, dear! No—no, thanks, sir!"

Mr. Quelch rustled out of the room. The three Removites squeezed their hands under their arms, and groaned in anguished chorus.

"Ow! Yow! Yow! Yooop!"

"Oh, dear! Oh, my hat!"

"All up with the Remove Acrobatic Troupe! Yow—ow-ow!"

The unfortunate acrobats crawled away, feeling that life was not worth living. They felt even too used up to visit Temple Dabney, & Co., whom they suspected of being the authors of their disaster. For some hours after that the unfortunate trio were chiefly occupied in uttering deep groans.

It was evidently "all up" with the Remove Acrobatic Troupe. It was not at all probable that Mr. Quelch would ever smile upon an acrobatic performance by the members of his Form. And the only consolation the Removites had was in a visit they paid, later on, to Temple's study in the Fourth.

When they left Temple, Dabney, & Co., those humorous young gentlemen were, apparently, practising the role of contortionists, and their contortions were accompanied by sounds of deep woe. Which was all the solace that was possible for the Remove acrobats.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.
Back to the Ring!

"YOU fellows coming?"

Charley Chumgum asked that question on a half-holiday in the following week as the Removites came out after dinner.

Ever since the Remove acrobatics had been knocked on the head Charley Chumgum had been looking much less cheerful.

He confided to his chums in No. 1 Study that he was fed up with school, and that but for disappointing his father he would have asked Mr. Chumgum to take him back into the circus. He missed sorely the bright glitter and excitement of the ring. He had been born in the circus, he had lived there, and he yearned for his old life. The Remove Acrobatic Troupe had consoled him to some extent, but since that was "done for" he thought more and more of his old life.

"Where are you off to?" asked Wharton.

He noted that Chumgum had bucked up again, and was looking quite chippy. But the new junior soon explained the reason.

"My father's circus is at Luxford," he said. "I'm going."

"Luxford! That's a tremendous distance from here," said Bob Cherry. "You can't go to Luxford."

"I've hired a car."

"Oh!"

"We can do it in time for the afternoon performance if you like," said Chumgum. "I'm going, anyway. I can't stand it any longer. I simply must see the circus again, or bust. It's different with you fellows; you've never belonged to a circus. I want to sniff the niff of the tan once more."

"Oh, we'll come, rather!" said Harry Wharton. "And we'll whack out the car, too!"

Chumgum shook his head.

"No, it's my treat. I've settled that. The car will hold eight, and you fellows are five. Squiff makes six. Will you ask Linley?"

"Right-ho!"

Harry Wharton & Co. were by no means averse to a visit to Chumgum's Circus, which they had never seen. They could not quite understand Chumgum's longing for his old life. To their minds Greyfriars was the finest place on earth, and a fellow who couldn't be satisfied there couldn't be satisfied anywhere. It was natural, however, that Chumgum should want to see the circus again, though they could not understand his wanting to go back to it. And they were glad enough of a run in a big car on a sunny spring afternoon, with a circus at the end of it.

The party walked down cheerfully to the gates, where the car was waiting. Billy Bunter gave them a sniff and a blink as they passed him in the Close. Billy Bunter had rejoiced at the sudden demise of the Remove Acrobatic Troupe, and cheerfully told the acrobats that it would have been a failure anyway, as he wasn't in the troupe. And Chumgum, since, having steadily declined to cash any of his postal-orders in advance, Bunter's contempt for the circus bounder had reached burning point.

"Going out with that bounder?" sniffed Bunter.

"Looking for a thick ear?" asked Bob Cherry.

"I'm really surprised at you, you fellows!" said Bunter. "I really think it is up to you to be a bit more particular. I really doubt whether I can continue to speak to you, you know!"

"Come on, the car's waiting," said Chumgum.

Bunter pricked up his fat ears.

"The car!" he ejaculated, his expression changing. "You fellows going out in a car?"

"Yes. Chumgum's taking us to a circus," said Bob, with a chuckle.

"Oh, I'll come!"

"With a circus bounder?" grinned Chumgum.

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"Ahem! I don't mind. After all, I'm not a snob!" said Bunter, with a burst of generosity. "I don't mind. I'll come!"

"But I mind," said Chumgum cheerfully; "and you won't come, you fat bounder!"

"Oh, really, Chummy, old chap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The party of eight walked down to the gates, and Bunter toddled after them as fast as his fat little legs would go. The eight mounted into the car. The chauffeur was already in his seat, and the engine began to buzz.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Good-bye, Bunter!"

"I'm coming with you!" roared Bunter. "Look here, I can stand that chap if you can. Make room for me in the car. The—the fact is, I was only joking. I suppose you fellows can take a joke. Chummy, old pal, you can take a joke!"

"Yes, I can take a joke; but I can't take you," grinned Chumgum.

The car started.

Billy Bunter broke into a run after it. Chumgum grinned, and told the chauffeur to drive slowly for a half-mile. The car glided on, and the fat junior behind kept pace with it, panting and puffing.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Put it on, Bunter!" chirruped Bob Cherry. "Race you to Luxford!"

Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stop, you beasts! I say, Chumgum, old chap—— Oh, you rotter! I say, old pal—— You—you disgusting circus bounder—— Yow!"

The car suddenly leaped on, and whisked away, and Bunter was left standing in the road, gasping for breath, and shaking a fat fist after the car. He was still shaking his fist when the car turned a corner, and vanished.

It was a long drive to Luxford, but the rapid car ate up the miles, and the juniors greatly enjoyed the run.

They drove into Luxford at last, and stopped outside the big building which was at present tenanted by Chumgum's Celebrated Circus. It was the Luxford Stadium, which Harry Wharton & Co. had visited before.

"We'll go in with the crowd," said Chumgum, "and I'll take you round to see the pater afterwards—if you'd care to see him."

"Oh, rather!" said the juniors, delighted at the idea of a run behind the scenes.

"No aristocratic prejudices—like Bunter?" asked Chumgum.

"Ha, ha, ha! None at all!"

A goodly crowd was going in to the afternoon performance; the new arrivals were in time. Chumgum paid for a box, greatly tickled at the idea of patronising the paternal circus in that way. The man in the pay-box stared at him, recognising him. Charley Chumgum gave

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him a nod, and they passed on to their seats. It was a large box, and held the eight comfortably. The performance was already starting.

Chumgum's Celebrated Circus was, as the juniors agreed, really ripping. But Chumgum probably enjoyed it more than the other fellows. His face flushed and his eyes sparkled as he gazed into the ring. The "turns" were all good—Captain Coke, the lion-tamer; Sapolio, the serpent charmer; Rab Rabbi, the juggler; Tiny Tony, the clown; Texas Bill, the broncho buster; and the rest. The great Mr. Chumgum himself, resplendent in evening clothes and white waistcoat, with a big diamond and a gay orchid and a curly-brimmed silk hat, presided in the ring, armed with a long whip, which he cracked with a report like a pistol-shot.

Mr. Chumgum evidently did not know that his hopeful son and heir was watching him from the box. But later in the performance, as the Greyfriars juniors gave a thunderous cheer for Texas Bill's performance, the circus-master glanced towards the box, and jumped as he caught sight of Chumgum among the other juniors.

The fat old gentleman came towards the box.

"Charley, you young rascal, what are you doin' 'ere?" he demanded.

"Come to see how you're getting on, old man," said Charley affably. "Chaps, this is my pater."

"How do you do, Mr. Chumgum?" chorussed the juniors.

Mr. Chumgum raised his hat.

"Happy to see you, young gentlemen! Happy to see any friends of my son's. I 'ope I shall see you round to tea after the show."

"Hear, hear!"

"How's the new acrobat—the chap you've got in my place, pater?" asked Charley.

"Fairish," said Mr. Chumgum—"only fairish. Not a patch on you, Charley. But you was too good for the circus, my boy. You're getting a tip-top education now, and you'll make a bigger figger in the world than your father."

"Oh, rats!" said Charley. "Don't pile it on, dad!"

Mr. Chumgum grinned and went back to his duties in the ring. The next item on the programme was the acrobatic turn, and the juniors watched it keenly—Charley Chumgum the keenest of all.

"That's my old turn," explained Charley. "Don't I wish I was doing it now! What?"

His look was disparaging as he watched the performance. The fat gentleman in tights and spangles was a good acrobat; but Charley Chumgum had been billed in his time as the "Miraculous Boy Acrobat and King of the Trapeze," and he had deserved the title. His heart was in his eyes as he watched the performance.

The acrobat retired at last; and then, all of a sudden, a figure in Etons bounded from the box into the arena.

"Chumgum!" shouted Wharton.

"Charley!" gasped the circus-master.

Charley Chumgum did not heed.

The temptation had been too strong for him. He kicked off his boots, threw off his jacket and cap, and swarmed up the rope to the trapeze.

The audience stared in astonishment at first, and then, taking it for a part of the performance, they cheered. Harry Wharton & Co. cheered, too.

"Oh, my 'at!" gasped Mr. Chumgum. "Charley, you young rascal!"

"By jove, he's going it!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"The go-fulness is terrific!"

The performance that followed held the juniors breathless. Charley Chumgum's garb was not suitable to the performance, but it did not seem to make any difference to him. He was a born acrobat. He swung on the high trapeze, he launched himself through space, and caught the lower trapeze; he swung through the air upon it at a dizzy rate, suddenly swung off——

"Oh, my hat!"

"He's falling!"

But Charley Chumgum was not falling. He was swinging through the air in an upward flight, and he caught

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the high trapeze with his knees, and swung there, head downwards, amid roars of applause.

"Oh, crumbs!" said Bob Cherry, with a gulp. "I thought the young ass was a goner!"

"Bravo!"

The audience simply rose to Charley Chumgum. The Greyfriars juniors watched him almost with their hearts in their mouths. But the performance came to an end without the enterprising Charley's neck being broken, and he walked off by the ring exit, followed by thunderous cheers.

He did not return to the box; but when the show was over, and the audience began to file out, a big man in riding-breeches came to the door of the box. It was Texas Bill, the broncho buster.

"You young gents follow me, plaze," said Texas Bill.

And Harry Wharton & Co. followed him behind the scenes, where the found tea ready and received a warm welcome from Mr. and Mrs. Chumgum. Charley was at the tea-table already, and he greeted them with a grin.

"What did you think of my turn?" he asked.

"I thought you were going to break your neck!" said Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Which I don't know what to do, young gentlemen," said Mr. Chumgum, with a distressful look. "Which that kid says as he won't go back to Greyfriars."

"Not go back?" exclaimed Bob.

"No fear!" said Charley Chumgum emphatically. "I can't stick it out any longer. I'm back in the circus now, and I'm going to stay. 'Tain't any good arguing, dad. I've stuck it out as long as I could. I'm born for the circus. You can give your acrobat man another job, and I'm going to do my old turn. Why, you unnatural parent, you, you ought to be glad to see your only beloved son again."

"Why, so I am, Charley!" said Mr. Chumgum, in perplexity. "But——"

"Charley's right," said Mrs. Chumgum.

"Oh, if you say so, that settles it, Gloriana!" said Mr. Chumgum. "But wot am I to say to Dr. Locke, what was so kind as to take the young rascal at all?"

"These chaps will take him a letter," said Charley. "I'm awfully sorry to leave you fellows; you've been awfully decent to me at the school. But this is my place, you know, and I stick here."

"Perhaps you're right," said Wharton. "We shall be sorry to lose you."

"And whenever you're anywhere near the circus," said Charley, "just come in—on the nod, you know. All old friends always welcome."

"Ear, 'ear!" said Mr. Chumgum.

"Pile in!" said Charley.

Harry Wharton & Co. piled in. It was a famous feed, and gave them a great impression of Mr. Chumgum's hospitality. Charley's decision had astonished them, but it was evident that Charley had made up his mind, and equally evident that his parents were glad to have him back.

When the time came for departure, Charley Chumgum came down to the car to see them off. They shook hands all round heartily, and Charley stood waving his cap as the car drove away.

. . . . . .

Dr. Locke received the letter from Mr. Chumgum that Harry Wharton brought for him, and then the news was imparted to the Remove. All the fellows were sorry to lose Chumgum, who had become very popular in his short stay at the school.

"Never mind," said Bob Cherry. "The circus will be coming this way later on, and we'll make up a party to go, and have old Chummy and his pater to tea in the study—what?"

"Hear, hear!" said the Co.

And Harry Wharton & Co. looked forward to their next meeting with the Schoolboy Acrobat.

THE END.

(Look out for next Monday's splendid tale of Greyfriars, entitled "Hurree Singh's Peril!" Order your copy now, or you may be disappointed.)

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On the opposite page is a miniature reproduction of pages 1 and 16 of a recent issue of "The Boys' Friend." On the next page you will find miniature pages 2 and 15 of the same issue. In the "Gem" Library out on Wednesday—No. 378—pages 3, 4, 13, and 14 will appear in the same way. The "Magnet" Library on sale next Monday will contain pages 5, 6, 11, and 12, and the "Gem" Library out on Wednesday week—No. 379—will contain pages 7, 8, 9, and 10, thus forming a complete miniature number of "The Boys' Friend."

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(Continued from previous page.)

their posts until they should receive a certain signal from Keene.

Turtle Street—branched off a main road, and as it was frequented at all hours, and lined with several large and pretty shops, it offered facilities for espionage. Aaron Moscowitch had lived there for many years, and so warily that he had never been tripped up by the police.

His house, No. 17, was a large, rickety old building of four stories, and almost as tortuous as a rabbit warren inside.

An adjoining dwelling, No. 19, was the one that had been referred to by the Circle of 13, who had, pari passu, chosen it as an abode where a march or so ago. It was very similar to the residence of the force, and it was now occupied. To enter it without being seen was not a difficult matter, since there was a high walled yard at the back, and a gate that led to an alley.

Aaron Moscowitch was a man of sixty, lean and bent, with a hooked nose, and a ragged, iron-grey beard and moustache. He had the vision of a hawk, and he was sharp on his guard. And thus it happened that the plain-clothes constables, despite though they were, did not escape the attention of the Jews.

He had noticed them on the morning of this Wednesday, and not long afterwards there was delivered to him by a boy a message written in cipher-code, that tended to confirm what he surmised. He sent an answer, and three matters reared until early in the evening, when the faint whir of a telephone bell summoned him to the private office at the rear of his shop. He picked up the receiver, and put it to his ear.

"Hello!" he called.

"Hello!" floated to him over the wires. "Is that Aaron?"

"Yes, he is speaking."

"This is the chief. Have you seen anything of Harvey Keene yet?"

"No, not yet. I don't believe he is coming."

"He will come," declared the chief. "A number of my constables are now in the adjoining house, and I have had a report from them. They saw certain that the men loitering in Turtle Street are Scotland Yard detectives, which can mean but one thing. You just leave a visit from the detective, and he will force you to assist him in setting a trap. I can promise just what he will want you to do."

"Am I to do it?" Aaron Moscowitch inquired.

"Of course you are. You will obey like a lamb, pretending to be frightened. And now for your instructions. Keene will tell you that he expects Lord Beaming's gold-plate to be brought to you by one or more of the thieves. He will doubtless wish to have a view of the street, and you will take him to the sitting-room above, and leave him there.

"On your return to the office below, you will signal to my men in the area house. Word will be sent to me, and I will arrive shortly with the plate. You will take it up to Keene, having previously persuaded him that you would do so, as a reasonable precaution. Meanwhile, he will have been kept under observation by the peripatetic that was made this morning. And while he is looking at the stuff, before he has a chance to examine the Scotland Yard men, he will be seized and hustled into the adjoining dwelling. No alarm will be raised.

"You will have ample time to put the plate in the secret hiding place, and when the police ultimately come, suspecting that something has gone wrong, you will be in a position to defy them. They will out be able to lay a finger on you. Do you understand?"

"Yes, your instructions are clear."

"That is all, then," said the chief. "Good-bye."

The chief had rung off. Aaron Moscowitch hung the receiver on its hook, and chuck his head doubtfully.

"It is a complicated affair," he muttered. "I don't like it. I wish I had never had anything to do with this gang of—"

He paused hearing the click of the street door. He passed from the office in the shop and found there a tall, shabby-dressed man, with indifferent features and a fair, heavy moustache, who was carrying a parcel.

As he came forward the door was opened again, and there appeared a ragged youth with grimy cheeks. He also had a parcel under his arm. The men stepped to the counter, and the pawnbroker glanced at them inquiringly.

"What have you got there?" he asked.

"Nothing of value," the man replied. "Only kind-hearted."

As he spoke, he deftly whipped off his moustache, and at once Aaron Moscowitch's face paled.

"Mr. Keene!" he gasped.

"Yes, Mr. Keene," murmured the famous detective.

"This is a great surprise!" said Aaron Moscowitch.

"Can't you guess?" Keene answered blandly.

"Not on my life, sir. You haven't anything against me."

"Haven't I?" Which of your dear pals with the bent of criminals who call themselves the Circle of 13?"

"I do not know of them, except from the newspapers."

"You can tell that stuff properly from them, Moscowitch."

"Never, sir, to the best of my knowledge," vowed the Jew.

"Stop lying, and listen to me," Keene interrupted. "What I have to tell you can be said in a few words. I strongly believe that a valuable set of gold-plate, which was stolen from Lord Beaming's residence in Grosvenor Square, will be brought to you some time tonight by one or more members of the gang."

"It is news to me."

"Perhaps it is, and perhaps it isn't. You may know all about these men, or you may know little or nothing. That isn't the point. I propose to set a trap under your roof, and you must help me."

Aaron Moscowitch hesitated. He was pretending to consider the matter, judging that it would be wise to show some reluctance.

"Right you are," he assented, in a calm tone. "I'do not injuring anybody with any plate, but I'll do what you like. You can trust me."

"I am sure I can," Harvey Keene replied. "You won't dare to play me false. There are Scotland Yard men in plain-clothes posted outside, and if you were to try to leave the premises you would be promptly arrested. And now to arrange things. I shall want to set a watch on the street. Where will be the best place?"

"My sitting-room, on the first floor," said the Jew.

"Has it a cupboard?"

"Yes, sir, a large one."

"So much the better. Listen closely, Moscowitch, and I will tell you just what you are to do to the event of the thieves coming with the plate. It is to be assumed that there will be at least two of them, and there may be three or four."

"So that as it may, you will have one man only accompany you with the plate to the sitting-room, intending to lay a trap for him that is will be safer for you to negotiate there for the purchase of the stuff. The lad and I will be hidden in the cupboard, and when the man appears we will whip out and cover him, with, get resolvers. Should any assistance be required, you will give it.

"Meanwhile, I shall have blown a whistle as a signal to the police, who will rush into the house. They will seize any persons who may be below, and hasten up to you me. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly, sir," Aaron Moscowitch answered. "You can count on me."

"Very well," said Keene. "All is arranged. And now take us to the room. Be quick."

Oliver and the detective were led from the shop to the office at the rear, and from that by a passage in a staircase, which they ascended. When they had traversed another passage the Jew opened a door and drew his companions through. He had brought a candle with him and the light revealed an apartment that had two windows, and was furnished with a desk, a couch, and a table, and several chairs. Harvey Keene stepped to the cupboard and peered into it.

"Quite large enough," he said. "You can go, Moscowitch. Be sure you don't fail us."

Aaron Moscowitch withdrew, shutting the door behind him, and was quietly downstairs, laughing in his sleeve at the thought of the chief's trap. He rapped twice on the wall of his office and by then Keene and the lad were standing in darkness at one of the sitting-room windows gazing from a crevice of the blind into the street below.

"I wonder if they will come?" murmured Oliver.

The 3rd Chapter.
Posing the Ferrets.

Nearly an hour had elapsed, and the watchers at the window were beginning to feel discouraged, when they observed approaching along Turtle Street a hundred that resembled a large sack, and was pushed by an elderly, shabby-clothed man with a ragged moustache. He stopped and threw a further look about him.

"There he is," said the lad in a low eager tone.

"I think so," Keene assented.

"He is alone, you see."

"Yes. I am afraid there is only the one. If we get him and the plate, however, it will be something scoop planned."

Apparently satisfied by his scrutiny, the man shouldered the sack, and entered the shop with it. Nobody else arrived though Oliver and the detective kept sight for ten or three more minutes and then, as they turned from the window with the intention of concealing themselves in the cupboard, Harvey Keene took his electric torch from his pocket. The cupboard was at the back, and as soon as he played the silvery glow towards it he heard a faint, creaking sound, and saw a spot that glittered like a point of fire. And at once he knew it is be the reflection from a human eye that was gazing at him from a tiny hole in the wall. The truth flashed to his mind. Craft had been marshal against his staff.

"By Jove!" he whispered as he extinguished the torch.

"What's wrong?" asked the lad.

"Treachery!" breathed Keene.

"What do you mean, guv'nor?"

"Hush, my boy! We are under observation."

The detective's hand was on Oliver's arm. They crept to the door, and on the outer side of it there was fortunately a key, which Keene turned as soon as he and the lad had glided from the room. A noise of scrambling sprig Burtal in his ears.

They darted in the direction of the staircase, and here they encountered Aaron Moscowitch, who had a candle in one hand, and with the other was dragging the sack that had been brought to the pawnbroker.

"Who could you well be are?" he asked. "There was only the one man, and he didn't want to come up. He let me have the plate. I told him I would give him his price and—"

"Lies!" interrupted Harvey Keene. And with that he seized the Jew, and slapped a revolver to his head. "Confess, you cur!" he hissed. "The Circle of 13 are in your house!"

"Yes, Mr. Keene, they—they are! All of them!"

"Where?"

"Above and below! They got in through the adjoining parading. Don't shoot me! Oh, sir, please don't—"

Aaron Moscowitch squirmed like an eel, and was gone, leaving behind him the sag of plate, and dropping the candle, which was snuffed out. He tripped, and plunged headlong down the stairs.

"Help! Help!" he yelled, as he crashed to the bottom. "Keene is after me!"

From the lower floor rose threats and curses. Above, the men who had dashed from hiding into the sitting-room were hammering on the locked door. Keene put his whistle to his lips, and blew four shrill, piercing blasts.

"That will fetch the police!" he declared.

"They will be too late to save us!" gasped Oliver. "We are in a trap!"

"We'll get out of it! We're not caught yet!"

Harvey Keene led the way, flashing his electric torch, and the lad followed at his heels, lugging the heavy sack. They dared not go forward. They must escape by the chance of escaping by the roof.

They hurried from corridor to corridor, from room to room, realizing that they were in a tortuous, rambling rookery of a house. And in a maze of peril, in the very shadow of death. In this same house, striking for them like snakes on a hot scent, were the bloodthirsty members of the Circle of 13.

"The coming rogues!" Keene said savagely.

"Hark, guv'nor! They are shooting!"

"Yes, the police have entered, and are meeting resistance."

"My word, it's like the Sidney Street siege!"

The dwelling was an inferno of noise now. Banging and clattering, and heavy shouts, mingled with the rapid crackling of revolvers, and even a volleys that was resulting in Turtle Street and the surrounding neighbourhood. Even in this dread crisis Harvey Keene remembered what he had learned from Moscowitch.

Knowing that the murderous crew had got in from an adjoining house, he was anxious, whether he himself lived or died, to prevent their escape by warning the Scotland Yard men to draw a cordon around the entire block.

"I don't know what we are to do, my boy," he said, as he stood gazing wavered for an instant.

"It's a bad, bad hole, and no mistake," was Oliver's reply.

They were still in a confusing maze, and still the revolving band were searching for them. They went blindly on, this way and that, through rooms that were empty and rooms that were burdened with trash. The firing had ceased, and the other sounds within had almost faded to silence when they came to a door that was locked.

With one kick Keene burst it open, and behold the lean form of the Ferret, who was crouching in a corner. His hand flew to his coat, and he whipped forth a gleaming knife. The detective knocked it from his grasp, and rapped him on the skull with the butt of his revolver.

Though it was not a stunning blow, it sent the Ferret reeling against the wall, and half dazed him for a moment. Keene gripped him by the collar and shook him until his teeth fairly rattled.

"Blow on the way to the cuff," he hissed fiercely. "You must be familiar with the dwelling."

"I—I don't know anything about it," spluttered the little ruffian. "Tells the trouble. You just—I've been trying to—" He stopped, and his yellow cheeks grew white. "Listen!" he panted. "Do you hear footsteps? Hanged if they haven't done it!"

"Done what?" demanded the detective.

"They are into me house!"

"Tell me what you have to speak."

"It's what the chief said. He was going to light a bomb below which would destroy the house and the police also, and the rest of the gang had slipped through to the next dwelling. And then you have come in. We're be taken in this!"

A startled exclamation burst from Oliver's lips, and for a second or two Harvey Keene's brain reeled with terror. But even while he was gazed terrified him he saw his the plan from his electrician the rapid shape of a staircase.

"There is a chance for us, he cried. "Come, my boy, come! Hurry!"

The Ferret was helpless with fright. Keene thrust him along with one hand, and with the other played the torch ahead of him. And the lad followed staggering under the weight of the sack, which he had hoisted to his shoulder.

In harrowing suspense, at fast as they could, they scrambled up one rickety staircase, and more in another. Up that they—this, and reached the top breathless and exhausted. No trapdoor was visible above them. They stumbled into a room to one side of the passage, and they had not more than raised their eyes to the ceiling when, from beneath them there was a tremendous explosion that hurled them off their feet.

"My price boy!" gasped Keene, as he fell.

For a few moments the three lay there in a stupor, then senses returned, while a cloud of dust swirled slowly around them. They had not been hurt. Either the bomb had been badly made, or the house had been strong enough to withstand the shock of the explosion. Dense was the dust in the air, and from the adjoining room, hauling the Ferret to his feet.

It was a marvel that they had not all been killed. They were at the top of the dwelling and the roof was a hollow and a wreckage. The floor had split and sagged, and the roof was bulging. And what had been a window was now a wide ragged gap in a tangled, twisting framework of splintered beams and fragments of lathe and plaster.

Harvey Keene, and his companions groped to the opening, where they were clearly exposed to view from below. The street was thronged with people. Soft! Up at stage, saw the three figures high above them.

"Don't jump!" they shouted. "Don't jump! Wait for the firemen!"

"Where are the police?" Keene called back. "Tell them to—"

His voice was drowned by the clamour. He could not make himself heard. The tumult increased, ringing shots and louder. Blows of single were now drifting out the shattered window, and the street beneath was circulated with vivid emotion.

The explosion had set fire to the house!

Oliver and the detective waited calmly, showing no fear, as the minutes dragged by. At intervals the Ferret, trembling in Keene's iron hand, gave vent to shrieks of terror. The smoke thickened, and the crackling flames soared higher and higher. And at length, when it seemed that there could be no hope, the clang of a gong and a sound of wheels and hoofs had that help had arrived.

A scene ensued. Soon the telescopic ladders shot up to the ragged gap at the top of the dwelling, and the intrepid band of a fireman appeared. It was a rush down through scorching heat and a shower of sparks.

Down went Harvey Keene and his prisoner, and the lad with his heavy burden. And at last amidst a storm of cheers, they safely reached the street. And a few moments later, just as the firemen got to work at the flames, the burning shell of the house collapsed into a heap of ruins.

Lord Beaming's gold plate had been recovered, and the Ferret had been caught. But the rest of the gang had escaped through the adjoining dwelling, and not a trace of them could be found. It was a baffled disappointment to Keene, yet the triumph was with him. His plan had won the game, despite the cutting of his adversaries.

* * *

Several days had elapsed, and a fresh sensation had taken the interest of the public from the Turtle Street affair. Aaron Moscowitch, who had escaped with the others before the explosion of the bomb had been sought for in vain. Lord Beaming's butler had disappeared, and there was reason to believe that he had fled the country.

As for the Ferret, no amount of threats or persuasion had led him to give the slightest information regarding his associates. He had sworn that he would never betray them, that nothing would induce him to open his lips.

It was certain that he would stick to his word. Harvey Keene knew that was a feeling of disparagement gripped him, and he began to doubt if he would ever succeed in the strenuous task he had undertaken. But even while he sat smoking and musing Fate was bringing to him that which was to put him once more on the track of the daring and insolent Circle of 13.

THE END.

(Next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND will contain another new thrilling story of Harvey Keene's efforts to bring The Circle of 13 to justice. Don't miss it!)

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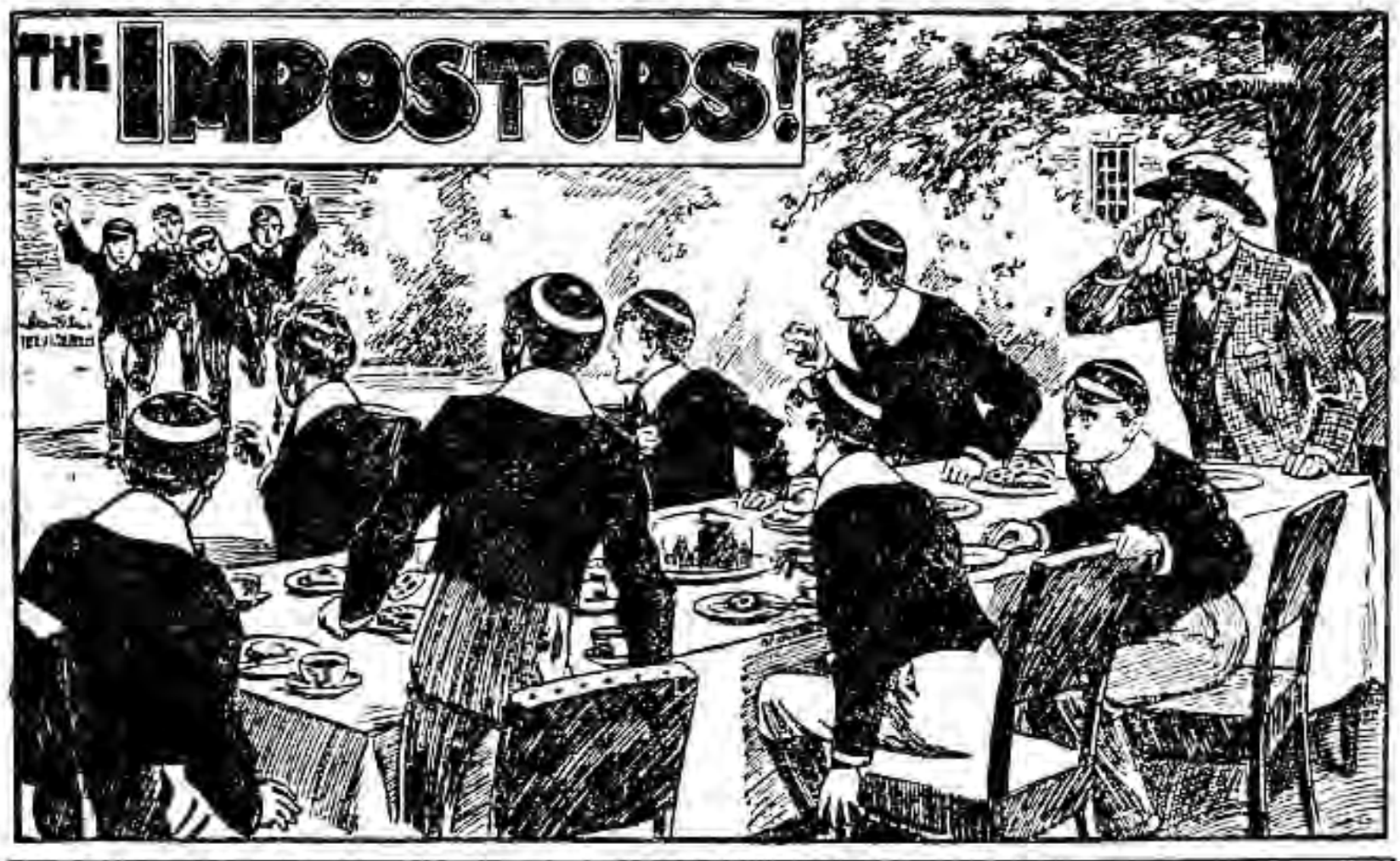
OWEN CONQUEST'S GRAND COMPLETE SCHOOL TALE OF JIMMY SILVER & Co.



Four Digwell and Greyfriars juniors came running up the drive, and charged across the lawn. The modern juniors all leapt to their feet in dismay as they recognised the Fortinbal Four. "Oh, here and thunder!" yelled Tommy Doyle. "They've got away!"

The 1st Chapter.
Concerned.

Jimmy Dodd jumped.

Tommy Dodd, the great chief and leader of the Modern juniors at Rookwood, was dumfounded.

Jimmy Dodd was standing on the mat ready of the junior lounge of the Classical side—that is to say, in the home and headquarters of Jimmy Silver & Co., the deadly Classical rivals of Jimmy Dodd.

He had a large camel hair brush in his hand, loaded with ink, and he was adorning the walls of the study with inscriptions that were quite modern, and not in the least classical. Upon the looking-glass stood out in bold letters the telling phrase

"THIS STUDY IS A HOME FOR IDIOTS!"

Upon the wallpaper were daubed such graceful sentences as "Classical chumps!" "Go and eat coke!" "Go and grind Greek!"

Jimmy Dodd was surveying his handiwork with great satisfaction. As the wallpaper had already suffered considerably from leaning teeth, it was plain and not the owners of the study were not likely to be totally satisfied with the lumber central decorations.

Jimmy Dodd had been centured upon a Greek inscription. As a Modern fellow, Greek was not included in his studies. But he knew one sir-tabet, and he felt that a Greek inscription was exactly the thing for a Classical study. He executed the following effort with considerable pride

PATS

which, being interpreted, meant "Rats!"

Jimmy Dodd had not finished yet by any means. Jimmy Silver & Co. were down at the cricket practice, and Tommy Dodd had found the coast clear. So long as the coast lasted he meant his energetic efforts to continue. But suddenly, as we have said, he jumped. There were footsteps in the passage, and the sound of voices.

Tommy Dodd lowered his inky brush, and glanced anxiously. It was the voice of Oliver. He has watched those Classical fellows go down to the cricket, and he considered that they were safe for an hour at least. And now he could hear their voices in the passage.

The Fistical Four were coming to their study, and there was no escape for the raider. And if they found him there with those inscriptions on the walls, then the result was certain to be extremely painful for Jimmy Dodd. He could guess in advance how the rest of the afternoon would be used.

Tommy Dodd looked round the study wildly.

There was a screen in the corner, a present from Lovell's affectionate aunt. The screen was somewhat damaged—it was curious how things got damaged in the junior studies at Rookwood. And there was a somewhat inscription on the screen in red ink "J. Silver A.B.S. L.H.W."

The last initials referring to a recent performance of Jimmy Silver's on the cricket-field.

The screen was a little dirty, due to being propped across the corner of the room. It could be induced to stand. At that thrilling moment it was a haven of refuge to Tommy Dodd.

The footsteps had almost reached the study door when the Modern junior made up his mind. He whipped behind the screen, and drew it as close to him across the corner as he could, holding it by one of its numerous rags and tatters.

Barely was he concealed from sight when the study door was thrown open, and the Fistical Four came in. Lovell had a bat under his arm, and Jimmy Silver had a letter in his hand which had evidently arrived by the afternoon's post, as it had not yet been opened.

Peters, Lovell, Newcome, and Raby were chatting pleasantly as they came in, but as they crossed the threshold the chat suddenly stopped, and there were four separate and distinct bursts of wrath.

"Look at that!"

"My bat!"

"Some Modern cur!"

"Wish we'd caught him!"

Tommy Dodd, behind the screen in the corner, shivered silently. It did not seem to occur to the Classicals that the raider who will in the study. They stared and glared at the inky inscriptions on all sides, with exclamations of wrath that tickled Tommy Dodd immensely.

"Why, the rotter's got wet!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "The rotter can't have been gone long. If I hadn't popped in to take the beastly letter from the postman we'd have caught him."

"Yes, and if there's a smartness on," said Raby as Jimmy Silver regarded the envelope with more surprise. "It's getting dark, indeed, and there's nothing in the wicket."

Silver jumped big letter. He chuckled with rather unusually seen forgetting the damage done to their chairs. "Modern rotter! Stuck was right! In the mid study and his was a grave question. There was a general exclamation of delight as a currently hole in one behind came into view.

"Ha, ha!" said Lovell. "A good—a whole good!" Hurrah!"

Jimmy Silver read the letter, and gave a shout.

"Well, my hat!"

"What's up?" asked Raby.

"Listen, my young friends," said Jimmy Silver. "Listen, and I will tell you what's up. Listen, and I will tell you what's up. Listen, and I will tell you what's up.

(Continued from the previous page.)

from your father that you are now a pupil at Rookwood School. As your school is no great distance from my home, I should be glad if you would call upon me. Come one half holiday, and bring your friends with you if you like. I shall be very glad to make your acquaintance. You must have heard your father speak of his old friend.

"Manny Eastwood.

"P.S.—Pray accept the enclosed little present, which you will find useful, unless schoolboys have changed very much since my time. Let me know when to expect you, and I will make some little preparations."

"What a giddy old sport!" said Lovell heartily. "Who is he?"

"An old chap my father knows. I've heard him mention the name," said Jimmy Silver. "He's as rich as Croesus, I believe. Looks like him, as I dare say he's all right. Make some little preparations." That means a feed."

"Hurrah!"

"Take my friends!" continued Jimmy Silver. "You fellows feeling friendly?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Jimmy, my son, we worship the ground you walk on and the feeds your pater's pal invites you to!" said Lovell solemnly.

"Didn't take you to my bosom, eh? Well, I'm sorry. Feed name to Rookwood!" said Raby.

"No, no, jolly well didn't!" said Jimmy Silver. "You tried to boot me out of the study."

"Absurd! Tell the dead past bury its dead," said Newcome. "My opinion is that this old chap ought to be encouraged."

"Hear, hear!"

"Old sports who send you lovely tuns and hunks don't grow on every blackberry-bush," said Lovell sagely. "You can overlook his calling you James. Naturally he doesn't know any better. We'll go."

"Yes, rather!"

"Tuesday afternoon's a half holiday," remarked Raby naturally. "I've always believed in drinking the sun while it's hot."

Jimmy Silver chuckled.

"There's no need to rush the pace and let him know I'm the worship that we're running," said Lovell. "Those things spoil by keeping, like Stilton."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a go!" said Jimmy Silver, drawing a chair to the table. "I'll write and tell him I'm coming with three friends to-morrow afternoon, and then he'll have time to make his giddy little preparations. This comes the cons in Form. We'll get off unobtrusively after dinner in Hansom and take it."

"Done!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. gathered round. "I'll get this screen clean while you're doing that," said Lovell. "When you're finished we'll go out and post the letter, and change that nets in the tuck-shop."

Tommy Dodd suppressed a gasp.

Before he had time to think, Lovell had taken hold of the screen, and pulled it out of the corner.

Then he gave a yell.

"My hat!"

Tommy Dodd made a desperate swing across the study for the door.

"Hold him!" shrieked Lovell, as he reared back from a vigorous shove. "Modern cad! Collar him!"

Tommy Dodd reached the door. But Newcome's arm curled round his neck, and Raby "hooked jaw" in approved Rugger style, and Tommy Dodd came to the floor with a crash, with the two Classical sprawling over him.

"Valiant!" yelled Jimmy Silver, pumping up from the table. "Shin like that! Hold him! You can't study carpet, I suppose. It was a present from Baby's mater."

"Blow your study carpet! Leggo!"

"Move on!" growled Lovell. Three pairs of hands yanked the horrified Modern person to the grate, and his head was held firmly over the fender.

"Close your mouth and shut your eyes," said Jimmy Silver.

Tommy Dodd only partially obeyed. He closed both his mouth and his eyes firmly.

"Mind, this is only done out of kindness," explained Raby. "You understand that, Dodd?"

No reply from Tommy Dodd. He did not care to open his mouth.

"You see, if you get into the habit of ragging our masters, we shall get unlucky, and one of these days we shall snap up the whole Modern side," said Silver. "We are really giving you a lesson out of kindness, Harry!"

No answer.

"Can't you open your eyes, Tommy Dodd?"

Tommy Dodd's eyes remained firmly sealed.

Jimmy Silver grabbed, and placed the basin in the grate. Tommy Dodd's head was suddenly plunged into it.

"Wooooooooop! Groooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Classicals released Tommy Dodd, and jumped back. There had been a terrific splash from the basin as Tommy Dodd's head was shoved into it. Tommy Dodd sat up as he was released. Only the top of his head had gone into the mixture. But as he sat up, it streamed down his face in inky streaks, giving him a zebra-like look that made the Classicals howl with laughter.

"Groooch!" gasped Tommy Dodd, as a stream of the Inkpotsers mixture found its way into the corner of his mouth. "Yoo! You horrid beasts! Oh, rickety!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yoo! Barkes bearly wick——"

"Any excuse thus taking a fellow's study all good?" chortled Jimmy Silver. "You can wash that off in time, and we can't wash our walls. I think we're letting you off lightly."

"You too one!"

"Oh, get out! You're no use in clean quarters."

Tommy Dodd scrambled forward to his feet.

"You rotters!" he panted. "You groooh-beasts! I'll jolly well give you some of it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared at the Fistical Four. They were four to one, but they did not wish to come to close quarters with Tommy Dodd in that state.

"Fix bayonets!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

Four cricket bats were presented at Tommy Dodd, and he stopped as the nearest one thumped on his manly chest.

"You are on!"

Lovell threw open the door.

"Tuesday!" he shouted.

"Get out, you Modern hooligan! Now mind for a fellow to be in on a decent study," exclaimed Jimmy Silver indignantly.

Tommy Dodd made another rush, anxious to impart some of the mixture to the Fistical four. But the cricket bats drove him back, roaring. The Classical chorus were not taking any.

"Begorra, what's the row here?" exclaimed Flynn of the Fourth, looking in. "Why—— How's another an' Kinsey, phwat is that?" Flynn stared at the zebra like Tommy Dodd with his eyes almost starting from his head.

"New specimen from the Modern monkey-house," said Jimmy Silver. "Aperture Modern worm, under of boundary, infinite Dodd. When scented with a Classical matter on the nappers is liable to show ferocity——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Flynn.

"Oo, you rotters!" yelled Tommy Dodd.

"Drive the nasty animal out," said Lovell. "We can't have horrid beasts like that in our study. Out you go."

"Yow-ow!"

Tommy Dodd retreated to the door before that hanging bats. He was fairly driven out, gasping with wrath and ink and anguish. Flynn was doubled up with laughter in the passage. Tommy Dodd clutched him as he fled, and rubbed his inky head over the Irish junior's face and neck, and then bolted down the passage.

"Yoo an' ouooh!" yelled Flynn. "Why, the thafe of the worrrld—the latest! Oh——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Leggo an' stop! Stop him! I'll scrag him! I'll——"

There was a yell in the passage. Townsend and Topham, the dandies of the Fourth, were coming along. They stopped in astonishment at the sight of the inky junior, but Tommy Dodd did not stop. He was burning for vengeance, and any Classical would serve his turn. He rushed between Topham and Townsend, and caught hold of them both in passing, and swung them together, and the three rolled on the floor of the passage in a heap. Tommy Dodd leaped up and ran, leaving the cuts of the Fourth sprawling on the floor, gasping for breath, and simply reeking with ink and gum.

"Oh, by Jove!" panted Topham.

"Ow, by gad!" stuttered Townsend.

Tommy Dodd disappeared round a corner. Topham and Townsend sat up shakily, and blinked around.

"What-at was it?" stuttered Topham.

"Begorra, he's gone—the lunatic—the spatpoon!"

"Yes! I'm smothered with something—ink, by gad!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Fistical Four in chorus. "It's all right, Townsy. Only some ink, and gum, and soot, and treacle! Ha, ha, ha!"

The two dandies of the Fourth shook furious fists at Jimmy Silver & Co. They started in pursuit of Tommy Dodd, and then paused—they did not feel quite equal to following that warlike youth into the Modern quarters. They changed their course and turned for the dormitory.

Jimmy Silver & Co. returned to their study chuckling. The outrage upon their quarters was avenged, and they were convinced that Tommy Dodd would stop to think twice, if not three times, before he had another visit to the old study. In great good-humour Jimmy Silver sat down to write the letter to Mr. Dangyon, and the four chums settled out to post it, and to change the currency note at the tuckshop. The Fistical Four were in high feather.

The 3rd Chapter.
A Monster Scream.

"What the dickens——"

"What the thunder——"

Tommy Dodd and Tommy Cook, of the Fourth, Modern side, uttered these startled exclamations simultaneously. The two Modern juniors were waiting for the return of their leader from the irate expedition into the Classical quarters. A blackened and disguised-looking figure came staggering along the passage from the Classical side, and they thought was their Tommy Dodd!

"Grooo!" gasped the fearsome object. "Ow!"

"My hat!"

"Boys, you look a sight!" howled Tommy Doyle. "What's the matter?"

"Yoo! I'm smothered! I'm nearly choked! Groooh!" gasped Tommy Dodd. "The beasts caught me—yoop!—and tried to—yoooop!—make me swallow ink!—and treacled me—groo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at, you silly ass?" roared Tommy Dodd, with his eyes and nostrils glaring at his chums. "Is there anything funny in it?"

"Ha, ha! Yes, of course not—ha, ha, ha! You look queer, that's all—ha, ha, ha!"

"You howling fathheads!"

"Ha, ha! It never is's hard times tickleth, Tommy darling." It's hard charge, and Tommy Doyle. "Come up to the dorm, and get a wash. You look a fright. Ha, ha, ha! Faith, you need that, too. Ha, ha, ha!"

Tommy Dodd snorted, and started for the Modern dormitory. The other two Tommies followed him, chuckling. Tommy Dodd had left them behind, when he made his raid, to show a fellow by himself was more ready able to dodge in and out of the Classical quarters unobserved. Evidently he had not succeeded in dodging out undetected. Tommy Doyle and Tommy Cook began to feel glad that their leader had left them behind.

The humour of the situation had not apparently dawned upon Tommy Dodd yet. The troubles of his chums aggravated him. He peeled off his jacket and collar, and plunged his head into a basin of water. He lathered soap on it, and rubbed and scrubbed, and scrubbed and rubbed. The water was turned almost into ink, and it had to be changed half a dozen times before Tommy Dodd made the least impression upon his smeared head.

His face grew crimson with his efforts. Doyle and Cook retarded him with grinning faces. They were sympathetic, but they could not help thinking that it was funny.

Tommy Dodd grasped a towel at last, and began to towel his head, which was aching with the energy he had expended upon it. He glared at his chums through the whisking of the towel, and they tried to look grave. But Tommy Dodd's crimson face and spluttering hair, and a patch of inky gum still adhering to his nose, proved too much for their gravity, and they roared.

"You cheeking chumps——" roared Tommy Dodd indignantly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tommy Dodd's patience was exhausted—the little he had left. He seized a bolster, and drove his infuriate chums yelling from the dormitory.

It was nearly half an hour later when he came down to the study to tea. He was still red with excitement, and looking very ruffled. Doyle and Cook had tea ready, and there was an enticing scent of rashers and toast in the study. They tried to look gravely sympathetic, as he came in, but Tommy Dodd detected the smiles lurking about the corners of their mouths.

"Ripping joke, ain't it?" he said sarcastically. "Awfully amusing to be done brown by those Classical rotters, what?"

"I—I say, we're sorry, you know," stammered Cook. "It's all on the day's work, you know. Jolly good grooming."

"Who's grooming?" demanded Tommy Dodd.

"Not—not—not! and Tommy Cook painfully. "It's all right."

"I don't call it all right!" Tommy Dodd recovered to be in a slightly unreasonable mood.

"Sure, it's ready," said Doyle, hoping to change the subject.

"Blow tea!"

"Nice gentlemanly manners, Tommy——"

"Hang the rashers."

"And poached eggs——"

"Bust the eggs——"

Cook and Doyle gave it up. Tommy Dodd sat down ungracefully to tea in spite of his disparaging remarks concerning the rashers and the eggs, however, he did full justice to both. His experiences in the Classical quarters had damaged his appetite. His chums waited patiently for the good cheer to bring the sunny look to his face. But Tommy Dodd continued sourness.

That little jape on the Classicals has cost us a pound of rashers, and it had ended in such an exceedingly uncomfortable manner. It was not easy for Tommy Dodd, the chief of the Modern side in Greyfriars, to admit that the Classicals had taken an optimistic view.

"Cheer up, old man!" said Cook at last. "We're getting the worst of it. If this kind of thing goes on we may as well shut up shop, and let the Classic cads roll their eggs up hill all Tuesday long."

"Oh, stow it, mild!"

"They're going to the Lebanon all along the line," said Tommy Dodd. "Last term we knocked them silly high. We were always top dog. Now we know that brainless Silver turns up, and they're getting at us on the nuts. He showed up the very day he came. Then there was that barring-out—they scored. Then they scored all along the line. It's time we Moderns to score!"

"Oh, rats!" and Doyle sarcastically. "We'll give 'em the kybosh. You'll think of something, Tommy," added Doyle, trying the efficacy of the soft answer that turneth away wrath.

Tommy Dodd grunted.

"I shall have to think it out all on my own, then," he said. "All you fellows seem to think it is poached eggs and gammon rashers, and nothing else a gal when he gets a little out of his nappers."

"Well, you did look funny, you know," murmured Cook, his face breaking into a grin again at the recollection.

"Oh, rats!"

The chums of the Fourth proceeded with their tea in grim silence. Tommy Dodd was evidently not coming round yet. It was an undoubted fact that since Jimmy Silver had come to Rookwood the Fistical quarters had more than held their own on the important matches between the two sides of the school. The Classicals, in fact, had quite backed up since Silver's advent into the Fourth.

So Tommy Dodd frowned darkly and thoughtfully. His chums were on with their tea, waiting for him to come round. As a rule, Tommy Dodd was never out of humour long.

Suddenly Tommy Dodd's ruffled features face smiled. The clouds disperced, and he grounded and the grin spread. Harvey Keene puffed at his pipe, and stilled through the smoke at the lad, on whose face was an expression of black bewilderment.

"What was it you said, guy'nor?" he asked.

"Mosenstein!" Keene repeated. "That is the answer I gave you."

"I don't understand," declared Oliver. "Who the devil is Mosenstein?"

"You shall have an explanation in a few words," said the detective. "Aaron Mosenstein is a notorious fence, a receiver of stolen property. He does business as a pawnbroker in Tarla Street, Whitechapel, and he lives over his shop. On several occasions the Circle of 13 have disposed of plunder to him. The police learned that, and they passed the information on to me.

"But another Mosenstein are the gang know that the police know, and possess the knowledge, which was gleaned only a day or so ago. I judged that it was likely to be of service at some time, and a way to utilise it suddenly flashed on my mind to-night, as I was wondering what to do with that valuable piece."

"I don't see the point yet," revised Oliver.

"It is quite simple. The hand of friendship extended by the message. I have a very strong idea that the Circle in the course of to-morrow removed Lord Scarning's gold plate to Aaron Mosenstein's place, instead of melting it down, as we probably been their intention, and then I shall have an opportunity of recovering the plate and of capturing several members of the band. Do you understand now?"

"Yes, guv'nor, you have made it clear. You want to use it as a trap for them at Mosenstein's place, then?"

"That is the idea, my boy. You and I will be there, and a force of police will be at the neighbourhood."

"Well, I hope we don't have our trouble for nothing."

Harvey Keene nodded, and was silent for a few moments, gazing into vacancy. He tapped the ashes from his pipe, and rose to his feet.

"It has been a very exciting evening for both of us, Oliver," he said, as he glanced at his watch, "and now we must get some sleep. You can join Mr. Bull here at his engineers, and to-morrow the wonderful story be unveiled. But before going to bed I had better——"

He broke off, and stepped to the telephone that was on his desk.

"I shall ring up Scotland Yard," he added, "and have Detective-Inspector Lestrade sent to keep Aaron Mosenstein's premises under observation. It will be as well to have that done to-at once, in the event of the gang removing the plate sooner than I expect."

It was just midnight when the lean, little figure of the Ferret turned from the High Street at Wapping into a dark and narrow alley that led to Calcutta Wharf and the river. The members of the Circle of 13 had been waiting for him, and were growing impatient and uneasy. As they heard his tread on the stairs they glanced at the door, and when he entered the round chamber twelve pairs of eyes glittered at him. He glided forward to the table, and stood by the vacant chair.

"Have you done our bidding?" asked the big, bearded man who was the chief, and was called the Vulture.

"Is Harvey Keene dead?"

"No, he won't," the Ferret answered, in a harsh, croaking voice. "He is alive and kicking, worst luck!"

"So you have failed! How is that?"

"It wasn't my fault, mr. I was nipped by Keene. He had a dummy at his window, and he was hidden in the empty house. After I had jumped on me, and sent the hap of his boy, he locked impression my wrists, and dragged me across the street to his own place."

"And you escaped from him, did you?"

"No, he let me go."

"He let you go!" cried the chief. "You have been cracked, you infernal idiot! Keene might have followed you home!"

"No jolly fear!" declared the Ferret. "He didn't have my followed, mr. I saw never. I was too cunning for that. But I'll tell you the whole story!"

And the Ferret explained how he had been captured by Keene, and afterwards released.

"Here you are, mr.!" he concluded. "This is what Keene told me to give to you."

And he handed the envelope to the chief, who tore it open, and read aloud the brief message:

"At nine o'clock to-morrow night I am coming to your rendezvous for Lord Scarning's gold plate. Kindly have it ready."

There was silence again, tense and breathless. For a few seconds a you might have heard a pin drop. Terror and dismay were now in the eyes of the villains seated round the table. It was a bolt from the blue to the Circle of 13, this daring challenge that had been flung at them by Harvey Keene.

"I wish I had gone to Princes Street," declared the Baron, with a hideous smiling mouth. "I shouldn't have failed!"

"I bet you would!" the Ferret roared suddenly. "It would have been the same with you as it was with me!"

"Well, the wretched lad has been done," drawled the Baron, twisting his fair moustache. "I was afraid we were too reckless. That the detective should have been aware of the plot, and hiding in the empty dwelling. Does clearly that, while the lad was lying bound in the waste house, he must have overheard some of us talking, and it is equally clear that he kept his bearings during his flight, and was able to tell his master where our headquarters are."

"That we may expect Keene and the police at any minute," cried sinister of the party, glancing nervously at the door. "We had better be off at once, or we shall all be——"

"Nonsense!" a voice broke in, the big, lonely in room and dominant. "There is not the slightest ground for alarm!"

It was the chief who spoke, and the mocking laugh that followed his words allayed the panic. All eyes were turned on him. He resumed the Antarctic's warning message between his lips, while fingers, and flung it on the table.

"This is bluff!" he exclaimed.

"Why do you think so?" asked the Baron.

"Because it is impossible for me to think anything else."

The chief laughed again. This man of mystery, of whom the members had little or no knowledge, was the bane of the organisation. He lit a cigar, and stalked in silence for a few moments, his mind bent on the shrewd deliverance he had formed.

"If Harvey Keene knew where to find us," he said, "would he have invited us of the fact?"

"It seems rather unlikely, come to think of it," the Baron admitted.

"Of course it is," declared the chief, with a shrug of the shoulders. "As regards the boy, you are right. While he was a prisoner here he heard us talking of the plot to shoot his master. But he could not guide him to the place from which he escaped. He had only a vague idea as to where it is."

"Then why did Keene send the taunting message?"

"For much the same reason that led his brother's bullet to believe that we had a traitor amongst us—so that the man would reminisce with us, and he would have his shadowed. I have worked it all out by theory. Harvey Keene must have learned, in the first place, that we have been in the habit of disposing of stolen property to that fellow Mosenstein."

"In the second place, he argued that if we should be deserted by his bluff, frightened into the belief that we knew where to find us, we would rush Lord Scarning's gold plate off to the fence. And it is his intention, therefore, to act a trap for us at Mosenstein's shop. That is my line of deduction. What do you think of it?"

The chief paused, and as he dropped into his chair there were murmurs of approval from his companions. His clever theories had convinced them. They were no longer afraid of a raid from the detective.

"By heaven, we shall be right," exclaimed Paul Bulfin, the cracks man.

"I am so sure I am right," asserted the chief, "and I will take the chances. There will be no flight from this place because Mr. Harvey Keene has reasoned so that he is coming to his lovely plate. By the way, which of you has the key to the unoccupied dwelling adjoining Mosenstein's house that I purchased a month ago?"

"I have, sir," spoke up the Dwarf, the little, monkey-faced man who was devoted to the leader of the gang as a hound to its master.

The chief nodded. He stared into vacancy, and then their looks to his eyes with a flame of fury that his companions shrank from them, but none he spoke by there was as cool as ice, as sharp as a lancet steel.

"When I purchased the dwelling," he said, "I judged that it might be of use to us at some time, so I looked after it carefully. The walls are flimsy, and access may easily be had to Mosenstein's place. This fellow Keene has drifted on too long. He has baled us by every move he has made, and I am determined that he shall be——"

He paused, and drew his chair closer to the table.

"Sit down," he added, "and I will tell you what I propose to do to-morrow night!"

The 2nd Chapter.
Graft Against Graft.

It was on a Tuesday night that the Ferret was trapped in the empty dwelling in Princes Street, and the back morning Harvey Keene sent to Scotland Yard to make full arrangements as were necessary.

Meanwhile his request of the previous night had been obeyed. A man had been sent off to watch the premises of the Jewry, and as the day wore on more men, to the number of a dozen, swarmed now by one in the vicinity of the house in Tarla Street, Whitechapel, and posted themselves at such points of vantage as permitted them to observe without being observed.

The very plainclothes constables, and their orders were to arrest all

THIS WEEK

THE CASE OF LORD SCARNING'S PLATE.

By W. MURRAY GRAYDON.

PART I.

HARVEY KEENE, the prince of detectives, is engaged to investigate the Case of Lord Scarning's Plate. He travels to the latter's residence, and although he denies Sacorer any clue, he is confident that his lordship has been robbed by the mysterious "CIRCLE OF 13," a band of criminals of the worst type.

Keene finds Lord Scarning's butler, a man named DISHMERE, suspicious, and believes that he is connected with the Circle of 13. He therefore decides to set a trap for the man. Realising that Dishmere is listening, unseen to his conversation with Lord Scarning, he remarks that he has great hopes of recovering the plate, as he is negotiating with a member of the Circle of 13 to betray his companions.

Keene surmises that Lockhaven will hasten to warn the Circle of 13, and sends his assistant, OLIVER, in disguise, to shadow the man. Oliver goes to, and follows Lockhaven to the East End of London. The butler discovers that he is being tracked, and leads the lad to a dark alley where he has a confederate.

When Oliver recovers he is lying in a dark room bound and gagged. There he overhears a plot to murder Keene. THE FERRET, a member of the gang, is sent to Princes Street, opposite Keene's, and to shoot him dead. Oliver manages to escape from his bonds, and gets away from the house by jumping into the river which runs alongside.

He is followed, but he succeeds in getting away and warning Keene. At ten o'clock the Ferret enters the house opposite, and fires at what he takes to be the detective's form. At the same moment, Keene, who has been hiding in an alcove in the room, steps forward, captures the Ferret, and, taking him to his own rooms, shows him a dummy figure which he had placed in a chair to deceive the latter.

Oliver is greatly surprised when Keene allows the Ferret to go free.

"How can you capture the gang now that you've let that villain escape?" he asks.

Harvey Keene only smiles and said:

"Mosenstein!"

PART II.
The 1st Chapter.
A Mine of Mystery.

The Ferret was gone, leaving behind him the dire tidings of his visit—the handcuffs that had been around his wrists, the angry from which he had fired the murderous shot, and the dummy figure lying by the French window, with a bullet in its wooden head.

Princes Street was very quiet. Nobody was aware of what had occurred.

The Ferret trembled in Keene's unrelaxed grasp, shrieking with terror, and all the while the smoke thickened and the flames neared higher and higher.

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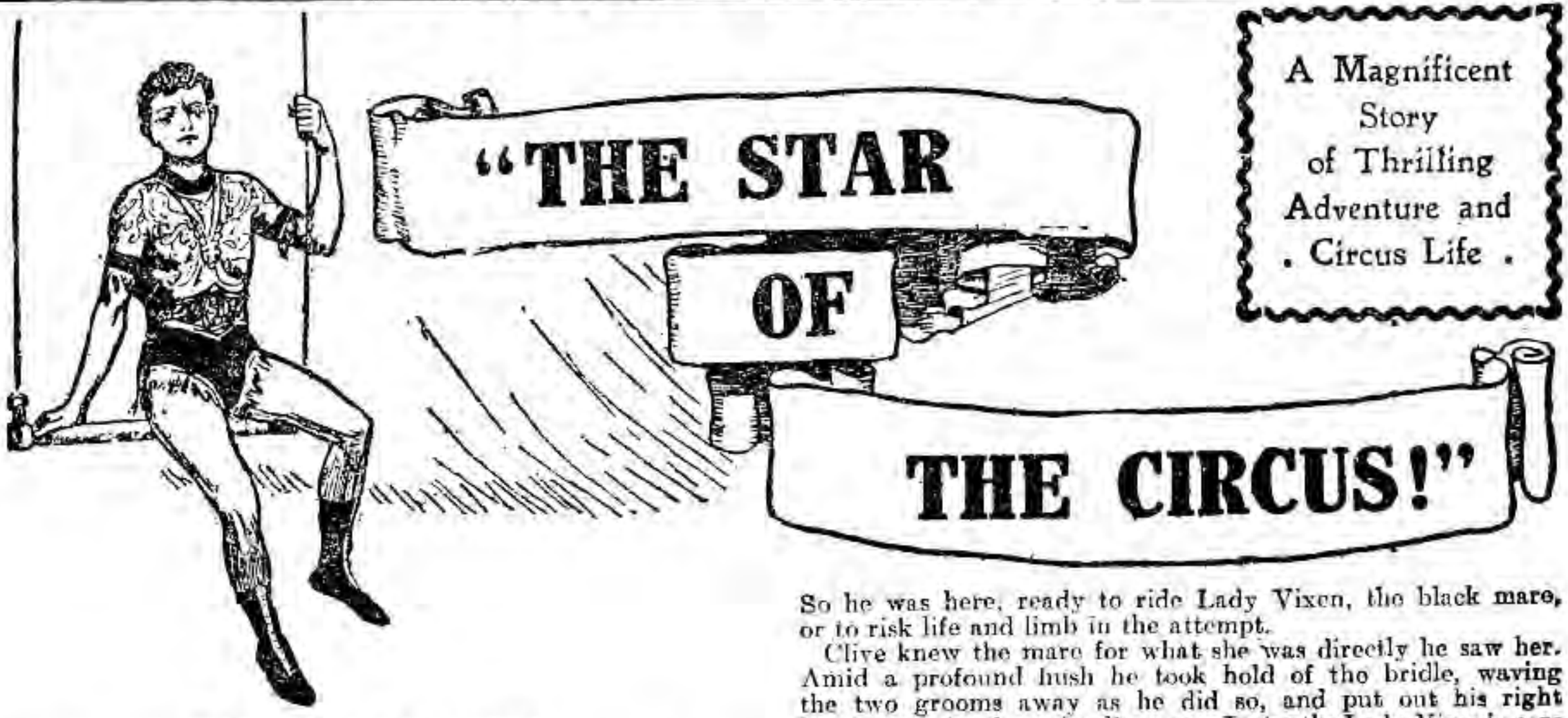
THE OPENING CHAPTERS OF OUR NEW SERIAL.



THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

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

Paul Murdway follows the circus in its wanderings, and, under the name of Adrian Deering, leagues himself with a member of Cyrano's Circus, named Senor Miguel Gurez, a Mexican dead shot, to bring about Clive's death.

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 Duruette, 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. May gives this money to the circus proprietor, Mr. Adolph Cyrano, who forgives Professor Durnette his theft for his daughter's sake, and reinstates him in his position as circus paymaster.

Sir Richard Battingley, seeing that his accomplice, Adrian Deering, does not seem to be very successful in carrying out his murderous designs, arranges that the circus artistes shall visit his house, and artfully bets Mr. Adolph Cyrano that Clive Clare is unable to ride one of his horses, Lady Vixen.

This horse has already caused the death of one daring rider, but Clive Clare accepts the challenge, and comes forward, ready to win the money on Mr. Cyrano's behalf.

(Now go on with the story.)

Clive's Challenge—The Shot on the Heath—Conquered!

Clive advanced, attired in a riding-suit lent him for the occasion by Sir Richard Battingley. Mr. Cyrano had informed Clive of the baronet's challenge, and Clive was there to carry out his part of the contract.

He was indeed a magnificent horseman, and, as Cyrano had said, he had never yet seen the horse that the youth could not master. But, apart from this, Clive was not one to seek unnecessary danger. In ordinary circumstances his instinctive antipathy to Sir Richard Battingley would have prompted him to decline to ride Lady Vixen, for in his composition there was no touch of personal vanity; with him there was no desire to gain the applause of those who should see him make his present attempt.

It was Mr. Cyrano who had asked him to undertake the task, and Clive felt that he was under obligations to the circus proprietor. The latter's generous treatment of May Ellis in respect to her father's defalcations had completely won his heart, and he felt that to decline to assist Cyrano in a matter on which his mind was set and his professional pride involved would be a mean return for that kindness.

So he was here, ready to ride Lady Vixen, the black mare, or to risk life and limb in the attempt.

Clive knew the mare for what she was directly he saw her. Amid a profound hush he took hold of the bridle, waving the two grooms away as he did so, and put out his right hand to stroke the animal's nose. Instantly Lady Vixen's ears shot back, her eyes blazed, her nostrils dilated, while her upper lip quivered over her white teeth.

Clive dodged her mouth with his hand, and managed to touch her. Lady Vixen tossed her head irritably, shaking him off. Clive repeated his action, with the same result. A third time he put out his hand, and once more, with an angrier toss than ever, the mare threw it off.

But Clive knew horses as few men do. It was a game of patience and determination in which he was engaged—a man's brain against the brain of a beast. The man persisted, and won. In five minutes Clive was stroking the mare's nose uninterruptedly. She was still irritable, angry fire still flashed in her eyes, and her lip and nostrils still quivered, but otherwise she kept quiet.

"That's right, my young lady," said Clive, gently reaching higher and touching her ear. "We're getting to know one another now, and we're going for a nice gallop presently, aren't we?"

"Wait and see!"

Everybody among the murmuring crowd suddenly held his breath. Visitors and grooms all stared in amazement at Lady Vixen, for, to their ears, it had seemed as if those ominous words, "Wait and see!" had proceeded from the mare's mouth. Nobody spoke.

"Yes, wait and see!" came the words again, as if spoken by the animal. "Wait and see, Clive Clare! Perhaps you will suffer the same fate as Squire Thestleton! Perhaps you don't know what that was, though—perhaps Sir Richard Battingley hasn't told you. But I threw young Squire Thestleton, and I crushed the life out of him—killed him!"

Instantly all eyes were turned on the baronet.

"What on earth does this mean?" he said, with a ghastly attempt at a smile.

"What's this about Squire Thestleton?" asked Adolph Cyrano, with some concern.

"Ah, then Sir Richard hasn't told you of the affair?" came the mysterious voice from the mare's mouth.

"What is this deuced tomfoolery?" cried the baronet, going red and white by turns.

"What's this about Squire Thestleton?" retorted Cyrano firmly.

"Oh," laughed the baronet uneasily, "that was rather an unfortunate occurrence, I admit. Didn't I tell you? Young Thestleton insisted on riding the mare, and—well, it was very unfortunate, as I said. But he got thrown off, and—and—well, the mare rolled over him, and—well, poor Thestleton died. I thought I mentioned it."

"No, you didn't tell me that, Sir Richard," said Mr. Cyrano, knitting his brows. "You didn't tell me she had killed a man when you made the bet."

"Oh, the bet!" rejoined the baronet uneasily. "I told you that you could call the bet off if you wished. Do you wish to call it off?"

"No!"

It was not Cyrano who spoke. It was Clive Clare, who, with hand outstretched, had thus imperiously replied.

NEXT MONDAY— "HURREE SINGH'S PERIL!" A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

"No, Mr. Cyrano will not withdraw the bet!" he went on. "I will ride this mare!"

And as he spoke he vaulted nimbly into the saddle without dreaming of placing foot in stirrup.

So far so good. But Lady Vixen no sooner felt Clive astride her than her eyes literally blazed. She tossed her head wildly, champed furiously at her bit, and then, ere anybody could do anything, she was almost perpendicular on her hind legs, while with her fore legs she pawed the air like a mad thing.

An ordinary man would have come out of the saddle at the first onset; but Clive Clare kept his seat, his knees gripping the mare's sides like steel clamps. Alert and wondrously cool, he looked a part of the animal itself.

He flicked her gently between the ears with a light crop he carried. Down on all-fours she came. Only for a second, however, for, still violently irritated by her burden, she was quickly up again, and pawing the air in a towering rage. From side to side she writhed, tossing her head, shaking her shoulders, and doing all she knew to unship her rider. She might just as well have tried to discard her flowing mane. Once more the crop flicked her between the ears, and once more down came her fore feet to the ground.

She tried to rear again; but this time she received a warning, and promptly desisted from any further attempts in that direction. There she stood, quivering in every beautiful limb, champing her bit violently, and trembling as though with a sense of defeat.

A roar of admiration for the horseman went up from the onlookers. It really seemed as if the mare understood, and that, in her discomfiture, she wished to be away from those who had witnessed her defeat. For, without warning, she suddenly sprang forward, got into her stride almost at once, and galloped at full stretch straight for the gates, out of the yard, and down the short drive.

Not for a moment did Clive lose his head. Away slightly to his right there stretched Battingley Heath, a tract of uncultivated common land, several miles in extent. Towards this he, with some difficulty, managed to steer his fiery courser; and, with the soft, springy turf beneath her hoofs, Lady Vixen seemed to gather redoubled vigour. Like a whirlwind she dashed across the heath, Clive at first striving his utmost to check her mad career.

Perceiving, however, that the ground was fairly level, and rather enjoying the wild gallop than otherwise, he soon ceased to tug at the curb, and allowed the mare to dash onward at her own free will. That Lady Vixen would quickly tire and slacken speed, Clive felt pretty certain; so he sat firmly in the saddle, his knees gripping the mare's sides, and the reins lightly but securely clutched between his fingers.

Puzzled, apparently, by her rider's tactics, Lady Vixen, after going about a half of a mile at breakneck speed, commenced to slow down, until, reaching the top of a gently-rising slope, she halted with an abruptness that would have shot a less skilful horseman clean over her head. Clive, however, sat as though glued to the saddle, while for about half a minute the mare stood snorting and panting, her sides and flanks steaming with perspiration.

Finding that Clive showed no inclination to dismount, Lady Vixen, recovering somewhat from her recent exertions, now recommenced her endeavours to unseat him. She reared on her haunches, kicked and gyrated, made sudden plunges forward, and finished up with an exhibition of buck-jumping that would have done credit to an untamed prairie mustang. All to no purpose. Clive retained his seat through it all.

At length, rendered furious by the tenacity with which her rider held on, the mare stood completely still for a moment, as if debating her next course. Then, with a vicious shake of her head, she shot forward again like a stone from a catapult.

For two or three hundred yards the ground sloped downwards, and consequently the pace was terrific. Clive bent slightly forward, took a shorter grip of the reins, and tried with all his might to pull the maddened brute up.

He seemed to be borne along on a hurricane. The wind whistled past his ears; the objects around were blurred to his vision as they flew past; and yet not for a single instant did he lose his presence of mind. Nor was he as yet actually alarmed, for the ground was comparatively smooth, and, as long as it remained so, there was no great risk of the mare falling in her headstrong flight. But, looking ahead, Clive could see that they were rapidly nearing the edge of the heath; and of what lay beyond he had no knowledge.

Down the slope tore the mare, then along a tract of level; and then, taking in her stride a dyke and low hedge which bordered the heath, she landed into a small ploughed field. Her pace naturally relaxed in this stiff "going"; but, once the field was crossed, and she found herself on soft turf again, she gathered herself together, and dashed straight towards a high stake fence, which divided the meadow from the Challington road.

On, on, on she flew, Clive pulling desperately at the almost useless bit which, by the baronet's instructions, the groom had provided. Fifty yards lay between them and the ugly-looking fence—a fence which, owing to the awkward "take-off" and the ruggedness of the bank into which it was built, no hunting man, however reckless, would have dreamed of putting his mount at.

It is an awful leap, and the unknown nature of the landing beyond makes it still more fearful to contemplate. But Lady Vixen's stride does not falter as she approaches it. Her ears are pricked, the foam flies from her mouth and nostrils, and she dashes impetuously towards the terrible obstacle.

Clive makes a last attempt to pull the mare up, finds it useless, and determines that, as the leap has got to be taken, he must do all in his power to assist the mare over. So, when within twenty yards of the fence, he sits well back in the saddle, takes a firmer grip with his knees, "saws" at the animal's mouth, and, with a sharp touch of the spur, literally drives and lifts the mare at the jump.

She rises to it like a deer, and clears the topmost rail by barely an inch.

As she does so the forms of two men some thirty yards ahead dart behind a couple of bushes, and cower down unseen by Clive Clare. The taller of the two is Paul Murdway—or Adrian Deering, as he is known to his companion. That companion is Miguel Gurez, the dead-shot.

"Now's your chance of earning that hundred, senor!" mutters Deering. "You can drop the young cub as he passes!"

"I mean to. He cannot escape me now!" returns the Spaniard hoarsely, a fiendish gleam of triumph in his eyes.

And, pulling a revolver from his pocket, Gurez crouches there, waiting.

The clattering hoofs draw nearer, and Lady Vixen comes tearing past the clump of bushes. At the same instant Gurez springs upright, points his revolver at the head of Clive Clare, and fires!

All unconscious of the new and imminent peril which threatened him, Clive was borne at lightning speed past the clump of bushes behind which crouched his two enemies.

Suddenly upon his left ear he felt a sharp twinge of pain. Instinctively his hand went up, and, drawing it away, he saw that it was stained with blood. But he had no time now to think of how the wound could have been caused; all his attention was required to keep Lady Vixen in the middle of the road as she dashed furiously on.

A long, steep incline in the road presently confronted them—to Clive's infinite relief, for he knew that breasting it would take some of the extraordinary vigour out of his steed. And sure enough it did, for, although still going at a good rate, the mare began to blow and snort, as though at last the pace was really beginning to tell. Once she almost stumbled; but Clive pulled her together again, and on she went, slower and slower, up the stiff incline.

There was no doubt about it, the mare was pumped out now. The furious gallop of a few minutes before had given place to little more than an amble. In very mercy to the animal, Clive leapt nimbly out of the saddle, seized the bridle close to the mare's mouth, and walked her up the remainder of the hill. Arrived at the top, he halted her for a minute's breathing space; then once more he placed his foot in the stirrup, and sprang lightly into the saddle. There was no resistance on Lady Vixen's part now. Her proud head was bowed; her eyes, which had previously flashed fire, were dull and listless; and, sullen but subdued, she started off at a gentle trot, obedient to every touch of the rein.

Presently, at the turning of a lane, Clive pulled the mare round, and at the same gentle pace they made their way towards Battingley Hall.

Magnificent horse and magnificent horseman had been matched, and the magnificent horseman had won!

Sir Richard Battingley Loses His Temper and Gains Some Bruises.

Meantime, Sir Richard Battingley was biting his lips with suppressed rage. He had seen how Clive Clare had so far mastered the furious Lady Vixen as to gallop her out of the stable-yard; and afterwards—having rushed with the rest of the onlookers to the end of the drive—he had, with black, angry eyes, followed horse and horseman in that mad gallop across the heath.

"Hang him!" he muttered under his breath. "With luck he may break his neck yet!"

"Yes," came a voice from behind him, "like poor young Squire Thestleton—eh? Sir Richard Battingley, you are a scoundrel!"

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The baronet swerved round, uncontrollable rage darting from his eyes.

"Who said that?" he demanded fiercely. "It was the same voice that spoke before. Who said that? Was it you?"

And he scowled at a quiet-looking man who was standing nearest him.

"No, it was not," returned the quiet-looking man calmly, who, however, was perfectly aware that it was Tremaine, the ventriloquist, who had spoken through his teeth.

"Take that, you low circus cad!"

As he spoke he raised the stout hunting-crop which he held in his right hand, and brought it, with a fearful smack, right across the cheek of the man he addressed.

Sir Richard Battingley did not know—he could never have dreamed—that that quiet-looking man whom he had thus struck was Dando, one of the Herculean Twins. Surely had he known he would never have aroused such a man to fury.

For roused to fury Dando certainly was. Stung by the pain of the blow, the strong man's eyes blazed with a fierceness that matched the baronet's own. Instantly he had darted in, and with his mighty arms had enveloped Sir Richard's frame.

The baronet was a big man, and powerful, but he might just as well have been a baby for all the chance he stood against that terrible hug. His very frame seemed to contract beneath it; his face went red, then purple, then almost black, as the pressure grew and grew. His head rolled and his jaw dropped. What might have happened Heaven only knows; but at that critical moment another man sprang forward excitedly. It was Sando, the other strong man.

"Dando," he cried, striving to loosen his brother's grip upon the baronet, "quit your hold of him—for Heaven's sake, quit your hold! Remember, Dando, what happened at Vienna!"

The words seemed to have a remarkable effect, for instantly Dando's rage appeared to fly from his eyes, his grip loosened, and he released the tottering figure of Sir Richard Battingley.

"Go!" he said. "You have my brother to thank for getting off lightly!"

From the baronet's appearance he didn't appear to have got off so lightly, after all, for he groaned aloud repeatedly, and placed his hands over his bruised ribs.

"You will repent this!" he gasped, as soon as he could spare the breath. Then he turned towards the little knot of grooms, who were looking on in amazement, and commanded:

"Remove this ruffian at once!"

But the whisper had gone round. Some of the men had seen Dando at the previous night's show. They had seen his arms, and had marvelled how one pair of arms could carry such mighty masses of muscle upon them. So, although they were ordinarily quite obedient grooms, they hesitated now, coloured up and turned pale by turns, and finally did nothing except look sheepishly at their master.

The baronet bit his lip savagely. He dared not raise a hand himself again, so he contented himself with a sneer.

"You common ruffian!" he snarled. "I believe I staked fifty pounds with you?"

Mr. Cyrano inclined his head.

"Well, then," the baronet went on, "allow me to tell you that, for your insolence, I shall withhold the money!"

"And allow me to tell you, Sir Richard Battingley," retorted the circus proprietor calmly, "that such an act would be one quite in keeping with your character!"

Once more the baronet bit his lip, and again his fingers clenched fiercely over the handle of his riding-crop; but at the same moment a twinge of his aching ribs reminded him that the "low-bred mountebanks" were a trifle dangerous to meddle with. So, instead, he muttered an oath, turned on his heel, and strode angrily away.

Adolph Cyrano gazed after him, half in pity, half in contempt.

"There goes a man," he said sententiously, "whom you might say was born above his station. I admire an English gentleman, and I thought Sir Richard Battingley was one. He's turned out to be a blackguard, unworthy of the name of Britisher, and I for one want no more to do with him."

As the circus proprietor uttered these words, there was a sound of a horse's hoofs approaching by way of the drive. A few seconds later there entered the stable-yard the foam-flecked mare Lady Vixen.

Astride her was Clive Clare, stained somewhat with dust, but still as proudly erect as if he were going through his performance in the arena.

The astonishment of the grooms on seeing the evil-tempered mare in such a subdued condition was unbounded. Murmurs of admiration for Clive went round, growing in volume, and culminating in a volley of cheers.

As he dismounted there was a rush towards him; his hands were grasped and shaken, and hearty congratulations heaped on his head.

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

An Unholy Compact.

"Well, Madame Cymeli, supposing—I only say supposing—you have read my thoughts aright, what is the extent of your power to further my plans?"

It was the so-called Adrian Deering who spoke, and it was an old, withered, witch-like woman whom he addressed—Madame Cymeli, the thought-reader and hypnotist attached to Cyrano's circus.

"I do not help a doubter," she replied, in the harsh, grating voice which was one of her characteristics. "If I am to help you, you must believe."

"And pay!" sneered Deering.

"Yes, and pay, since you will have it so!" assented the hag. "If you desire to have occult power on your side, then indeed you must pay! You wish—I know it is true, though you would scoff at the manner in which I have read your inmost thoughts—to marry May Ellis. I know, too, that she in her turn despises you. But I could make it otherwise."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that, once put under my mesmeric influence, the girl will do my bidding in all things."

"You can make her consent to marry me?"

"Ay, absolutely! Though I cannot affect her heart, yet can I influence her brain and tongue—influence her brain and tongue so that she shall spurn Clive Clare, and speak with affection to the man she despises and hates. Oh, don't curl your lip in that way! I tell you it is in my power to do these things."

"But how do I know that you can do what you say?" asked Deering, with more earnestness in his tone than he had hitherto displayed.

"How do you know? Have you not already had sufficient proof of my powers? Have I not told you—a complete stranger to me—all about your past life? Have I not told you your thoughts of May Ellis? Have I not told you of your hate for Clive Clare? Have I not told you of your compact with Sir Richard Bat——"

"Hush!" broke in Deering hoarsely. "Don't speak so loud, or someone will be hearing you."

"And it wouldn't do for anyone to hear, would it?" cackled the old woman, with harsh sarcasm. "Because it is all so true. Cymeli has said so, and what Cymeli says is true—every word!"

Deering sat in silence for some seconds. The old woman who leant forward, looking at him with her small, piercing eyes, was certainly extraordinary. She had told him of his past life—had recalled to him circumstances and facts which he had thought to be completely hidden in his own brain. It was wonderful! He had been inclined to scoff at first. He had always looked upon such powers as this old woman boasted of as mere fraud. But it certainly was wonderful, and it could not be all guesswork. Supposing Cymeli could help him to win May Ellis? The prospect was indeed alluring, and there seemed to be no hope any other way. He turned to the old woman suddenly.

"Madame Cymeli," he said, "I believe what you say. I believe you have the power, and I want you to help me. Are you willing?"

"On condition that you pay me what I ask."

"What do you ask?"

"Fifty pounds."

"It is a big sum."

"The stake you are playing for is bigger. Think! For fifty pounds you would win the girl you have set your heart on!"

"Oh, very well," said Deering, with some reluctance, "I agree."

Madame Cymeli held out her skinny palm.

"Give me the money, then."

"But supposing you should fail?"

"I shall not fail! Cymeli never fails! Come—the money!"

Deering hesitated. He was not a rich man; his wealth, indeed, was all prospective. Sir Richard Battingley's £10,000 would be his—of that he was determined—but at present that prize was in futurity. Two or three hundred pounds was all he had in the world, and he really needed every sovereign of that to carry out his plans. He could scarcely afford to pay Cymeli the amount she asked. He argued again with her, tried to beat her down, offered her a smaller sum on account and a more tempting balance to be paid later on. But Madame Cymeli was inflexible.

"Fifty pounds down!" she said, half-rising to leave the coffee-room of the hotel where Deering was staying.

"You are hard," he answered—"very hard on a poor man. However, I agree."

And, taking out his pocket-book, he counted out £50 in notes.

(Look out for next Monday's Instalment of this exciting yarn. Order your MAGNET early!)

NEXT MONDAY— "HURREE SINGH'S PERIL!" A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

MY READERS' PAGE

YOUR EDITOR.

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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FOR NEXT MONDAY:

"HURREE SINGH'S PERIL!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.

In next Monday's grand, long, complete story of Greyfriars School, the chums of the Remove have their hands full, owing to a source of danger which threatens the fortunes of their Indian chum, Hurree Singh. A daring attempt to kidnap the dusky junior is only frustrated in the nick of time, and Greyfriars positively seethes with excitement. Happily, all danger is averted, thanks to the prompt and timely assistance of Harry Wharton and his comrades, who remained faithful to their dusky chum during the adventurous period which signalised

"HURREE SINGH'S PERIL!"

A GRAND NEW COMPETITION.

I would draw the attention of all "Magnet" readers to the attractive and interesting competition, particulars of which appear on page 22 of this issue.

This grand feature is being run in conjunction with our famous companion paper, "The Gem" Library, in response to the hundreds of letters I have recently received urging me to introduce a competition of this kind into my papers.

When completed, the midget copies of "The Boys' Friend" will form an absolute replica of the full-sized edition, and as such will be well worth keeping. My chums will therefore be well advised to order two copies of the "Magnet" and "Gem" for this and next week, so that they can compete for the splendid Cash Prizes, and also retain one of the wonderful miniature numbers for themselves.

INCREASING THE "MAGNET'S" CIRCULATION.

The invitation to readers to send in what they consider the best means of increasing the circulation of the good old "Magnet" Library has met with a really wonderful response, and certain suggestions which have come to hand are so meritorious that the work of adjudication is rendered extremely difficult. However, the name and address of the lucky prize-winner will be announced on this page next week.

"MAGNET" LEAGUES STILL FORMING.

The fact that summer will soon be here, with its fine facilities for cricket, boating, and rambling, has inspired several of my more enthusiastic chums to form "Magnet" and "Gem" Clubs, with a view of bringing readers together for the purpose of following their favourite pursuits, and at the same time discussing the stories which appear week by week in the companion papers.

I have pleasure in recording the names of three of my chums who are desirous of forming Leagues in their district, and who will be pleased to hear from intending members:

R. Penney, 159, Ombersley Road, Barbourne, Worcester.
Richard Brown, Post Office, St. Oswald Street, Old Swan, Liverpool.
G. Coulbeck, 21, Clyde Street, Grimsby.

When writing to the above-named readers for particulars, readers should enclose a stamped addressed envelope for reply.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

Tom A. (Lower Walton).—Sorry I cannot help you to obtain the story you mention.

C. M.—Thanks for your very interesting letter. Pleased to hear your father enjoys the companion papers so much. I regret your suggestion with regard to a list of athletes at Greyfriars is impracticable, owing to considerations of space.

"A Loyal Reader."—I am afraid it would be rather a big order for me to supply you with a list of all the masters and boys at Greyfriars and St. Jim's, with their full Christian and surnames, and the Forms to which they belong. Sorry!

"A Friend" (Caithness).—Sorry I cannot supply you with a photograph of the Famous Five. Best wishes!

Fred Smith (Welling).—Glad to hear your spirited appreciation of the Greyfriars stories.

J. R. (Manchester).—Your best course would be to study at one of the art classes held in your town.

Harold Hudson (Woodford Green).—The title of the first "Magnet" story ever published was "The Making of Harry Wharton." There are forty boys in the Remove Form, and Bob Cherry is slightly the better of several good boxers.

"A never-miss-one-word Reader" (Reading).—I think, as far as school stories go, "The Boy Without a Name" takes a good deal of beating. Whether Mr. Richards will undertake another threepenny book I cannot at present say. The youngest fag at Greyfriars is ten years of age.

H. D. (Miles Platting).—The Everton Club has always maintained its position in the First League, and has never been relegated to a lower division. Thank you for your letter!

Harold Millington (Walsall).—Cherry and Wharton are about the same age, and the former is the fighting-man of the Remove.

C. E. H. (Bristol).—"S. P. S.," whose abusive letter was published on this page a few weeks back, gets quite a sharp rap over the knuckles in your sensibly-written communication. I think we have heard the last of this bogus schoolmaster.

"Florrie" (Bristol).—I agree with you that the character of Vernon-Smith is excellently drawn. Many thanks for the good work you are doing to popularise our papers!

C. Mackley (Melton Mowbray).—Yes, there are some ripping cricket stories coming along in the "Magnet" and "Gem." All good wishes!

May T. (Regent's Park).—Very many thanks for your letter!

Patrick Neeson.—Cora Quelch may reappear at some future date, but I can make no definite promise. You see, Mr. Richards has such a host of characters to write about.

Bertram H. Lake (London, S.E.).—You will see that Master Clare's suggestion has been put into practice.

"Emerald Isle" (co. Antrim).—I certainly think you are rather small for your age; but you will continue to grow for a number of years yet. Thanks for your praise of the companion papers!

Robert Ash.—The titles of "Magnets" Nos. 301, 302, 303, and 304, were, respectively, "Cast up by the Sea," "The Biter Bit," "The Scapegoat," and "In Borrowed Plumes."

C. R. (Wanstead).—I am much obliged to you for your excellent letter. Such loyal readers as yourself wield a great influence for good so far as the companion papers are concerned, and I hope you will never be given cause to relax your efforts.

The Editor

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