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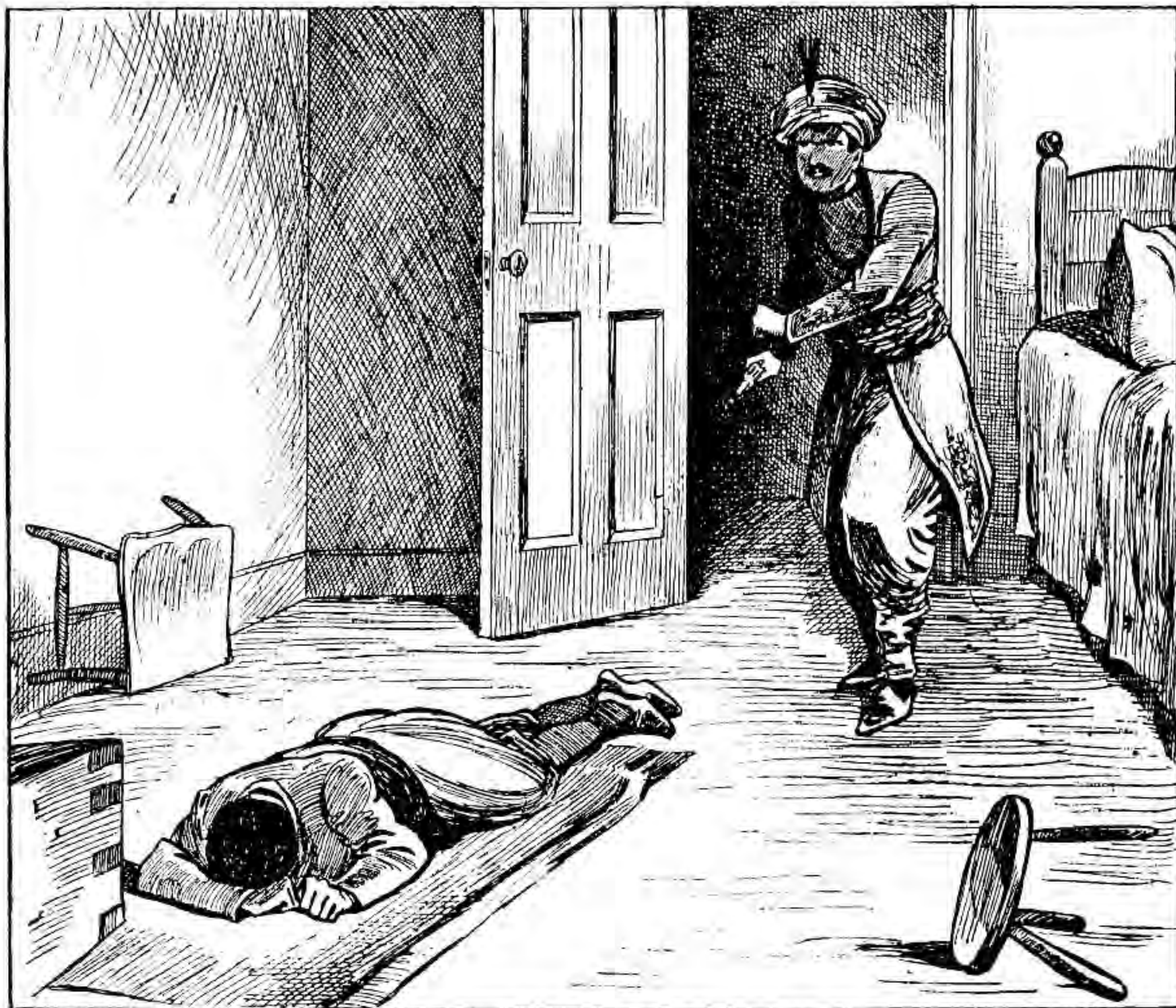
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HURREE SINGH'S PERIL!

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

By FRANK RICHARDS.



Hurree Singh started, and his eyes gleamed. "Wharton! My esteemed chum! It is you!" he gasped, and then collapsed. "Thank Heaven I've found you!" muttered Wharton. (See Chapter 13.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER. All Blacks!

"MY heye!" Trotter, the page, uttered that startled ejaculation as he looked into No. 1 Study, in the Remove passage at Greyfriars. Trotter had come there with a message. The sound of half a dozen cheery voices as he approached warned him that the Co. were at home. Trotter looked in, expecting to see Harry Wharton & Co. of the Remove.

Instead of which, six individuals in Oriental costume, armed with jewelled daggers and sabres, turned black faces towards him.

"My heye!" gasped Trotter.

He stood in the doorway, blinking at the extraordinary apparitions in the study. One of them, a sturdy black ruffian, with large feet, made a spring towards him, grasped him by the shoulder, and whirled him into the study, and flourished a sabre over his head.

"Alas! A spy! To your knees!"

Trotter did not fall upon his knees. He grinned; for he had recognised the voice of Bob Cherry of the Remove. He also observed that the sabre was made of tin. Evidently he had dropped in upon a meeting of the Remove Dramatic Society.

"Oh, Master Cherry——"

"Don't Master Cherry me!" growled the black ruffian. "I am Ping Pong, the giddy dacoit. I slay a Feringhee every morning before brekker——"

"Before breakfast, you ass!" said the voice of Harry Wharton, proceeding from a bejewelled Indian rajah, who did not bear the remotest resemblance to the captain of the Remove. "Dacoits don't say brekker."

"My mistake! To your knees, dog of a Feringhee, else shall my trusty blade drink thy gore!"

"My 'at!" said Trotter.

"The esteemed Bob makes a rippingful dacoit," said the voice of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, who was no more recognisable than the others. The usually slim and handsome Indian junior was transformed into a black and ruffianly dacoit, with a black beard a foot long. "He remindfully recalls to me my native land."

"It will go toppingly," said Harry Wharton; "we've done a lot of things, always in topping style——"

"Hear, hear!"

"But I really think that 'The Rajah of Bang' will take the cake. How do I look as a rajah, Inky? You know more about rajahs than I do."

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh grinned through the make-up on his face.

"The rajahfulness of the esteemed Wharton is terrific! If I should meet him thusly in my native city of Bhanipur, I should takefully consider him a native, and to the manner and custom born, as your poet Shakespeare expresses it."

"Master 'Urree Singh," said Trotter; "sorry to interrupt, but I come 'ere to speak to you, as you wasn't in your study."

"Fire away speakfully, my esteemed Trotter!" said Hurree Singh, in the excellent English he had learned before he came to Greyfriars.

"There's a genelman called to see you."

"Oh, my hat! In this esteemed costume I am not in a fitful state to see any gentleman. Requestfully ask him to depart and eat coke!"

"It's an Injy gentleman, Master 'Urree Singh."

"A which?" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"A Injy gentleman, sir."

"Probably an Indian gentleman," grinned Frank Nugent. "Have him up, Inky. He will be pleased to see a party of his fellow-countrymen here."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I cannot go downfully in this rigfulness," remarked Hurree Singh. "Show the esteemed and ludicrous Injy gentleman up here, my beloved Trotter."

"Yessir!"

Trotter departed grinning. He could not help wondering what would be the effect upon the visitor when he was shown into No. 1 Study. Certainly it could not fail to be surprising.

The Famous Five were planning a new comedy, written by themselves. They generally wrote their plays themselves. As Bob Cherry remarked, if you wanted a job well done, you had to do it yourself.

The new play, entitled, "The Rajah of Bang," was to come off shortly, and the youthful players had lately received their costumes, and were trying their effect in the study.

Harry Wharton was the Rajah of Bang, and a very handsome rajah he made, his Oriental disguise adding about ten years to his age.

Bob Cherry and Squiff and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh were dacoits—ferocious robbers of the jungle—and they looked their parts in their stage rig.

Johnny Bull and Frank Nugent were sowars—native soldiers. They also looked their parts very well. The six juniors were the leading spirits in the Remove Dramatic Society, and they had the leading parts. But a crowd of the Remove were to appear as dacoits, soldiers, policemen, and other small fry.

"The Rajah of Bang," when it came off, was to knock

sky-high anything that had ever been attempted by the Fifth Form Stage Club, or by Temple, Dabney & Co., the amateur actors of the Fourth.

The Co. had all their war-paint on, and were about to proceed to rehearsal, so it was evidently impossible for Hurree Jamset Ram Singh to "unload" for the purpose of seeing his visitor. His visitor would have to take him as he found him.

"Deuced awkward, your blessed visitor calling now!" remarked Harry Wharton. "Didn't you know he was coming, Inky?"

The Nabob of Bhanipur shook his head.

"I was not informfully aware of the impending and ludicrous visit," he replied; "but the surprisefulness is not great."

"You know who the chap is, then?"

"Not at allfully. But I received a letter last week from the sublime and ludicrous India Office in London, which has put me on the watch guardfully. My esteemed visitor is going to meet with a great surprise."

The dusky Nabob of Bhanipur grinned through the grease-paint on his face. Evidently he found something amusing in the visit of the "Injy" gentleman.

"What's the little joke?" asked Wharton, in surprise.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh chuckled gleefully.

"My esteemed chums will see the jokefulness when I receive my esteemed visitor," he replied. "The funnifunness will be terrific."

"But what the deuce——"

"Shush! He is arrivefully coming!"

There were steps in the passage, and the voice of Trotter could be heard.

"This way, sir!"

The visitor appeared in the doorway of the study.

He was a young Hindoo, looking about as old as the Rajah of Bang in his present rig. He was dressed in Oriental garb, over which he wore a light overcoat. His head was covered by a turban.

He stopped in the doorway, his black eyes glittering with surprise at the six disguised juniors.

"Mister Ram Das," said Trotter, announcing the visitor.

And Trotter retired, chuckling.

Mr. Ram Das stared at the juniors, and they stared at him. Evidently Mr. Ram Das did not quite know what to make of the extraordinary sight that greeted him in No. 1 Study.

"Salaam, sahibs!" he said at last.

"Slam!" said Bob Cherry affably. "In fact, Grand Slam!"

"I seek his Highness the Nabob of Bhanipur?"

"Here he is!"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh made a step forward. Mr. Ram Das looked at him searchingly. In his guise of a jungle robber Hurree Singh looked very little like the slim and handsome Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Speak, my esteemed Ram Ras," said Hurree Singh. "I am the Nabob of Bhanipur."

"I do not recognise your Highness."

"My Highness is disguisefully prepared for an honourable and ludicrous play," explained the nabob politely.

Mr. Ram Das stared hard, and began to speak in the native language of Bhanipur—a language which was a deep mystery to the chums of the Remove. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh replied in the same tongue. But the conversation was short.

After half a dozen sentences had been exchanged Hurree Jamset San Singh, for reasons best known to himself, proceeded suddenly from words to action.

He caught up a cushion from the armchair, made a sudden rush at Mr. Ram Das, and smote him with terrific vim.

The astonished visitor staggered, and sprawled on the floor.

Hurree Singh caught him by the collar of his coat, and yanked him over, and proceeded to belabour him with the cushion.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked on, dumbfounded.

They could only conclude that Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had suddenly taken leave of his senses.

The yells of the unfortunate Ram Das rang through the study.

"Whack! Whack! Whack! Whack!"

"He's potty!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Collar him!"

With one accord the juniors rushed on Hurree Singh, and seized him, and dragged him away from his hapless visitor.

Ram Das staggered to his feet.

His turban was disarranged, his coat was rumpled, and he was gasping and spluttering for breath.

"Let me go, my esteemed chums," panted Hurree Singh. "I shall give him an astounding hiding! Let me go! Stop it chuckfully!"

"Hold him!"

The five juniors held on to Hurree Singh, and Mr. Ram Das made a jump out of the study, and fled. His rapid footsteps died away down the Remove passage. Squiff, looking from the study window, saw him streaking across the Close for the school gates.

The juniors released Hurree Singh.

The dusky nabob threw himself into the armchair, and burst into a roar of laughter. Tears of merriment streamed through the grease-paint on his olive cheeks.

"Ha, ha, ha! Did I not tell you, my esteemed chums, that the funnifulness would be terrific!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Hurree Singh's Peril!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. stared blankly at their Indian chum.

The extraordinary scene had astounded them.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was usually the quietest and most pacific fellow in the Remove Form at Greyfriars. His politeness was proverbial. His action in making that sudden attack upon his visitor from his native country was amazing.

"Are you dotty?" demanded Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the little game?" yelled Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Have you gone off your blessed black rocker?" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "What did you go for that chap for?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a case of hysterics," said Bob Cherry. "A good thing for hysterics is bumping, administered on the spot. Bump him!"

"Good egg!"

"My esteemed chums——"

Bump! Bump!

The nabob ceased to laugh as he was grasped by five pairs of hands, and came in violent contact with the study carpet. He yelled, but not with laughter.

"Yow—ow—ow! Yooop! Chuck it stopfully, you esteemed asses! Yow!"

"Are you going to explain yourself, you howling ass?" demanded Wharton.

"Yow! Yoooh! Yes!"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh staggered to his feet, gasping. He dodged round the study table to keep his exasperated chums at a safe distance.

"Now, what is it all about, fathead?"

"I will explainfully explicate, my worthy pals. The esteemed Ram Das is a trickful spoofer, and he came here to collar me trapfully. But I have been warned by the esteemed India Office to be on the look-out guardfully, so I was ready for him."

"Oh!" said the juniors, all together.

"What was he saying to you in that crackjaw language?" asked Frank Nugent.

The nabob grinned.

"He has a motorful car waiting at the gates, my dear chums. He wished me to enter the car, and to depart hastefully, to visit my esteemed uncle, who lies sickful at an hotel in Courtfield on his way to see me visitfully."

"And it was gammon?" asked Wharton, puzzled.

"The gammonfulness is terrific. If I had stepped into his esteemed car, my chums would never have seen me in this esteemed school again."

"What would have happened to you?" asked Squiff.

The nabob did not reply in words, but he drew his finger across his neck. The juniors stared at him blankly.

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PENNY.

"You—you mean to say your life would be in danger?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Yes."

"But—but why?"

"I will explicate. I have in Bhanipur an esteemed uncle, the Prince Lal Nalouth. He is a ludicrous rotter. Educated in Germany, he has sympathetic weaknesses for the esteemed and beastly Kaiser. The German agents in India—there are many of them, my esteemed chums—have been busy in the State of Bhanipur. If I should deathfully perish it is my uncle Lal Nalouth who would be upon the throne of Bhanipur, and he would call fifty thousand spears to rise against the British Raj. The people of Bhanipur would follow him, if their true prince—your esteemed pal—should perishfully disappear. The esteemed Prussians hope to begin a revolt in India, to prevent more reinforcements of Indian troops from being sent to France. My esteemed and fatheaded uncle would be their tool in the hand."

"My hat!"

"But, firstfully, it is necessary that your beloved pal should be perishfully disposed of," explained Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But you observefully remark that the esteemed India Office is what you call fly, and up to snuff, and they have the watchful eye on the little game. My esteemed uncle has had to hide himself, and he dare not showfully appear, unless it is as Nabob of Bhanipur, when the people would rally round him. And the India Office have sent to me a warnful letter to be on my guard, so I was aware what to expectfully look for. Also, Dr. Locke has been told, and, besides, there is an esteemed detective that watchfully looks round the school."

"Great Scott!"

"Until Prince Lal Nalouth is caughtfully shoved into esteemed chokey, it is necessary to be watchfully alert."

"You blessed ass!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "You ought to have told us all about it!"

Hurree Singh shook his head.

"It was not needful to worry my esteemed chums. Moreover, it is undesired that there should be great talkfulness on the subject. I speak to you now explainfully but confidentially."

"You—you giddy fathead!" said Bob Cherry. "You can cackle away like an old hen when your silly life is in danger. That inky blackguard ought not to have been allowed to get away."

"I have thrashfully pulverised him!"

"It would have been better to hand him over to the police, you duffer," said Harry Wharton. "If we'd known——"

"It is now too late, my worthy pal. Let us get on with the rehearsefulness."

"But look here, Inky, you will have to be jolly careful——"

"The carefulness will be terrific, but I am not afraid. A prince of Bhanipur knows not fear. Let us rehearsefully proceed."

The chums of the Remove looked at one another. They were far from taking the matter so lightly as Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

But the Nabob of Bhanipur came from a land where life was held cheap, and his danger had made no impression upon his cheerful mind.

"Let no word be said outsidefully," he said. "It is not a subject for talkfulness. Let us get on."

The chums of the Remove proceeded "rehearsefully," as Hurree Singh expressed it. But their minds were not so much in the "Rajah of Bang" now. They could not help thinking of Hurree Singh's peril.

But for the warning he had received, the Indian junior would certainly have fallen into the trap, and departed in the car with Ram Das, and, according to his statement, his chums would never have seen him alive again.

It was not a matter that Harry Wharton & Co. could lightly dismiss from their minds.

The rehearsal had not proceeded many minutes, however, when there was a tap at the door, and Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, looked in. Mr. Quelch's face

was a study as he stared at the Rajah of Bang and his comrades.

"What—what is this?" exclaimed the Form-master.

"Only a rehearsal, sir," said Harry Wharton.

"Oh! Is Hurree Singh here? I do not recognise him."

"The herefulness is terrific, honoured sahib."

Mr. Quelch smiled. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was easily recognisable by his English.

"I understand that you have had a visitor, Hurree Singh—a native of India?" he said.

"Yes, sir. He has departfully gone."

"You should have acquainted me with the matter, Hurree Singh, under the circumstances. I have now given instructions that visitors are not to see you alone. Kindly tell me who the man was, and what he wanted."

Hurree Singh explained.

The master of the Remove frowned as he listened.

"I am sorry for this," he said. "The man should have been detained. You have acted very rashly, Hurree Singh. On another occasion, you will inform me at once, and I shall take the necessary measures."

"The honoured sahib shall be obeyed."

"Fortunately, there is no harm done. But from this day, Hurree Singh, you must not go outside the school gates, except in the company of a master."

"My esteemed chummy pals will look after me——"

"That is not sufficient. You will remember my injunction, Hurree Singh."

Mr. Quelch quitted the study, and the Nabob of Bhanipur looked at his "chummy pals" in dismay.

"This is rottenful!" he remarked. "I am now gated, and the gatefulness is terrific. There is no dangerfulness while I am in the company of my chummy pals."

"Quelch's right," said Wharton. "You can't be too careful. We don't want you to perishfully disappear——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is rotten! But let us proceed rehearsefully."

And the rehearsal of the "Rajah of Bang" proceeded to its conclusion, but Harry Wharton & Co. were no longer thinking only of the great comedy, which was to give Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Fourth, the "kybosh." Hurree Singh's peril was more in their minds—though the nabob himself seemed to give it hardly a thought.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Fourth Form on the War-Path!

"**R**OTTEN!" said Cecil Temple, the captain of the Fourth Form.

Cecil Temple stood before the fire in his study in the Fourth Form passage, with his hands in his pockets, and a frown upon his face.

Dabney and Fry, his study-mates, nodded in assent.

They agreed that it was rotten.

"The more we do to shove those Remove kids in their proper place, the more they bob up!" went on Temple.

"They do!" said Dabney.

"They does!" remarked Fry.

"Who was it first started a dramatic society at all?" went on Temple warmly. "Was it the Upper Fourth, or was it the Remove?"

"It was us!" said Fry.

"Oh, rather!" chimed in Dabney.

"Those cheeky young sweeps simply borrowed the idea—stole it would be a better word," said Temple.

"They did!"

"And they've got the cheek to—to—well, to cut us out," said Temple. "It's a very unfortunate thing that the public taste is so rotten bad at Greyfriars. It's a slur on the school. We give ripping representations of Shakespearean drama—the very best thing going, done in the best possible style. For instance, what's the matter with my Hamlet?"

"A regular scream," said Fry.

"What's the matter with Dab's Horatio?"

"Topping!" said Dabney.

"What's the matter with your Laertes, Fry?"

"Nothing at all," said Fry promptly.

"Yet when we give our Shakespearean dramas, what

happens?" demanded Temple, with growing warmth. "Do we get an audience?"

"Ahem!"

"Unless a gang of cheeky fags come in with pea-shooters and things, we play to empty benches. I call it rotten!"

"Rotten isn't the word," said Fry. "It's disgusting! Taste is at a very low ebb in this school. We give 'em the very best stuff, and we don't charge for admission. And they won't come. Even our own Form-master won't stand by us. We ask old Capper in the politest way, and he's always too busy."

"While those Remove fags," said Temple, "what do they give? Howling rot, you know, blithering stuff that they write themselves. And the fags roll up in their giddy millions, simply because they make 'em laugh. We don't make 'em laugh," said Temple bitterly.

"I've seen 'em laughing, when you've done Hamlet," remarked Fry, rather unfortunately.

Temple glared at him.

"If you're going to be funny, Fry——"

"Ahem! What I mean is——" stammered Fry.

"Never mind what you mean, if you can't talk sense! The question is, are we going to stand it?"

"I don't quite see how we can help it," said Dabney thoughtfully. "These Remove fags have set up as our rivals in the amateur theatrical line. And there's no denying that they get the audiences, and we don't. It's disgusting, but there you are."

"Because they give awful rot, instead of really ripping, serious drama," snapped Temple.

"Yes; but there you are, all the same."

"Of course, we could beat them at their own game," suggested Fry. "I'm sure you would write some awful rot, Temple, if you tried to write a play."

Temple looked at him suspiciously. He always had a suspicion that Fry was pulling his leg.

"We're not going to descend to beating them at their own game," said Temple, after a pause. "If the public don't like really good stuff, well acted, they can go and eat cake. We're not going to give 'em funny piffle like the Remove fags. But my idea is, that we're called upon to interfere. These fags are really helping to corrupt the public taste."

"Ahem!"

"They're getting up some new rot now, that they call the 'Rajah of Bang,'" resumed Temple. "They've been spending a lot of money on it, too, in costumes and things. Of course, it's the usual rot. Well, they're going to charge threepence admission to see it, and give the money to some fund. That alone ought to be enough to keep the audience away. The duffers can see us for nothing; and they prefer to pay three D to see the Remove sweeps. Shows the state of taste in this school. That cheeky cad Wharton actually says it's because they can act, and we can't!"

"Cheeky rotter!"

"Well, my idea is that we oughtn't to allow it," said Cecil Temple firmly. "As we're the only fellows, apparently, in the school who've got any artistic taste, we ought to do something to stop this rot. It's humiliating and revolting to see fellows crowding to cackle at that piffle, when they won't come to our Shakespearean performances for love or money. That idiot Todd told me would come if we provided refreshments."

"Cheek!"

"He said he needed a pick-me-up to help him to stand it."

"Rotter!"

"Well, it's up to us," said Temple. "Of course, I've got no personal feeling in the matter."

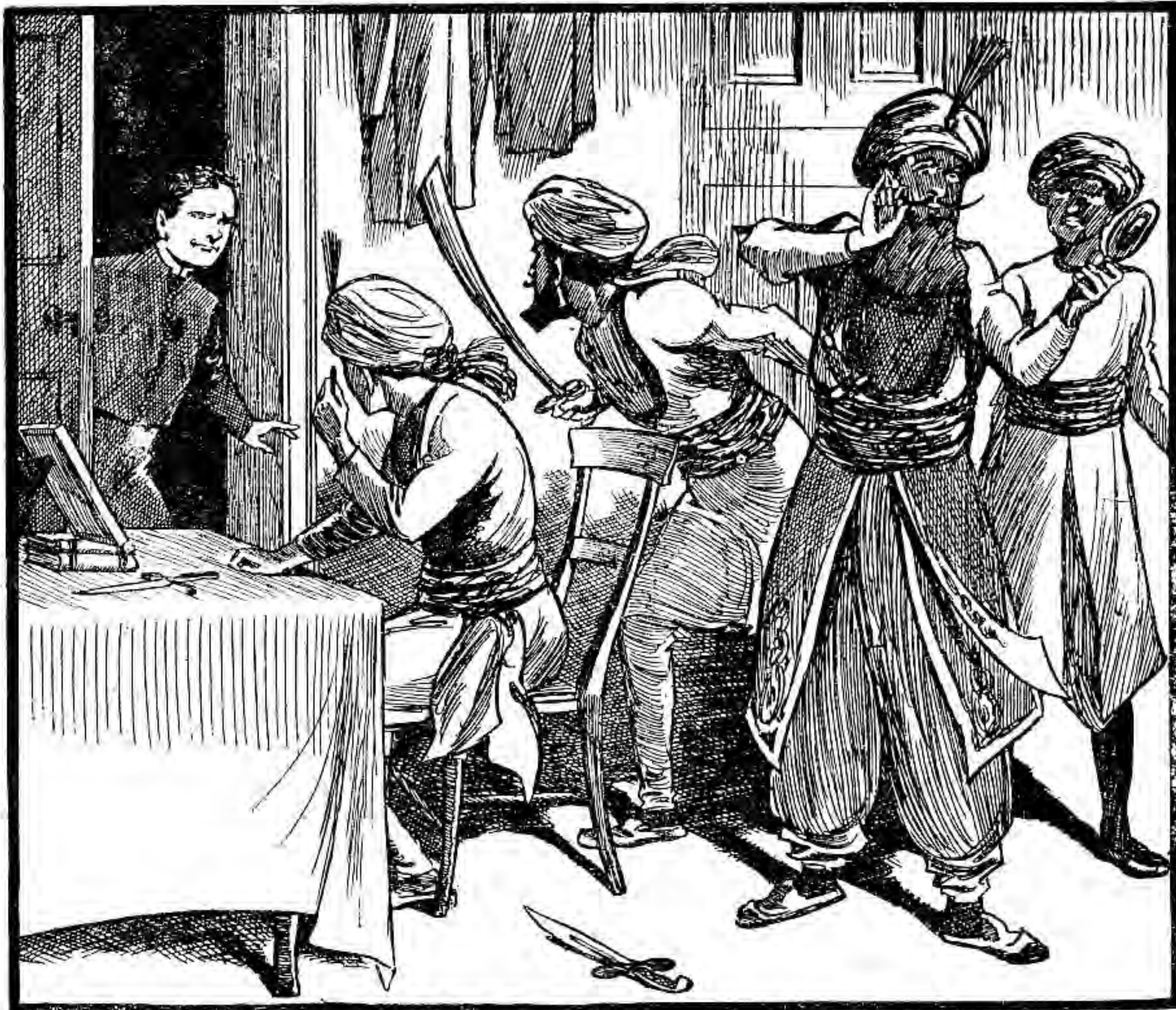
"Oh, of course not," said Fry, winking at the inkpot.

"That's understood."

"But for the—the sake of art——"

"Hear, hear!"

"We ought to do something. And my idea is, that that rot ought to be stopped—mucked up, and completely knocked on the head. Next Thursday they're giving the 'Rajah of Bang' in the Form-room, and, I tell you, the place will be crammed. Well, they can cram it. Let



Trotter looked in, expecting to see Harry Wharton & Co. of the Remove. Instead of which, six individuals in Oriental costumes, armed with jewelled daggers and sabres, turned black faces towards him. "My heye!" gasped Trotter. (See Chapter I.)

'em cram it, like blessed sardines in a tin! But the play's not coming off."

"Oh!" said Dabney and Fry together.

"That's the little game," said Temple. "Of course, it's not a question of jealousy or anything of that sort. It's a question of principle."

Dabney and Fry agreed that it was a question of principle.

"The giddy audience can cram themselves in, and they can cram themselves out again," said Temple.

"But what's the idea?" asked Fry. "How are you going to work it?"

"Lend me your ears, as we say in the play. We're going to have a motor-car here, waiting outside the gates on Thursday evening——"

"My hat!"

"A taxi-cab from Courtfield, you know," said Temple. "Then we're going to collar Wharton as soon as he's made up as a giddy rajah——"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Yank him down to the taxi, and whisk him off," said Temple. "They can play their play without a rajah if they like."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll give Wharton a jolly good run, and strand him somewhere——"

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"HEROES OF HIGHCLIFFE!"

"Wha-a-at!"

"And leave him to walk home as a rajah——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Dabney and Fry yelled at the idea. "Ripping!"

"I dare say he'll get home with a crowd at his heels," grinned Temple. "That's his look-out. It will be a lesson to him, and to all of them."

"Bravo!"

"The whole giddy bizney will be mucked up," chuckled Fry. "It will be one in the eye for them, and no mistake!"

"Of course, we're hardly thinking of such a thing as one in the eye for those kids," said Temple loftily. "We're going to do this as a protest against the rotten stuff put on the stage by their kiddish dramatic society. It's a matter of principle with us, not a matter of japing the Remove."

"Oh—er—yes—certainly!"

"We can work it easily enough," said Temple, his eyes gleaming. "Considering that it was a matter of principle, and that there was no personal feeling in the matter, Cecil Temple was certainly very keen about it. "Of course, we shall have to keep it awfully dark. If they had the slightest suspish, it would be no go. We'll tell Scott, and us four will manage the whole bizney. No

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

need to tell the others till afterwards. And when they——"

Temple broke off suddenly.

His ear had caught a slight sound at the door. Temple made a jump to the door, and dragged it open. There was a startled howl, as a fat junior rolled headlong into the study.

"Oh! Ah! Ow!"

"Bunter, you spying cad!" yelled Temple furiously.

"Oh, my hrt! Bunter!" ejaculated Fry. "The game's up!"

Billy Bunter, the Owl of the Remove, sat up on the floor, and blinked at the Fourth-Formers through his big glasses. They gathered round him with threatening looks. It was only too clear that the Peeping Tom of Greyfriars had been listening.

"You fat cad!" hissed Temple. "What were you doing at the keyhole?"

"Yow! I—I wasn't!" stuttered Bunter. "I—I was just coming to see you, Temple. I—I was just going to knock."

"Squash him, the blessed fat beetle!" said Fry.

"Oh, really, Fry! I—I——"

"What do you want here?" roared Temple.

"I—I was just coming to speak to you," stammered Bunter. "I've been disappointed about a postal-order——"

"What?"

"And that rotter Johnny Bull won't lend me a small loan. He's come back to Greyfriars simply loaded up with tips from his uncle," said Bunter, "and he's spending the money on rotten costumes for a rotten play, and when I asked him to cash my postal order, the beast threw a cushion at me. I know you've had a remittance, Temple; I saw you open the letter—— Ow! Yow! Leave off kicking me, you beast, or I'll go and tell Wharton you're going to collar him—— Yow-ow!"

"Bump the fat rotter!" said Fry furiously. "He's heard the whole thing at the keyhole."

"I haven't!" roared Bunter. "Not a word! I don't even know Temple was talking about Wharton at all—— ow!—and I didn't hear him say he could whisk him off in a taxi-cab—— Yaroooooh!"

Bump! Bump!

"Oh, crumbs! I say, you fellows—— Yow-ow-ow!"

Billy Bunter wriggled out of the grip of the Fourth-Formers, and gasped for breath. Temple and Dabney and Fry were furious and dismayed. Now that the chatterbox of Greyfriars was in possession of the secret Temple's ripping scheme for "mucking up" the "Rajah of Bang" was completely knocked on the head.

"I say, you fellows, keep off," mumbled Bunter. "I won't say a word, you know. I'd be jolly glad if you mucked up the rotten show. I offered that beast Wharton to play the title-role, and he pitched me out of the study, the beast. I'd be glad to see him spoofed, I would, really."

"If you say a word about this," said Temple, in a concentrated voice, "we'll smash you as flat as a pancake, you—you porpoise!"

"Oh, really, Temple——"

"Make the beast promise," said Dabney.

Temple shrugged his shoulders angrily.

"Fat lot of good that would be; he'll jaw all the same! But if he says a word, we'll scrag him. You remember that, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter set his glasses straight on his fat little nose, and blinked at Temple. Bunter began to understand that he held the whiphand. He was in possession of the secret.

"If you fellows can't take my word, I decline to discuss the matter with you," he said loftily. "Treat me as a pal, and I'll keep mum. I'm not going to have any of your rot, though."

"You'd better keep mum, you fat toad!" growled Fry.

"I'm not going to have any threats, Fry! If you threaten me, I shall feel bound to go to Wharton at once."

"Why, you slimy toad——" said Fry.

"I'm willing to back you fellows up, to dish those cads in No. 1 Study," said Bunter. "They left me out of the

play, though they know I'm the best actor in the Remove—in fact, the only actor at Greyfriars. But you've got to be civil. I came here, Temple, to ask you to cash a postal-order for me."

"Nothing doing," said Temple.

"Oh, very well! Perhaps Wharton will cash it."

"Where's the postal-order?" said the captain of the Fourth hastily.

"It's coming this evening."

"Then I'll cash it this evening."

"I happen to be short of money," explained Bunter. "You cash the postal-order now, and I'll hand it to you immediately it comes. It's only two bob. Still, I dare say Wharton will do it, if I ask him."

There was a grim silence in Temple's study for some moments. Then the captain of the Fourth drew a two-shilling piece from his pocket and passed it to William George Bunter.

"Thanks!" said the Owl, slipping the coin into his pocket. "By the way, you fellows haven't had tea yet, have you?"

"No!" snapped Temple.

"Good! I'll have tea with you," said Bunter affably.

"Bless you, I don't bear malice for your little jokes. I'll come with pleasure."

Temple's mouth opened—and it closed again. He nodded.

"I'll rest a bit in the armchair while you fellows get tea," said Bunter. "I'm fed up with Todd in my study. He never lets me have enough. I'll come to tea with you chaps every evening if you like."

Cecil Temple made a peculiar sound, as if he were choking.

"Of course, I shall expect something decent," said Bunter, stretching his fat limbs in the armchair. "I don't really care much what it is, so long as it's good and there's plenty of it."

Temple and Dabney and Fry looked at one another. They felt an almost irresistible inclination to seize the Owl of the Remove and hurl him forth bodily into the passage. But the great jape Temple had schemed so elaborately for the discomfiture of the Remove Dramatic Society was at stake! And Billy Bunter stayed to tea!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

An Exacting Guest!

THE next day, after lessons, the Famous Five stopped in the Form-room passage after the Remove were dismissed, to speak to Mr. Quelch when he left the Form-room.

Squiff stopped with them. Since the return of Johnny Bull to Greyfriars, Squiff was no longer a member of that celebrated and select circle—the Famous Five. But he was an honorary member of the Co. The six juniors waited for Mr. Quelch to come out, and stopped him very respectfully as he emerged from the Form-room.

"Please, sir——"

"Respected sahib——"

"Well, what is it?" asked the Remove-master.

"We are going over to Cliff House, sir," explained Wharton. "We are to see Miss Hazeldene about taking a part in our play. We're going to have tea. May Hurree Singh come?"

Mr. Quelch shook his head.

"We'll all look after him, sir," said Bob Cherry.

"Hurree Singh is not at present safe outside the school gates," said Mr. Quelch. "I am sorry, but he must not go under any circumstances."

Mr. Quelch rustled away.

"No go!" said Nugent.

"The no-gofulness is terrific!" said the nabob dismally. "That is all the fault of my ludicrous and wicked uncle. I am to be gated until he is laid by the esteemed heels. It is rotten."

"Hard cheese!" said Harry Wharton. "You'll have to mug up your part while we're gone, Inky."

"The mugfulness will be great. But the rottenfulness is terrific."

"I say, you fellows——"

"Oh, buzz off, Bunter!" said Wharton crossly. "It's beastly that you can't come out, Inky."

"Look here, I've got something to say to you chaps—something jolly important," said Billy Bunter. "You'd better listen to me. It's about the play."

"Well, what about it, fatty?" snapped Wharton.

"I suppose you want the play to be a success?"

"Yes, ass."

"I wish you wouldn't call me names, Wharton. I don't like it. I suppose you wouldn't like the play to be mucked up at the last moment, would you?"

"No, ass."

"Well, it jolly well will be, unless you do the right thing," said Bunter darkly. "I'm not going to tell you anything. I know what I know. Look here, I made you an offer the other day, Wharton. I'm willing to play the title-role in the play."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If it were a sausage-roll you should play it, Bunter," said Bob Cherry. "But you're no good for a title-role."

"I want you to consider it," said Bunter firmly. "You know as well as I do that there isn't another actor like me at Greyfriars."

"True, O King!"

"And I'd really like to play the part. Otherwise, the play is very likely to be mucked up. I'm not going to tell you anything, but I can save the play from being mucked up if I like."

"Bow-wow!"

"I know what I know," said Bunter, very mysteriously. "A fellow may be plotting plots, or he may not. I'm not going to say anything."

"What is the fat idiot driving at?" said Bob Cherry, in astonishment. "Is Coker up to some little game?"

"I didn't mention Coker."

"Or those Fourth-Form bounders. Have you been haunting somebody's keyhole, as usual?" asked Nugent.

"Oh, really, Franky, I know what I know! I'm certainly not going to say anything. That is, not unless you do the right thing. If you like to give me the part of the Rajah of Bang it would be a different matter. You see, that part would suit me down to the ground. A rajah ought to look princely."

"Oh, my hat!"

"It requires a chap with a good figure——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And an imposing presence!" roared Bunter.

Harry Wharton & Co. shrieked. The fat and unwieldy Owl of the Remove had never struck them as looking princely.

"You can cackle!" hooted Bunter. "I'm used to this kind of jealousy. A fellow can't be good-looking without other fellows being jealous. I know that, and I know what to expect. But there's another reason why I ought to have the part. You're going to ask Marjorie Hazeldene to take the part of Luchmee."

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"Well, Luchmee and the rajah get engaged, don't they? You could introduce a kissing scene."

"What!"

"I'd write it up," said Bunter. "You could leave that in my hands. I'd make it a jolly telling scene, I can tell you. Marjorie would like it. You fellows know perfectly well that a certain person is rather soft on me——"

Billy Bunter did not proceed any further with his excellent reasons why he should have the part of the Rajah of Bang.

Six pairs of hands fell upon him before he could proceed.

The next two minutes seemed to Billy Bunter like an earthquake.

When he sat up, blinking and groping for his spectacles, the chums of the Remove were gone.

"Beasts!" stuttered Bunter. "Yow-ow-ow! Rotters! Jealous beasts! 'Tain't my fault if girls look at me and take no notice of you rotters! Yow-ow-ow!"

Billy Bunter found his spectacles, and jammed them on his fat little nose, and rolled away, gasping. He rolled to Temple's study in the Fourth-Form passage.

Temple, Dabney, & Co. were there.

Temple and Dabney and Fry and Scott gave the Owl of the Remove grim looks as he rolled in. Bunter did not seem to observe it.

"Tea ready?" he asked.

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"HEROES OF HIGHCLIFFE!"

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PENNY.

"Yes!" growled Temple.

"Oh, good! I hope you've got jam-rolls. I told you I liked jam-rolls," said Bunter. "I say, you fellows, when you collar Wharton on the night of the play, I've got an idea."

"Blow your idea!"

"My idea is, that you should chuck him into a pond!" said Bunter. "Give him a jolly good ducking, you know. He's a cheeky cad. I think you might arrange somehow to take the other rotters, too, and chuck them all into a pond. Give 'em all a ducking—sec? Where's those jam-rolls, Temple?"

"Here you are, Fatty!"

"I'll begin with the eggs," said Bunter. "Thanks; these will do me nicely."

Half a dozen poached eggs had been dished up. Billy Bunter cheerfully slid them off the dish to his plate.

The four Fourth-Formers watched that action as if it mesmerised them.

"What are you doing?" yelled Scott.

"Helping myself," said Bunter affably. "I don't want you fellows to wait on me. I can look after myself. Don't treat me with ceremony, I beg. Liberty Hall, you know."

Temple, Dabney & Co. looked daggers.

Bunter proceeded to scoff the whole supply of eggs, and the Fourth-Formers had to content themselves with bread and cheese.

The eggs did not last Bunter long. They speedily disappeared, and then he blinked round for fresh worlds to conquer.

"I'll try those jam-rolls now, Temple, old chap. I'll call you Cecil if you like," said Bunter, in a very pally way.

"You call me Cecil," said Temple, in a sulphurous voice, "and I'll—I'll——"

"What?"

"I'll be very pleased," ended Temple feebly.

"Good! Very thoughtful of you to get six jam-rolls for me," said Bunter, helping himself. "Aren't you fellows going to have any?"

"How can we have any if you scoff the lot?" demanded Fry.

"Oh, really, Fry! I suppose you don't want to starve a visitor? I like that, after the way you pressed me to come to tea. If Temple grudges me a jam-roll——"

"I don't," said Temple, in a far-away voice. "Pile in, Bunter! You—you—you're very welcome."

Billy Bunter did not need telling to pile in. The jam-rolls were disappearing at a record speed.

The Fourth-Formers exchanged looks, expressive of what they would like to do to Bunter. Perhaps the short-sighted Owl of the Remove did not observe them, or perhaps he did not choose to observe them. At all events, he was not affected in any way. He commenced operations upon the cake.

Temple's tea-table was always well spread. But with Bunter to tea, supplies needed to be laid in on a Gargantuan scale.

The unfortunate Fourth-Formers had hardly a chance at the cake. If Billy Bunter had been a wild wolf fresh from the steppes of Siberia, he could not have demolished it at a greater rate.

"I suppose you've got another cake?" said Bunter.

"No, we haven't."

"What else have you got, then?"

"Bread-and-butter."

Billy Bunter sniffed.

"Oh, really, Cecil! I don't want to complain, of course, but, really, I hope you haven't asked me here to eat bread-and-butter. Lord Mauleverer was urging me to go to tea with him——"

"Why didn't you go, then?"

"I suppose there's some jam?"

"You—you—give him the jam, Fry."

The jam disappeared. Nothing but bread-and-butter being left after that, Billy Bunter rose to his feet. He blinked at the Fourth-Formers with a great deal of dignity.

"I suppose you fellows want me to come to tea to-morrow?" he said.

"Ye-es," said Temple, in a suffocated voice.

"Very well! I hope you'll have something decent on the table. You see, I have so many engagements at tea-time—so many fellows want me, that I really expect to get a good feed. I don't like going away hungry."

"Hungry!" gasped Scott. "You're still hungry?"

"Oh, I suppose you've done your best," said Bunter loftily, "but when I go out to tea, I expect to be looked after. If you don't have something pretty decent to-morrow, I shall really have to decline your invitation. Wharton will be glad to see me."

Billy Bunter rolled out of the study discontentedly.

"I shall slaughter him if he comes to-morrow," said Fry, with conviction. "I know I shall!"

Temple drew a deep breath.

"We've got to stand him till after the play. We can't have our jape on Wharton spoiled by that fat idiot. But after that—we'll let him come again——"

"What?"

"And collar him——"

"Oh, good."

"And put jam-rolls down his back, and rub pickles into his hair."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Temple, Dabney & Co. felt somewhat comforted, at the prospect of what was to happen to Bunter, when they were no longer afraid of the Owl of the Remove betraying the great secret.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Any Port in a Storm!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. arrived at Cliff House School. Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh had had to remain behind, much to his exasperation, and that of his chums. The Co. were quite convinced that they could look after the safety of the nabob. But Mr. Quelch evidently thought differently, and Mr. Quelch's word was law.

The sky was overcast, and a few drops of rain were beginning to fall, when the juniors reached Cliff House. Over tea in the school-room, the "Rajah of Bang" was duly discussed. Marjorie Hazeldene cheerfully agreed to take the part of Luchmee, the Pearl of the East, and Miss Clara accepted the role of Nandy-Pandy, the Nautch-girl. Harry Wharton had brought the parts with him, and costumes were solemnly discussed—costumes being a very important part of the matter, especially from the feminine point of view.

"We'll mug up the lines all right," said Miss Clara cheerfully. "That won't take long. We'll be ready for a rehearsal to-morrow, and another on Saturday."

"We're giving it next week," said Harry. "Those Fourth Form duffers take weeks to mug up their parts, when they're giving one of their blessed plays. But we don't need all that."

"No fear!" agreed Miss Clara.

"General rehearsal to-morrow afternoon, as it's a half-holiday," said Wharton. "You'll turn up at Greyfriars as early as you can. Hazel is coming over to fetch you. Hazel is a coffee-planter in the play. If it rains——"

"We are not afraid of the rain," said Marjorie, with a smile. "But you will get wet going back, I am afraid."

Heavy drops of rain were pattering on the windows of the school-room. When the time came for the Removites to depart, the sky was very gloomy, and there was a strong wind from the sea.

The chums of the Remove bade farewell to Marjorie and Clara, and started.

"We ought to have brought our coats," said Bob Cherry. "The only thing is to buck up. This will be worse before it's better."

"Looks like it," growled Squiff. "Do you call this a climate? Now, in Australia——"

"Bow-wow! Buck up!"

The juniors hurried on their way.

They took the path by the shore, to take the short cut over the cliffs. But before they were half a mile from Cliff House, the rain was coming down heavily.

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There was a roll of thunder from over the sea.

"Dash it all," said Johnny Bull, "we shall have to get out of this, and wait for it to pass over!"

"We shall be late for roll-call," said Nugent.

"Blow roll-call!" said Johnny Bull. "No good getting soaked."

"Blessed if I know where to get shelter," said Wharton; "Not until we get out on the Friardale Road."

"Rats! Let's get into one of the bungalows."

"Phew!"

Dotted along the shore were the bungalows, which, in the summer, were swarmed with visitors. But in the early spring they were all closed and deserted. The juniors had passed those that were near the village, but there was one in sight—a bungalow that stood by itself in the shelter of the cliffs, in a lonely spot. The shutters were fastened over the windows, and the place looked dead and deserted. Johnny Bull, without waiting to argue, started for the bungalow.

The juniors followed him.

"The place is locked up, Johnny," called out Squiff.

"There's a shed or something," said Johnny Bull.

"May as well look," remarked Nugent. "We can't go on through this blessed rain, anyway."

The juniors passed the gate, and made their way round the bungalow. It was a small building, with four rooms all on the ground floor. There did not seem to be any shed, but there was a wooden porch before the building, and the party crowded into it, glad of the shelter. It was a case of any port in a storm.

Outside the porch, the rain pattered down harder and harder. In the distance, they could hear the roar of the surf from the angry sea.

The wind from the sea blew the rain into the porch, and the heavy drops splashed over the five juniors.

"I wonder how long this is going to last!" growled Johnny Bull. "If we could get into the blessed place——"

"The door's locked," said Wharton. "These places are all locked up till the summer."

Johnny Bull tried the door, not expecting it to open, but in a faint hope that it might have been left unfastened.

To his surprise the door opened freely.

"My hat! It's not locked!"

"That's jolly queer," said Bob Cherry, in astonishment. "Somebody's been here looking at the place, perhaps, and forgotten to lock up after him."

"Blessed if I know, or care. I'm going in."

"Yes, rather!"

The five juniors crowded into the little hall of the bungalow at once, and closed the door after them against the wind and the rain.

Inside, the house was very dark, owing to the closed shutters.

"Anybody here?" shouted Johnny Bull.

Only the echo of his voice answered him.

"Nobody at home!" grinned Bob Cherry. "I vote that we make ourselves at home."

"What-ho!"

The juniors passed through into the little kitchen at the back of the building. Bob Cherry had an idea of starting a fire to dry their clothes if he could find any fuel. To their amazement, the juniors found a fire in the kitchen range. It was burning low, but it was burning. A scuttle of coal stood by it, and Bob Cherry promptly proceeded to mend the fire.

On the kitchen table they observed the remains of a meal. Evidently the bungalow was not so uninhabited as they had presumed.

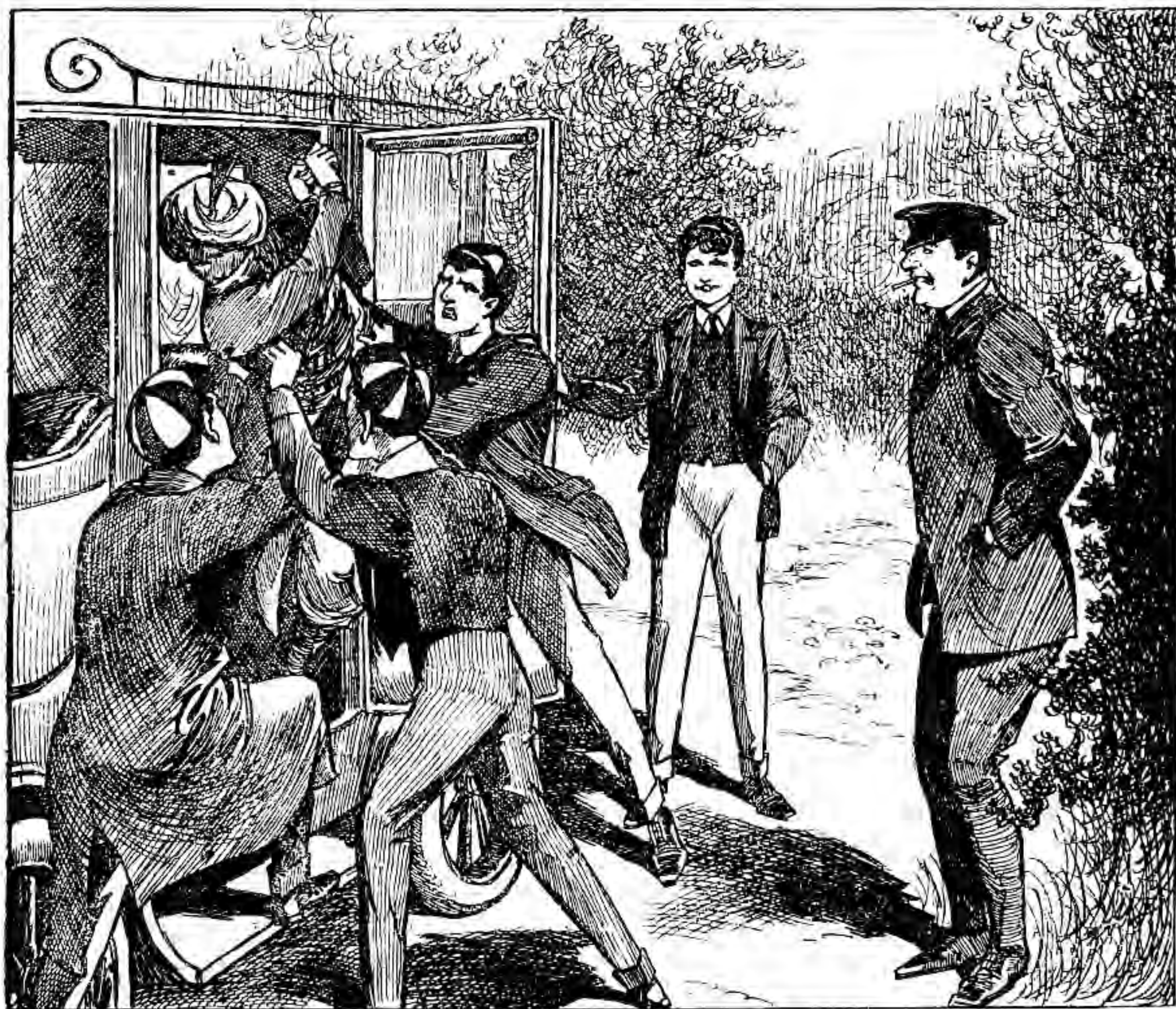
"I say, this is rather awkward," said Wharton. "Somebody must be living here, and if he comes home and finds us——"

"Oh, we'll explain," said Bob Cherry, stirring the fire. "If he's a blessed Christian, he won't want to turn us out in the rain."

"No, but——"

"Oh, blow butts!" said Bob. "We're here, and we're going to stay here until the rain's over. I suppose we sha'n't be taken for burglars—what?"

Harry Wharton laughed.



Fry opened the door of the waiting taxi, and Wharton was whisked into the vehicle. The taximan was standing by his machine, waiting, and he blinked in astonishment at the sight of Wharton. "I say, wot's the little game?" he asked. "Only a little joke on this chap!" said Temple airily. "It's all right—we're coming with him. Drive on!" (See Chapter 10.)

"No; but the chap who's living here will be surprised if he finds us."

"Let him be surprised!"

Bolt soon had a fire roaring in the grate, and the juniors gathered round it to dry their clothes, glad of the warmth.

After half an hour or so, the rain outside showed signs of slackening.

"It's clearing off," said Wharton. "We'd better chance it, and if we buck up, we may get in before calling-over after all."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Somebody's coming home!"

There was a sound of a door opening.

Footsteps sounded in the little hall, and the juniors heard a muttering voice—the voice of a man grumbling at the wet.

"Ach—ach! Mein Gott!"

Harry Wharton & Co. stared at one another blankly as the growling voice came to their ears.

For it was a German who was muttering to himself in the bungalow. The next moment a burly figure appeared in the kitchen doorway, and there was a sharp exclamation.

"Was? Was? Wer da?"

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"HEROES OF HIGHCLIFFE!"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. Quite English!

"WER da?"

The big, burly man in the doorway rapped out the words, evidently taken completely aback by the sight of the juniors in the bungalow kitchen, gathered round the fire.

They stared at him blankly.

They had supposed that the bungalow was occupied by an unusually early seaside visitor, and the sight of a German astounded them.

They could only stare at him.

The burly man advanced into the room, a fierce frown upon his face. But the frown vanished almost immediately.

"Who are you?" he exclaimed. "What are you doing here?"

He was speaking English now.

"We found the door open, and came in out of the rain," said Wharton.

"Indeed! Well, well, you are welcome! You may stay till the rain stops," said the German, with a nod. "It is a little unceremonious, hein? You are schoolboys, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Harry.

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The German looked at them curiously.

"Well, there is no harm done," he said.

"Thank you! You are living here?" asked Wharton.

"I am staying here at present. I come to the seaside by my doctor's orders: I have weak chest," said the German. "You did not know that the bungalow was occupied?"

"No, we had no idea—especially by a German," said Wharton. "We've explained what we are doing here, and it's up to you to explain what you are doing here, too. I didn't know that Germans were allowed to go about as they liked here."

The burly man laughed. He was rather a good-looking fellow, with a blonde moustache and a curly beard.

"But I am not a German," he said.

"Excuse me. We heard you speak—"

"I am Mr. Larson, and I am an Englishman," said the burly man, still smiling. "I was naturalised many years before the war. It is not my fault if my Kaiser shall run his head against a stone wall, hein? That does not make any difference to me, a naturalised Englishman."

"No, I suppose not," said Harry.

The burly man took off his overcoat, and drew a chair before the fire, and put his boots on the bars, with a grunt of satisfaction. The juniors drew back a little. If the man was a naturalised Englishman, he had as much right in England as they had, according to law. But it was curious, all the same, to find a German evidently of military age at large on the coast, while his country was at death-grips with England. The German took out a pipe and filled it, and began to smoke.

"You do not mind the tobacco, hein?" he asked.

"Oh, no!" said Harry politely, though it was making him cough a little. "It's very kind of you to let us stay till the rain stops."

"Don't mention it. I should hardly turn you out in the rain."

"We ought to apologise for coming into your house like this—"

"Not at all. Any port in a storm, hein," said Mr. Larson. "I am not, what you call, offended. I have sons of your age. They are in English school. They grow up to speak only English. I myself, I speak the English, but sometimes I forget. There is good news from the front in the latest paper."

"What do you call good news?" asked Wharton, with a smile. He suspected that his view of good news might differ from Mr. Larson's, however thoroughly that gentleman had been naturalised.

"Hein? The British are advancing once more," said Mr. Larson.

"You like news of that kind?" asked Squiff.

"Naturally. I am English. I was child of six when I was taken away from Germany, and I have always lived in England; it is my country. I am in good business here. If the Kaiser shall conquer, my business is ruined. So I call the news good news."

The juniors were silent. Mr. Larson's affection for his adopted country was very flattering, but they could not help feeling that there was something wrong about a man who was glad to hear of the defeat of his own countrymen.

"You belong to a school near here?" asked Mr. Larson.

"Yes; Greyfriars."

"Greyfriars?" Mr. Larson repeated the name as if he had never heard it before. "That is a school? It sounds like the name of a church."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"It was a monastery once, hundreds of years ago, and it keeps the old name," he explained.

"Oh, I see. Do not hurry away—you are welcome to stay as long as you like."

"Thank you very much. We'll get off, or we shall be late for call-over. It's very kind of you to give us shelter."

"Not at all," said Mr. Larson. "Don't mench, as you say. Well, if you will go, good-bye, my boys!"

"Good-bye, sir!"

Mr. Larson rose and accompanied them to the door and shut it after them.

A few drops of rain were still falling as the chums of the Remove hurried away towards Greyfriars.

"I suppose that fellow's all right," said Bob Cherry, after a long silence. "There are thousands of naturalised Germans in the country. He couldn't have taken the bungalow without satisfying the house-agent that he was all right."

"That's so; but—"

"But what?"

"Germans oughtn't to be allowed to live on the coast, whether they're naturalised or not," said Wharton. "It's all rot to suppose that a man feels any less like a German because he's taken out some naturalisation papers. He would be a pretty sort of rotter if he did. A decent man stands by his own country in war-time."

"I suppose so. Must be a bit awkward for naturalised johnnies in these days," Squiff remarked. "They must feel for their own country if they've got any decency at all; but they can't go back on their naturalisation without being traitors. I wouldn't trust one of them half an inch, I know that, if they had a chance to do this country a bad turn."

"Well, it's no business of ours, I suppose," said Wharton.

And the juniors dismissed the matter from their minds and hurried on to the school, reaching Greyfriars just in time to escape being locked out.

Hurree Janset Ram Singh was waiting for them inside the gates.

"You are latefully back," he remarked, "and the wetfulness is terrific! I have made up the roarful fire in the study, and the dryfulness is now the proper caper."

The juniors were glad of that "roarful" fire in the study. They found Billy Bunter in the study armchair toasting his fat toes.

He blinked up at them as they came in.

"I say, you fellows, if I'd known you were going to Cliff House I'd have come with you," he said reproachfully.

"That's why we didn't tell you," said Bob Cherry cheerfully.

"Roll out, porpoise," said Squiff.

"Oh, really, Field, I want to get dry," said Bunter. "Don't be selfish, you know. I've been caught in the rain. I've been down to the village, you know. I had to get into the barn coming back to get out of the rain. I can't possibly get out of this armchair—I'm afraid of catching my death of cold."

"No such luck!"

"I say, you fellows, I met a chap you know," said Bunter. "You remember that inky chap who came to see you yesterday?"

"What?"

"He came into the barn to get out of the rain while I was there," said Bunter. "Of course, he's only a nigger, like Inky here! Yow-ow-ow—leggo my ear, Inky, you beast! I—I meant to say he's a—a—a native gentleman, you know." Billy Bunter rubbed his ear. "I had quite a long jaw with him. He was awfully interested when he found that I belonged to Greyfriars. He asked me a lot of questions about the school, and about Inky, you know."

"He did, did he?" said Wharton grimly.

"Yes, and he seems to have lots of money, too," said Bunter.

"How do you know?"

"Why, he was so jolly agreeable that I mentioned to him that I was expecting a postal order, and—"

"You mean to say that you have been cadging off that fellow?" roared Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Bob—"

"If you call me Bob, I'll—I'll—"

"Oh, really, you know, he was a jolly decent chap for a nigger—keep off, Inky, you beast—I mean a native gentleman—he said his name was Ram Gas, or something—"

ANSWERS

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"Ram Das, you fat duffer!"

"Yes, something like that," assented Bunter, "and he lent me half-a-crown. Of course, I'm going to settle up with him when my postal-order comes."

"You oyster!" said Bob Cherry. "You fat rotter!"

The indignant Bob seized the armchair by the back and tilted it up, and Bunter rolled out on the hearthrug with a roar.

"Now, then, all together," exclaimed Squiff—"jump on him!"

Billy Bunter did not wait to be jumped on.

He was on his feet and whisking out of the study in a second, and his footsteps died away down the Remove passage.

Harry Wharton & Co. gathered round the study fire. The captain of the Remove was frowning.

"What did that rascal want to chum up with Bunter and lend him half-a-crown for?" he said.

"Not for the pleasure of hearing him talk!" grinned Squiff.

"The explicitfulness is simple, my esteemed chums. The worthy rascal is watchfully waiting for a chance to get at my noble self, and he thinks he may perhapsfully make use of that esteemed duffer."

"That's what I was thinking," said Wharton. "And the sooner Mr. Ram Das is looked after, the better. I think we'd better let Quelch know that he is still hanging about the place."

"Good egg!" said Squiff.

And Harry Wharton proceeded at once to the Remove master's study. Mr. Quelch looked very grave when he heard what he had to say, and sent for Bunter at once and questioned him. But the fat junior had no more to say than he had said in No. 1 Study. The Remove master dismissed the juniors, and took up the telephone receiver.

Bunter blinked curiously at the captain of the Remove as they came out of the study.

"I say, Harry——"

"Scat!"

"But I say, you know, what's the row about?" asked Bunter inquisitively. "Is there anything wrong about that black johnny?"

"Better ask him."

"Look here, you know, you can tell me all about it," said Bunter. "You know I'm a fellow to be trusted—don't walk away while I'm talking to you, you rotter! I'm jolly well going to know all about it. Do you hear? Beast!"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter is Pally!

DURING the next few days the amateur players of the Remove were very busy.

"The Rajah of Bang" was going strong.

Marjorie and Clara came over on Wednesday afternoon to join in the first general rehearsal, and all the Dramatic Society were delighted with Luchmee, the Pearl of the East.

Nearly half the Remove were in the cast, in one character or another, and the whole Form were very keen about "The Rajah of Bang."

There was to be a charge of threepence a head for admission to see the play; but the amateur actors were not "on the make." The takings were to go without deduction to the Courtfield Territorial Fund.

Temple, Dabney & Co. looked on at the great preparations, and bugged their secret, and rejoiced over it.

The date of the performance being fixed, Temple had made his arrangements for the taxicab which was to bear the Rajah of Bang away at the critical moment.

But that was being kept very dark.

So far Billy Bunter had kept the great secret. Every day regularly he turned up to tea in Cecil Temple's study, and he never failed to grumble at the fare provided for him. But Cecil Temple bore it with wonderful patience. It was necessary to bear with Bunter until the great jape had been japed. After that Temple & Co. had all sorts of plans regarding Billy Bunter.

Boiling him in oil was what they regarded as his just deserts. But that was, unfortunately, impracticable. But there were many things, short of boiling him in oil, that they could inflict upon him. William George

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Bunter was, in fact, booked for a really high old time when the Fourth-Form plotters were no longer in dread of his wagging tongue.

Meanwhile, Bunter made an excellent thing out of Temple, Dabney & Co.; and the chums of the Fourth possessed their souls with patience.

Bunter tried their patience very sorely.

He persisted in palling on with Temple. Temple of the Fourth was a somewhat lordly youth, much given to "swank." He was extremely elegant, and had a lofty manner. The fat Owl of the Remove was the very last fellow at Greyfriars with whom the lordly Temple would ever have dreamed of palling. But now he had no choice in the matter. Bunter meant to be his pal whether he liked it or not. And the unfortunate Temple had to bear it as patiently as he could.

Temple's new friendship excited quite a lot of remark. He was seen strolling in the Close with Bunter. Bunter called him Cecil. That was an honour that Cecil Reginald Temple allowed only to his most intimate friends. Apparently Bunter was now an intimate friend.

Billy Bunter used Temple's study as if it were his own. Indeed, he was much more free with it than his own, for in his own study there was Peter Todd, who ruled with a rod of iron.

But in Temple's study, for good reasons, there was no one to say Billy Bunter nay.

Once or twice, being moved by a brotherly spirit, Billy Bunter brought his minor there to tea—Sammy Bunter of the Second Form.

Temple, Dabney & Co. looked on in suppressed fury while the two Bunters devoured their tuck, leaving hardly a crumb for the unhappy owners of the study.

One evening, after the Bunters were gone, Fry picked up the poker and made wild passes in the air with it, in a state of frenzy.

"I shall brain him!" he gurgled. "I know I shall! I shall stretch him on the carpet a dead porpoise! I know I shall do it!"

"Patience, my son," said Temple; "it's only till Thursday! We can't afford to have the game mucked up at this stage."

"The fat beast is a fat, beastly blackmailer!" howled Fry.

"We'll make him wriggle after Thursday!"

"And now there's two of them," growled Dabney. "He'll be bringing the Todds along next, I shouldn't wonder."

"We'll slaughter him on Thursday!" said Temple. "It's worth this, to muck up that rot for the Remove kids. They're going awfully strong. They've got two of the Cliff House girls to take parts; they've been over here rehearsing. I asked Marjorie Hazeldene to play Ophelia for us once, and she wouldn't. I told her it would be easy enough, as I should have all the attention on me, as Hamlet. Fancy preferring to play in that fag rubbish! But we're going to put a spoke in their wheel—all on principle, of course. It's beneath us to think of japing those fags."

"Miles!" said Fry.

"Yes, miles beneath us. This isn't a jape; it's simply an emphatic protest against such rot being played at Greyfriars, while the drama—played by us—is treated with neglect. Personal feeling doesn't enter into the matter at all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at, Fry?" roared Temple.

"Oh, n-nothing! I was thinking of their faces when the Rajah of Bang doesn't turn up," said Fry.

"Just think of Wharton, walking home dressed as a rajah, with the village kids after him!" said Scott.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And in that happy prospect the chums of the Fourth felt that they could bear even with Billy Bunter a little longer.

On Monday, after lessons, Billy Bunter bore down on Temple as the Fourth came out of their Form-room.

Temple smiled a sickly smile of welcome. He was longing to take the Owl of the Remove by the scruff of the neck and dust the floor with him. But as that would

have meant an instant betrayal of the Fourth Form plot, Temple had to restrain his feelings. He smiled instead.

"Coming to tea, Bunter?" he murmured.

Bunter blinked at him, as if considering.

"Well, they want me in No. 1 Study," he remarked.

"Oh, do come!" said Fry.

"We—we expect you," said Dabney; "we—we shall miss you. Do—do come!"

"Are you going to have anything decent?" asked Bunter.

"Anything you like, old chap," said Temple.

"I don't want to put you to a lot of expense on my account," said Bunter.

"Don't you?" said Temple, in astonishment. "I—I mean, of course—That's all right, Bunter. It's a pleasure, you know. We look on you as an old pal."

"Well, how much were you thinking of spending on the feed?" asked Bunter.

"Pooh! That doesn't matter!"

"Yes, it does; I want to know."

"Two bob," said Temple.

"Two bob for my whack, you mean?"

"Ye-es."

"Good! Then I'll tell you what—I can't come to tea this evening, Temple, as I've got an appointment, which happens to be at tea-time."

Temple brightened up.

"Oh, good!" he said. "That is, I mean, I'm sorry—awfully sorry! Good-bye!"

"But you can lend me the two bob," explained Bunter. Temple's face fell again. He was not to get off cheaply after all.

"The—the two bob," he stammered.

"Yes. I happen to be rather hard up to-day."

"Quite a new thing for you, Bunter," said Fry, with heavy sarcasm.

"Yes; quite," agreed Bunter. "I've been disappointed about a postal-order. I was expecting it from one of my titled relations, you know; but it's delayed on account of the war, I suppose. I'll settle this up as soon as it comes, Temple."

And Billy Bunter rolled away the richer by two shillings, for which Cecil Reginald Temple was to be reimbursed—when his postal order came.

"I know I shall slaughter him!" murmured Temple.

"I wonder his people don't take him away to some quiet place and suffocate him. They ought to; it's their duty!"

Billy Bunter rolled away to the tuckshop, where Temple's two shillings were speedily expended in the form of refreshment—liquid and solid. Then the fat junior, feeling very satisfied, strolled down to the gates, to keep his appointment outside the walls of Greyfriars—whatever it was.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Is Very Useful!

"ER kommt!"

It was Mr. Larson who uttered that remark. The "Englishman" stood in the doorway of the old barn near Friardale Lane, looking out across the fields. He stepped back quickly into the barn as he caught sight of a fat figure crossing the fields towards the little building.

Ram Das, the Hindoo, glanced from the door and nodded.

"Er kommt!" repeated Mr. Larson. "Der Knabe—"

The Hindoo made an irritable gesture.

"I understand not your language," he said. "You know that, Sahib Larson. If you cannot speak the Nagari, speak in English to me."

Mr. Larson grinned.

"Always I forget," he said.

"Yet you are an Englishman," said Ram Das, with a sneering smile.

"Gewiss!" said Mr. Larson. "Am I not as English as written papers can make me? They are simple people, the English; they believe you may write a new nationality upon a piece of paper as if it were a cheque, mein

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Gott! But that is the boy whom you have spoken of, hein?"

The Hindoo nodded.

"Then I will disappear."

The German mounted the steps into the loft over the barn. Ram Das waited in the barn for the arrival of the fat junior who was crossing the fields.

A few minutes later Billy Bunter arrived.

The Owl of the Remove rolled into the barn and blinked at the Hindoo with a patronising nod. Billy Bunter felt that it was very kind of him to take notice of the dark gentleman. Ram Das had been exceedingly civil to him, and he had succeeded in flattering the Owl of the Remove into an exceedingly good humour.

"Oh, here you are, darkey!" said Bunter.

Ram Das's black eyes snapped for a moment. But he smiled and salaamed.

"The young sahib honours me," he said.

"Well, I told you I'd give you a look-in," said Bunter. "I've got a lot of engagements; but I said I'd come, and here I am."

"The young sahib overwhelms poor Ram Das."

"You remember I told you I was expecting a postal-order?" said Bunter. "Well, I'm sorry it hasn't come. I sha'n't be able to settle that half-crown to-day."

Ram Das waved his dusky hands disclaimingly.

"It is nothing. It is an honour for poor Ram Das to be of service to the young sahib."

"Oh, good!" said Bunter, fully agreeing with Ram Das on that point. "I'll tell you what, Ram Gas—"

"Ram Das, sahib."

"Blessed if I can remember your queer name!" said Bunter. "Your names in your country are simply corks! There's a chap in my Form at Greyfriars—his name is Hurree Janset Ram Singh. Of course, you know him? He's the chap you called on the other day. We call him Inky—he, he, he—and sometimes Jampot. I say, there's been rather a row about you, Rum Gas."

"I do not understand."

"About my having a jaw with you the other day, you know. I mentioned it to one of the fellows, and he mentioned it to my Form-master, and blessed if old Quelchy didn't send for me and haul me over the coals. Blessed if I knew why. Asked me a lot of questions about you, you know."

"You did not mention—"

"About the half-crown? Oh, no!"

"About having an appointment to meet me once more?"

"No fear," said Bunter. "It wasn't Quelchy's bizney, was it? He might have come down heavy and stopped me. I say, there's nothing shady about you, is there—excepting your complexion, of course? He, he, he! Old Quelchy seemed awfully solemn about it, but he didn't tell me anything. Wharton wouldn't tell me anything either. I asked Inky, and he told me to go and eat coke. He's a rotten nigger!"

Again Ram Das's eyes gleamed, but the short-sighted Owl of the Remove did not observe it. The German, in the loft above, grinned.

Billy Bunter had not the least idea that a third pair of ears was listening. The German in the loft was well out of sight.

"I say," went on Bunter, "you don't mind if that half-crown stands over for a bit, Snowball, I suppose?"

"Not at all, young sahib."

"The fact is, I'm expecting a whacking remittance shortly," explained Bunter. "I'm thinking you might make it up to half-a-quid, and I'd settle it all at once."

"The sahib honours me."

Billy Bunter would willingly have bestowed that honour upon anybody. His eyes twinkled behind his glasses as three half-crowns were placed in his fat palm. He blinked at the dark gentleman quite benevolently. It was evident that he had made a very useful acquaintance in Mr. Ram Das. It was Bunter's idea to prolong that acquaintance if he could. Mr. Ram Das seemed to have plenty of money, and there was no reason, so far as Bunter could see, why he should not make a regular income out of him—always to be repaid out of the postal-order, when it came. Billy Bunter was a borrower of deadly skill and persistence, and he did not care in the least whom he borrowed from so long as he borrowed.

Bunter slipped the half-crowns into his pocket with much satisfaction.

"I say, I'll come and see you again, if you like, Mr. Dumb Grass," he remarked.

"I shall be honoured. Perhaps I could see the young sahib at the school?" the dark gentleman suggested.

Bunter shook his head.

"Can't be did! Old Quelchy is down on you for some reason."

"I wish to see his Highness the Nabob of Bhanipur," said Ram Das. "Perhaps the young sahib could help me to speak to him?"

Bunter chuckled.

"I'd advise you not to," he said. "I saw you bolt the other day, you know. Inky don't seem to want to see you, does he?"

"It was—what you say?—a misunderstanding," explained Ram Das. "I lacked respect to his Highness, and he was angry. It was my fault. I wish to see him to beg his forgiveness. But he is angry, and will not see me. If the young sahib could help me to see him, Ram Das would be very grateful. Perhaps—in the night—if a window or a door should be left open—"

Ram Das watched Bunter's fat face closely.

The fat junior shook his head.

"No fear!" he said promptly. "Why, you may be a blessed burglar, for all I know, Snowball. I know old Quelchy's down on you. Of course, Quelchy is a beast! He's down on me often enough. Still, I'm not such a mug as you seem to think. But I'll tell you what—I'm awfully pally with Inky, and I'll bring him out for a walk some day, and then you can see him."

Ram Das scrutinised the fat junior's face, and shook his head. Perhaps he did not quite believe Bunter's statement that he was awfully pally with the Nabob of Bhanipur. The dark gentleman, in an absent-minded way, drew a purse from his loose garments, and there was a chink of coin. Bunter's eyes glistened as he saw the Indian turn over a little heap of sovereigns in his hand. Ram Das was watching him out of the corner of his eyes, and he marked the greed that flashed into the round eyes behind the glasses.

"Rolling in tin, darkey?" said Bunter enviously.

"All that Ram Das has is at the service of the young sahib," said the dark gentleman, still counting the sovereigns.

"Gammon!" said Bunter.

Ram Das slipped the purse back into his pocket.

"Let the young sahib put Ram Das to the proof, and he will see," he replied.

"All right. Lend me a couple of quids," said Bunter.

"Ram Das would be pleased to give, not to lend, five, ten, sovereigns in return for a small favour."

"I should hardly be likely to accept a gift from you, darkey," said Bunter haughtily. "I should be willing to accept a loan of ten quids."

"As the sahib pleases—for a small service."

"Any old thing," said Bunter.

"Help me to see his Highness, that is all."

Bunter wrinkled his fat brow.

"You see, it ain't easy," he explained. "Inky has been gated. I don't know why, but he ain't permitted to come out of gates now. I wouldn't stand it myself, but he stands it."

"Ram Das would come to Greyfriars."

"But old Quelchy's down on you."

"After dark."

"You'd be spotted, and there'd be trouble," said Bunter uneasily. "I'm jolly well not going to let a stranger into the school at night. I might be sacked for it. Suppose Inky cut up rusty when he saw you? Then it would come out. Why can't you write to him if you've got anything to say?"

"Alas! Poor Ram Das cannot write."

"My hat!"

"And I must speak to his Highness," said Ram Das. "I must beg his pardon on my knees. The prince is angry with me."

"He seemed ratty the other day, and no mistake," chuckled Bunter. "He went for you with a cushion, didn't he? Well, I'd like ten quids—I mean, I'd like to oblige you if I could, as you're so jolly civil. I wonder—" Bunter reflected. "Could you come along on Thursday, Mr. Gas?"

"Any time the young sahib orders."

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"You see, on Thursday they're giving their blessed play," explained Bunter. "It's a rotten play called the 'Rajah of Bang.' About a dozen chaps will be made up as niggers like you—I mean, Hindoos, you know. Well, with so many blessed niggers mooching about, perhaps one more wouldn't be noticed. See?"

Ram Das's black eyes gleamed.

"It is a play—a theatrical performance?" he asked.

"Yes; some rot about India, you know. My Form are doing it. It's going to be a rotten performance; I'm left out of the cast. Wharton and Inky and the rest are in it. They're all going to be made up as niggers. Now, suppose you came in at about six on Thursday. They'll all be in their war-paint then; it begins early, you know. With about a dozen fellows all made up as niggers you might sneak in without being noticed, and see the nabob—see?"

Ram Das was breathing hard with excitement now.

"The young sahib is as wise as a moonshee," he said.

"What the dickens is a moonshee?" said Bunter. "You see, all niggers look alike, and they wouldn't know you. If you get over the wall and drop into the Close you'd simply have to walk into the house, and everybody'd think you were one of the gang. You can dab something on your chivvy; you see, they make up their faces. Put a beard or something on. Then you'll look like the rest. You're not much taller than a Remove chap; that won't be noticed."

"Ram Das will do as the sahib says."

"Then you can see Inky in his study," said Bunter.

"Inky will be made up as Hong Kong the dacoit. You'll know him all right; it makes him look jolly different, but he has a big red sash on in the part, you know, full of daggers and things. Then you can jaw to him as much as you like, unless he kicks you out again. You'll have to take your own chance about that."

Ram Das's eyes were burning now.

"The words of wisdom flew from the sahib's lips like a full stream," he said. "Ram Das hears, and obeys."

"Oh, good!" said Bunter. "And about that ten quid—"

"After Ram Das has seen the nabob, and begged his forgiveness, the young sahib shall see Ram Das again in this place. Then all the gold of Ram Das is at the command of the noble young sahib."

"All serene," said Bunter, very flattered at being called a noble young sahib. "I'll come along here about this time on Friday."

"Be it so!"

Ram Das sank on his knees before the fat junior, and touched Bunter's boots with his forehead. The fat junior rolled away very pleased with himself. He liked being treated with so much respect. Indeed, to Bunter's mind, Ram Das bore a resemblance to the "faithful nigger" he had read of in stories, who is always devoted to a handsome and noble young sahib. Bunter rather fancied the idea of being adored by a faithful nigger.

When he was gone, however, Ram Das's resemblance to a faithful nigger disappeared at once. A grin of contemptuous mockery came over his dusky face as he watched the fat junior ploughing away across the fields. When Bunter was out of sight Ram Das called out, and the German descended from the loft.

"You have heard?" said the Hindoo.

Larson nodded.

"It should be easy," said Ram Das.

"Mein Gott! It is simple," said Larson. "That dummkopf is useful, after all; you were right, my friend. But you may penetrate into the school, perhaps unsuspected, but then it will not be easy."

Ram Das shrugged his shoulders.

"I have the drug," he said. "Once that I see the nabob alone he will be in my hands. I shall contrive it. I am no fool, and they will suspect nothing. You will be ready in the road with the trap. I shall pass him to you after dark."

"I shall be ready."

"Then at the bungalow we will finish," said Ram Das.

The German made a gesture.

"You will finish," he said. "That is your business. I

shall not stain my hands. I carry out the orders of my chiefs, but I am no assassin."

"Bah! Leave it to me. I have to answer to Lal Nalouth for his life. That is my task. Till that night I must lie hidden at the bungalow; it seems that it is not safe for me to appear in sight, from what the fat fool says. You may go now. I shall remain here till nightfall. I run no risks."

The German nodded, and quitted the old barn, and Ram Das waited there, with impassive Oriental patience, till the fall of darkness made it safe for him to steal forth, and make his way to his hiding-place.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Temple & Co. Take a Hand!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were feeling very satisfied with themselves when Thursday came round.

On Wednesday afternoon there had been a full-dress rehearsal of the "Rajah of Bang," and it had been a complete success.

So on the day fixed for the performance the Remove Dramatic Society looked forward to the evening in great spirits.

So did Temple, Dabney & Co. All was prepared for Cecil Reginald Temple's little plot to be carried into execution.

So did Billy Bunter. Bunter was looking forward to the ten "quids" he was to "borrow" from Ram Das for the little service he had rendered him. Little did the fat junior dream of the real nature of that service. If the Owl of the Remove had suspected that harm was intended to Hurree Jamset Ram Singh he would not, of course, have fallen with Ram Das's plans for any sum of money. But Bunter had no suspicion. It seemed natural enough to him that Ram Das, having offended his Highness the nabob, wished to obtain an interview with him, and beg his forgiveness. Bunter did not see any harm in that.

So there were quite a number of fellows looking forward to the evening.

When lessons for the day were over, the Remove fellows began at once their preparations for the evening.

Mr. Quelch had given permission for the performance to take place in the Form-room, and had even promised to look to himself. The Remove actors were really good, and Mr. Quelch frequently honoured their performances with his presence—a great contrast in that respect to Mr. Capper, the master of the Fourth, who could never be induced to witness Temple & Co.'s Shakespearean performances.

The Removites industriously prepared the Form-room for the audience, arranging forms and chairs, borrowed from all quarters, to accommodate the expected rush.

Threepence each was charged for admission, but fags below the Remove were allowed in at a penny a head, so prices could not be called high. And it was understood that all the takings went to the Territorial Fund, so nobody objected to paying.

It was true that they might have witnessed a performance of Hamlet by Temple & Co. for nothing, and been elevated and refined by the influence of great drama, but somehow the fellows seemed to prefer comic plays done by the Remove. Though, as Bob Cherry had pointed out, Shakespeare, as rendered by Temple & Co., was comic enough.

After the Form-room had been prepared, and the stage and curtain arranged, the chums of the Remove snatched a hurried tea.

Bunter, as usual, had tea in Temple's study. As he felt that it was for the last time, Billy Bunter was more exacting than ever. But Temple and Dabney and Fry bore with him very

patiently. They were consoled by reflecting upon the things they were going to do to Bunter afterwards.

"I say, you fellows, it's rather hard on those chaps, don't you think so?" Billy Bunter remarked. "I have really been thinking that perhaps I oughtn't to let it go on, you know. Is there any more cake, Temple?"

"No," growled Temple. "You've scoffed the lot."

"Upon the whole, considering that they're in my Form, I really think I ought to give them the tip," remarked Bunter.

"Cut down to the tuckshop and get a cake, Dab," said Temple.

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney, with a positively murderous glare at Bunter as he quitted the study.

"You might get some jam-rolls, too," said Bunter.

"Bring a dozen, Dab," said Temple desperately.

At the eleventh hour Bunter's price was going up.

The fat junior grinned cheerfully. He demolished the cake and the jam-rolls, and looked very shiny and satisfied.

"All the same, it's rather hard on them—eh?" he observed.

"Could you eat anything more?" asked Temple, between his teeth.

"Well, as you're so pressing, I could manage some jam-tarts," said Bunter.

Fry went to fetch some jam-tarts.

"Of course, you fellows can depend on me," said Bunter. "I'm standing by you, you know. I always stand by a pal."

"I hope you'll come to tea to-morrow," said Temple, smiling, with a great effort. "We should miss you if you chucked it, you know."

"Oh, I'll come!" said Bunter.

"We shall have something really ripping for you to-morrow," went on Temple. "I—I'm getting a big remittance to-morrow."

"Oh, good! I'll come, certainly," said Bunter. "I suppose you don't mind if I take the rest of these tarts with me, you fellows?"

"Take 'em and welcome," said Temple. "We can depend on you for to-morrow, Bunter? We are going to have something quite out of the common."

"What-ho!" said Bunter.

And the Owl of the Remove rolled out of the study, feeling very tight about the waistcoat, and very satisfied. He had supposed that feeds in Temple's study would come to an end when it was no longer necessary to keep him in a good humour. But Temple's invitation for the morrow proved that the captain of the Fourth was really pally.

After the door had closed on him, Temple shook his fist at the door.

"So he's coming to-morrow to tea?" grinned Dabney.

Temple drew a deep, deep breath.

"Yes. That'll keep him from blabbing at the last minute, if he thinks he's going to get a feed to-morrow. I've promised him something quite out of the common. When he gets it, I fancy he'll admit that it's out of the common."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm jolly nearly stony," said Temple. "He's nearly ruined us in tuck. But it won't cost us much for what he's going to get to-morrow—only damage to a cricket-stump."

"Oh, rather!" chuckled Dabney.

Scott came into the study.

"Pretty nearly time," he remarked. The Remove kids are making up in their studies. We've got to settle Wharton before the gates are locked."

"They're not locked till dark," said Temple. "Still, the taxi will be here at six. It's six now. I suppose the man's in the road already. Cut off and see, Dab."

For Next Monday:

HEROES OF HIGHCLIFFE!

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

—By—

FRANK RICHARDS.

Order in Advance.

PRICE ONE PENNY.



"Help!" yelled Johnny Bull. "This way! Help!" Ram Das heard his rapid footsteps in pursuit. Carrying Hurree Singh as if he had been a featherweight, the lithe Hindoo rushed on, till he reached the school wall.
(See Chapter II.)

Dabney cut off, and returned in a few minutes with the information that the taxi-cab was waiting down the road.

"All serene," said Temple. "Call Wilkinson and Jones and Rourke here. We can tell 'em now."

The three Fourth-Formers were called into the study.

Temple explained to them what was "on," and there was a chirrup of delight from Wilkinson and Jones and Rourke. They were keen members of the Fourth Form Theatrical Society, and very much "up against" the Remove players. Temple was careful to explain that these proceedings were being done on principle, and that it wasn't merely a jape on the Remove. Wilkinson and Jones and Rourke grinned and assented. They didn't care whether it was on principle or not, so long as their old rivals of the Remove were thoroughly and completely dished.

"You three fellows will wait in the Close, ready to pile
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in if we need help," said Temple. "We four are going to deal with Wharton. You keep your eyes open, and if a Remove kid comes near us, just knock him down."

"Right-ho!"

Wilkinson and Jones and Rourke took up their watch in the Close.

Temple, Dabney & Co. proceeded to the Remove passage.

The dusk was falling on Greyfriars now.

The performance had been booked to begin at seven o'clock, and was to last one hour, thus leaving the juniors bare time for their preparation afterwards. Temple's taxi-man was waiting patiently in the lane. As his taximeter was ticking off twopences all the time, he did not mind.

Temple looked in at No. 1 Study, with his chums behind him.

Wharton and Nugent were in the study, making up. All the players were making up in their studies. They had no choice but to use their studies as dressing-rooms; the Form-room not really having been planned for theatrical performances.

"Hallo! How are you getting on?" asked Temple.

Wharton turned a darkly-bronzed face from the glass. He was in his costume as the Rajah of Bang, and nearly finished making-up.

Frank Nugent was progressing, and turning himself from a slim and handsome junior into a ferocious-looking sower.

"All serene," said Wharton. "You fellows had better be going in; the seats are filling up, you know. Don't forget your threepenny bits."

"We won't," said Temple. "I suppose we can't help you."

"Thanks! We don't need any help."

"No objection to our looking on, I suppose? You see, we do a bit of acting ourselves, and we like to pick up tips, by watching master-spirits at work."

"You can look on if you like, but don't jaw," said Wharton.

"Thanks awfully!"

Temple & Co. came into the study, and closed the door. Scott remained outside for a moment, to turn out the gas in the passage. Then he opened the door and came in, and the door was closed again.

"Finished now," said Harry Wharton. "How are you getting on, Nugent?"

"Nearly done," said Frank.

"I'll get along and see how Bob is getting on."

Wharton came towards the door.

Temple made a sign to his comrades, and with a sudden spring, the four Fourth-Formers hurled themselves upon the Rajah of Bang.

Taken by surprise, Wharton went with a crash to the floor.

Nugent spun round from the glass.

"What the thunder——"

Temple and Dabney piled on him at once. Fry and Scott were kneeling on Wharton, and pinning him down.

Frank Nugent went down heavily in the grip of the Fourth-Formers.

"Rescue!" yelled Nugent; but before the word was fairly out of his mouth, a handkerchief was jammed between his teeth.

A handkerchief had already been jammed into Wharton's mouth, as he opened it to shout to his comrades.

The Fourth-Formers had come prepared.

Temple slipped a running noose over Nugent's wrists and drew it tight, and knotted it. Then, leaving Dabney to deal with him, and rushed back to Wharton, who was gurgling and struggling desperately with Fry and Scott.

He dragged Wharton's hands together, and slipped a noose over them. Then another over his ankles. Wharton lay helpless on the floor.

Temple jammed the handkerchief a little more tightly into his mouth, and secured it with a length of twine wound round his head.

Nugent was still wriggling, but the Fourth-Formers turned their attention to him, and his feet were tied, and the gas secured.

Then Temple & Co., panting a little, surveyed their handiwork with great satisfaction. Wharton and Nugent glared at them furiously. They could not speak, but their eyes looked whole volumes.

"I rather think we score here," murmured Temple—"what?"

"Oh, rather!"

The attack had been sudden, the surprise had been complete, and it had been successful. And the heroes of the Fourth had not taken half-measures.

Temple turned out the light.

Then he cautiously opened the door of the study and peeped into the passage. All the Removites were busy in their studies, and the gas was still out.

"Come on!" muttered Temple.

Harry Wharton felt himself lifted from the floor in the darkness and carried away.

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THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Raiding the Rajah!

HARRY WHARTON was in a state of amazement and fury.

What the intentions of the Fourth-Formers might be he had not the faintest idea. He guessed, of course, that Temple had laid some scheme to "muck up" the Remove theatrical performance. But he was far from guessing the extent of the astute Temple's plans.

He could not resist. The Fourth-Formers had bound him hand and foot, and tightly; and the handkerchief in his mouth choked every sound he strove to utter.

He was rushed away at once down the darkened passage, to the box-room at the end. He was rushed into the box-room, and the door was promptly locked by Temple.

Then Temple opened the window.

In the darkness, Wharton felt a thick rope tied round his body under the arm-pits. He wriggled in his bonds, and made desperate efforts to utter a cry; but he wriggled and strove in vain. He was helpless.

Temple and Dabney raised him and pushed him through the window, Fry and Scott holding on the rope.

He was lowered carefully to the ground; then the end of the rope was secured, and the four raiders slid down it, one after another.

They landed on the ground near Wharton, and chuckled gleefully.

"Looks like a win for the Fourth!" murmured Temple.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Up with him!"

The wriggling Removite was released from the rope, and the four juniors raised him from the ground and hurried him away.

The dusk was deepening in the Close; but the Fourth-Formers were very careful not to appear in the open.

They skirted the wall, under the trees, keeping well out of sight of the windows.

Wharton's feelings may be better imagined than described. Even yet he did not guess what the young rascals intended. He supposed that he was to be planted in some secluded recess, to be found by his chums when it was too late for the play. But the heroes of the Fourth did not intend to let him off so easily as that.

Keeping close by the wall, and in the shadow of the trees, they brought him round to the dusky Close. Wilkinson and Jones and Rourke loomed up in the dusk.

"Got him?" ejaculated Wilkinson.

"What-ho!"

"Hurrah!" chirruped the three.

"Gates still open?" asked Temple.

"Yes."

"Is Gosling in sight?"

"At the door of his lodge," said Jones.

"He mustn't see us. You fellows start ragging him," said Temple. "Never mind if there's a row—it's worth a row."

"All serene!"

Wilkinson & Co. started for Gosling's lodge. The school porter was about to come out to lock the gates.

Wilkinson and Jones and Rourke scouted up to the lodge and peered in. Gosling was taking down his bunch of keys from the wall.

Wilkinson drew the door shut with a bang.

"Hold on, you chaps!" he murmured.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My heye!" came Gosling's voice from within. "My heye! You young raskils! Let the door go at once! I'll report yer!"

Gosling dragged at the door from inside.

The three Fourth-Formers held it on the outside, with their hands clasped one over another on the handle.

Gosling pulled, and they pulled. Three were stronger than one, and the door did not open.

"My heye!" yelled Gosling. "Cheeky young villains! I'll report yer! Shetting a man up in his own lodge! Wot I says is this 'ere, I'll report yer!"

The Fourth-Formers chuckled and held on.

Meanwhile, Temple, Dabney & Co. brought their

prisoner down to the gates with a run, and passed out into the road.

"They've gone!" whispered Rourke.

"Time we went, too!" grinned Wilkinson.

Gosling was dragging furiously at the door from within. The three young rascals let go suddenly, and there was a wild roar from Gosling as the door flew open, and Gosling flew across the room and bumped on the floor. He was up in a twinkling, and came forth raging. But Wilkinson and Jones and Rourke had melted away in the dusk. Gosling, murmuring uncomplimentary remarks about boys in general and Greyfriars boys in particular, stamped down to the gates, and locked them.

Temple, Dabney & Co. were rushing their prisoner down the dusky road. Fry opened the door of the waiting taxi, and Wharton was whisked into the vehicle.

The taximan was standing by his machine, waiting, and he blinked in astonishment at the sight of Wharton.

"I say! What's the little game?" he asked.

"Only a little joke on this chap," said Temple airily. "It's all right; we're coming with him. Drive on!"

The taximan looked a little doubtful. It was really not his business to be party to practical jokes. But the juniors had piled into the cab, and he mounted to his seat and drove away, still doubtful. He had driven Temple & Co. many a time, and so knew him well, and concluded that there was no harm being done. Moreover, he was in expectation of a handsome tip.

"Redclyffe, as fast as you can," said Temple.

The taxi buzzed off.

The four Fourth-Formers roared with laughter as the cab started.

Wharton sat wedged between Temple and Dabney, with Fry and Scott opposite. He could not speak. But he glared.

"This is where we smile," chortled Temple. "I wonder how the play will get on—the Rajah of Bang—without a giddy rajah?"

"Like Hamlet with the Prince of Denmark left out," grinned Fry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groooooh!" came faintly from the prisoner.

"Ha, ha, ha! Say that again, Wharton."

"Gerrrrrr!"

"The rajah is speaking his native language," chuckled Fry. "That must be the language of Bang."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The taxi buzzed on through the growing dusk.

After a couple of miles had sped under the whizzing wheels Temple took pity on his prisoner, and removed the gag from his mouth. Wharton gasped for breath, and stuttered with rage.

"Grooh! You rotters!"

"Go it!"

"You beastly cads!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Tell that man to turn back!" roared Wharton.

"No fear!"

"You—you—you rotters!" yelled Wharton. "They'll be ready to begin the play now."

"Let 'em begin."

"Oh, you beasts!" groaned Wharton. "We—we'll smash you for this! We'll scrag you! What a dirty trick!"

"Just like coming to see Hamlet with your peashooters—eh?" said Temple.

Wharton grunted. He could not deny that at the last performance of Hamlet by the Fourth-Form Dramatic Society the Remove had turned up in strong force with peashooters. That performance of Hamlet had been considerably marred.

It was only tit for tat, as the captain of the Remove had to confess. But it was very hard on the Rajah of Bang, all the same.

"What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, you know," said Temple. "But don't think that we're doing this as a jape, simply because you young sweeps mucked up our Hamlet. Nothing of the sort. We're doing this on principle. We don't approve of such rot being acted at Greyfriars. You're corrupting the public taste with your silly piffle. Fellows who ought to be glad to see Shakespeare well acted give it the go-by, and come to see you kids playing the giddy goat, made up as niggers and things. From an artistic point of view we're down on it."

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"HEROES OF HIGHCLIFFE!"

EVERY
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PENNY.

"Oh, you fathead!"

"We really can't allow it, you know," said Temple loftily. "We really hope this will be a lesson to you."

"Look here, where are you taking me?"

"Half-way to Redclyffe," said Temple cheerily.

"And what then?"

"Then you'll have a nice walk home. Exercise is good for kids, you know—much better than playing the giddy ox on the stage. You'll get back when it's all over—if they play it without you. You'll have a nice walk. Help you to get fit for the cricket, you know. But I don't expect any thanks."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you rotters! I can't walk home in this rig. I shall be chipped, and followed by a blessed crowd very likely."

The Fourth-Formers yelled

"Well, you Remove kids like the limelight," chuckled Temple. "You're going to get some. I only wish it was broad daylight, that's all."

Temple tapped on the glass, and the cab stopped in a lonely lane half-way to Redclyffe. Wharton was helped out of the cab, and Temple cut the cords round his ankles. Then the bonds on his wrists were loosened.

"You can wriggle 'em off presently," said Temple. "Anything else we can do for you, old chap—I mean your Highness."

"Rotter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, are you leaving the black gentleman 'ere?" asked the taximan doubtfully.

"Yes; the black gentleman—ha, ha!—prefers to walk home. Don't you, darkey?"

"I—I say!" said the taximan. "If the dark gentleman objects, I—I can't leave him 'ere, Master Temple."

"I do object!" roared Wharton.

"You drive off," said Temple. "I've hired this cab, haven't I? I'm not going to have any niggers in it if I don't choose. We've given that chap a lift, but we're not bound to take him back. But he's not so black as he's painted, you know; it's only Wharton of the Remove, and this is only a little joke. Get back, please."

"But——"

"Look here, if you don't drive off we'll jolly well drive off ourselves!" exclaimed Temple. "I can drive a car, so I suppose I can drive a taxi. If you want to stay here with the black gentleman, say so."

"It's all right, chauffeur," said Wharton, with an effort. "You can clear off." It was evidently impossible to return in the cab, and Temple was already preparing to get into the driving-seat.

The chauffeur, greatly puzzled, drove away with the Fourth-Formers. The Rajah of Bang was left alone in the shadowy lane. In about ten minutes he wriggled the cords off his wrists, and started to walk back to Greyfriars. The taxi had long vanished from sight. The walk was a good many miles, but Wharton did not mind that; he was a good walker. What he minded was the fact that it would be far too late for a performance when he reached the school. How the dramatic company had got on during his absence he could not guess. But one thing was quite certain—that much-anticipated performance of the "Rajah of Bang" was a dismal, ghastly failure, owing to the astute machinations of Cecil Reginald Temple.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER:

The Blow Falls!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

Ping-Pong the dacoit looked into No. 1 Study. Bob Cherry had come to see if Wharton and Nugent were ready. He found the study in darkness.

"Gone down?" he asked.

"Gerrrrrrrr!"

That faint mumbling sound startled Bob. He struck a match. He dropped it, in amazement, as he saw Frank Nugent, in his garb of a native soldier, stretched on the floor, tied and gagged with a handkerchief.

"Groooh!" came faintly from Nugent.

"My only hat!"

Bob lighted the gas quickly, and jerked the handkerchief from Nugent's mouth. Then he cut the cords.

Frank staggered to his feet.

"What the thunder?" exclaimed Bob, in blank astonishment. "Where's Wharton?"

Nugent panted.

"They've got him!"

"Eh? Who've got him?"

"Those Fourth Form cads!" gasped Nugent. "Temple & Co! They rushed us—collared us—they've taken Wharton off—about ten minutes ago."

"Great Scott!"

"It's a rotten dodge to muck up the play," said Nugent. "I don't know where they've taken him. Call the fellows and let's get after him."

Bob Cherry jumped to the doorway and shouted along the passage. The Removites came crowding out of their studies. There were dacoits, native soldiers, native policemen, planters, all sorts and conditions of Indians and Anglo-Indians. And there was a buzz of furious voices at the news of the raid on No. 1 Study.

"The cheeky rotters!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "They can't be far away! Let's hunt for them."

"The huntfulness will be terrific!" said Hurree Singh. "But can we go down in this esteemed and ludicrous rig?"

"Can't be helped—come on," said Bob Cherry.

There was a rush downstairs.

They met Marjorie and Clara in the hall. The two girls had just arrived from Cliff House with Hazel. They looked at the crowd of excited juniors in amazement.

The two girls had not expected to meet the theatrical company in the hall.

"What on earth's the matter?" asked Hazel.

"Those Fourth Form cads have raided Wharton, and whisked him off somewhere," said Bob. "It's a dodge to spoil the play. Take your sister and Miss Trevlyn to their dressing-room, Hazel. We sha'n't be long finding Wharton."

"There is plenty of time," said Marjorie. "He cannot be far away."

"Rotten trick!" remarked Miss Clara.

"The rottenfulness is terrific, my esteemed Miss Clara. But the bumpfulness will also be great when we have collarfully caught the estimable beasts."

The juniors were streaming out into the Close in the thick dusk.

"Search for them," shouted Bob Cherry. "They can't be far away."

"Scatter!" said Nugent.

The Removites scattered in all directions, hunting for Wharton and his captors. Some of them rushed for the old tower, some for the chapel ruins, and others peered into the shadows of the ruined wing of the old building. Some scouted under the trees, and round the buildings.

The juniors were in all kinds of costumes, with their faces brown or black. They shouted to one another as they searched.

"Seen them?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as he almost ran into a dark-skinned individual in Indian costume under the elms.

But the other passed on quickly without replying.

Bob Cherry ran on, little dreaming that the Hindoo he had just passed, and spoken to, was the genuine article, and not a made-up character in the play at all.

It was Ram Das.

The brown-skinned rascal was within the school walls, when the motley crew came rushing out in search of Wharton.

He drew close under the shadow of the trees, after Bob had passed him, and stared through the Close, wondering and alarmed. He did not understand the cause of the commotion, and could not guess why the disguised juniors were spreading through the school grounds.

The dusky man from Bhanipur gritted his teeth.

He was in little danger of discovery, for he closely resembled a dozen fellows who were scouring the Close. He had daubed his face with grease-paint, in order to

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be more like the made-up juniors, and his features were unrecognizable, even if he had been seen in the light.

But this unexpected and inexplicable commotion disturbed his plans.

He had intended to penetrate boldly into the House, watching for a chance of seeing Hurree Singh and dealing with him—the drug was ready in his pocket, and he was prepared to take desperate chances. He had counted upon passing as one of the theatrical performers, for he was certain to be seen. But in the present alarm and confusion he was at a loss. He knew from Billy Bunter where to find Hurree Singh's study. But he could guess easily enough that Hurree Singh was not in his study now. Indeed, he heard the nabob's name called several times, as the juniors hailed one another.

He gritted his white teeth with rage. But for this disturbance, which he did not comprehend in the least, he might have passed into the House, and reached Hurree Singh's study, and perhaps found the nabob alone—or lurked in the passages waiting for a chance to come upon him—the chloroform pad was ready, and he needed but a minute for his work. From the unsuspecting Bunter he had learned all he wanted to know of the "lie" of the Remove quarters. The nabob, safely drugged, would have been dropped from the box-room window, and then all would have been plain sailing. Outside the walls, his German confederate was waiting with the trap, to receive the prisoner from his hands.

Now, instead of entering the House boldly, as he had intended, he crouched in the darkness under the trees, his eyes gleaming, his teeth gritting together. He dared not show himself, lest he should be spoken to and questioned at once, and discovered. He had already had one narrow escape when Bob Cherry hailed him.

If he had known what had happened, he had nerve enough to answer questions—but he did not know. He could not guess.

Someone was missing—he divined that. Someone was being looked for. That was all he could guess.

Two or three juniors passed close to him, talking to one another. He crouched close to the trunk of the elm, and they did not see him.

He muttered curses in his own tongue. The voice of Squiff came to his ears.

"We can't have the play now."

"Impossible!" said Bob Cherry.

Then they passed out of hearing.

Ram Das ground his teeth hard. His cunning scheme had been risky, but it promised success. Now it seemed completely knocked on the head.

But the dusky rascal was not easily beaten. He was determined not to leave the precincts of the school without at least making an attempt. He knew that the police were seeking him in the neighbourhood, and that he could not long remain near Greyfriars to carry out his scheme. It was now or never.

He resolved to take the risk.

Leaving the shadow of the trees, he joined in the hurrying to and fro, taking care not to come too near any of the juniors. He was seen at once, but he passed unremarked. His costume was like that of the players in the "Rajah of Bang," and the daub of grease-paint on his face disguised his features. His hope was to come upon Hurree Singh in the Close, and his keen, black eyes were open for a dacoit in a red sash, such as Bunter had described to him.

"The disappearfulness is complete," he heard a voice saying. "We have looked everywhere, my esteemed chums."

"He must be found," growled Johnny Bull. "The beasts can't have taken him out of gates, surely?"

Ram Das's eyes were on the red sash now. He did not intend to lose sight of Hurree Singh again.

"This way!" called out Ram Das suddenly.

Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh spun round.

"Where?" exclaimed Johnny Bull quickly.

"Follow me!"

Ram Das ran on under the elms. Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh ran after him. They took him for one of the Removites, and supposed he was on the track of the missing captain of the Remove.

It was a bold stroke; but it succeeded. Under the

eims, Ram Das suddenly halted, and the two juniors ran full-tilt into him.

"My hat!" ejaculated Johnny Bull. "You clumsy ass— Oh!"

A heavy fist crashed into Johnny's face, and he fell like a log. The next instant Ram Das's grasp was on the nabob.

Taken utterly by surprise, Hurree Singh struggled.

But a soft cloth was over his face, and the suffocating fumes of chloroform were in his nostrils.

His struggles were feeble.

Johnny Bull, astounded and considerably hurt, sat up in the darkness under the trees, with a growl of fury.

"Who was that? Who punched me? By George, I'll — Where are you, Inky?"

The dazed junior detected the sound of a struggle in the darkness near him. He staggered to his feet.

"Inky! What's the matter? Where are you?" He groped towards the sound, peering in the darkness. He was shoved violently away, and then, like a fellow in a dream, he saw Hurree Singh lifted from his feet, and rushed away into the darkness.

For an instant Johnny Bull stood transfixed.

He was still under the impression that the Hindoo he had seen was one of the disguised juniors, and he was utterly astounded. But the sickly smell of chloroform, and the dim glimpse of the nabob carried bodily away towards the school wall, undeceived him.

He remembered Hurree Singh's peril—and understood. With the bound of a tiger, he sprang in pursuit. He understood now. Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh was being taken away under his very nose.

"Help!" yelled Johnny Bull. "This way! Help!"

Ram Das heard his rapid footsteps in pursuit. Carrying Hurree Singh as if he had been a featherweight, the lithe Hindoo rushed on. A sharp, loud whistle burst from his lips as he ran.

He reached the school wall.

Under the shadows of the overhanging trees, a face looked down on him from the wall. His accomplice was ready!

"Take him!" muttered Ram Das thickly.

The German reached down and grasped the insensible Nabob.

In a twinkling he drew him over the wall, lowered him into the road, and jumped down after him.

Ram Das made a spring for the wall.

His hands caught the top; lithe as a cat, he drew himself up; but Johnny Bull was upon him from behind before he could get clear. Johnny saw the vanishing form, and he grasped at the Hindoo's legs. His strong hands fastened upon the ankles of Ram Das, and he dragged with all his strength.

Crash!

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER. A Pal in Peril!

CRASH!

Dragged from his hold on the wall, by the sudden and fierce drag on his ankles, Ram Das came away and crashed on the ground headlong.

Johnny Bull closed on him at once.

But it was not needed.

The Hindoo lay inert and still.

His head had struck the ground with terrific force and he was completely stunned.

There were shouting voices from all directions; footsteps and lights were pouring towards the spot.

Johnny Bull did not wait.

He made a leap for the wall, caught the top, and drew himself up. He looked over, and, as he did so, he heard the sound of a cracking whip, the trampling of a horse, and the rush of wheels.

Hurree Singh was gone.

For an instant Johnny Bull caught a glimpse of a trap, and then it vanished, driving furiously. He did not need telling that Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh was in it.

He dropped back from the wall.

Bob Cherry was on the scene now, a bike lantern in his hand. A crowd gathered round the insensible Hindoo.

"What's happened?" shouted Bob. "Is that you, Johnny?"

"Who's this?"

The Voice of Liberty. No. 579.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"HEROES OF HIGHCLIFFE!"

EVERY
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"
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ONE
PENNY.

"He's stunned."

"My only hat! It's Ram Das!" shouted Squiff, as he turned a light upon the face of the insensible Hindoo.

"Look!"

"The Hindoo?"

"Ram Das!"

There was no mistake about it. Scanned close at hand, the daubed grease-paint did not deceive the eyes of the juniors who had seen the Hindoo before. Seen closely in the light, there was no mistaking the fact that he was a real Hindoo, and that the dark bronze of his skin was natural.

"What on earth does it mean?" panted Nugent. "How did he get here? Johnny, this is the Hindoo who came to see Inky the other day!"

"I guessed that it was," said Johnny Bull, between his teeth. "I knew it must be when I saw him carrying Hurree Singh away."

"Hurree Singh? What—"

"Johnny—"

"What's happened?"

But Johnny Bull did not stay to speak. There was not an instant to be wasted. He dashed away to the School House.

The juniors followed him in a crowd. Bob Cherry and Bolsover major picked up the insensible Hindoo to carry him in.

Johnny Bull arrived at Mr. Quelch's door with half-a-dozen panting and amazed juniors at his heels. He burst the door open without waiting to knock.

The Remove master jumped up.

The sight of half-a-dozen black ruffians rushing into his study had a startling effect upon him. The juniors, in their excitement, had forgotten that they were made up as dacoits and sowars.

"What—what—what—" stuttered the Form-master.

"Mr. Quelch—"

"Ah! It is you, Bull," said the Form-master, recognising the voice. "What possesses you to come into my study in this guise?"

"Hurree Singh has been taken away."

"What?"

"That Hindoo has come back here—we've got him—but he shoved Hurree Singh over the wall, and somebody else has driven him away in a trap!" panted Johnny Bull.

Mr. Quelch seemed petrified for a moment.

"Good heavens!" he gasped. "Bull, are you sure? Have you seen this?"

Johnny Bull explained rapidly.

"Then the man is caught?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"He's here, sir," said Bob Cherry's voice, from the passage. "He's stunned."

"Bring him in."

The insensible Hindoo was carried into the study and laid on the sofa. His eyes were closed, and blood streamed from a cut on his head. He was completely unconscious.

"That man must be secured," said Mr. Quelch. "Fasten his hands at once. Hurree Singh must be instantly searched for."

Mr. Quelch, with unusual activity, made a jump for the telephone. When he put down the receiver he rustled away to the Head's study.

In a few minutes more all Greyfriars knew what had happened.

The whole of the Sixth and the Fifth turned out to hunt for the trap that had taken Hurree Singh away from Greyfriars. The juniors, much to their chagrin, were ordered to keep within gates. Mr. Quelch had called on the police both at Friarsdale and Courtfield. The Head's car was ordered out, and Dr. Locke and Mr. Quelch and Mr. Proud departed in it.

The school was buzzing with wild excitement.

The spiriting away of Harry Wharton was forgotten in the new excitement of the more serious kidnapping of Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"The Rajah of Bang" was completely forgotten. The Removites cleaned off their make-up, and changed into their ordinary clothes. Then they hung about the gates.

waiting in feverish anxiety for news. Marjorie and Clara waited there with them, deeply concerned for Hurree Singh.

There was the buzz of a taxi outside, and the car halted, and Temple, Dabney & Co. descended. They had just returned from their run on the Redelyffe road. The four Fourth-Formers stared in amazement at the wide-open gates, the lights, and the excited crowd of juniors within.

"Anything happened?" exclaimed Temple.

"They're waiting for the Rajah of Bang!" grinned Fry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up cackling!" said Bob Cherry roughly. "No times for your idiotic jokes now! Hurree Singh has been kidnapped, and perhaps murdered by this time."

"Wha-a-t!"

"What have you done with Wharton?" demanded Nugent.

"We—we left him on the Redelyffe road," stammered Temple—"only—only a jape, you know. Wharton's all right. But what's that about Hurree Singh? It can't be true."

"It is true," said Bob gruffly.

"He has been taken away," said Marjorie.

"My hat! I—I'm awfully sorry," said Temple, rather blankly. He had come back prepared to chuckle at the dismay of the Remove Dramatic Society, and he was startled to find the comedy turned into a tragedy in this way. "How—how did it happen?"

Some of the juniors explained.

"I say, it's awfully rotten," remarked Dabney; "we wouldn't have japed Wharton if we could have known. It's awful! Poor old Inky!"

"And what has happened to him by this time?" groaned Bob Cherry. "If we only knew what direction to look for him; but there's no telling. We can't do anything."

The Sixth and the Fifth fellows were beginning to come in now. It was needless to ask them if they had seen anything of the vanished junior. Their looks were enough. They had had no luck.

The police were at work; the Head was scouring the roads in his car; it was all that could be done.

The Greyfriars fellows returned dispiritedly to the School House to wait for news. Marjorie and Clara remained; they were too anxious to hear news, to think of returning to Cliff House.

Ram Das had come to his senses, and some of the masters had spoken to him, seeking to learn from him the whereabouts of the kidnapped junior. The Hindoo maintained a sullen silence.

Not a word was to be extracted from him.

Police-constable Tozer arrived from Friardale and took charge of the sullen rascal, driving him away in the trap, with handcuffs on his wrists, to the police-station.

Ram Das could have told where the missing Nabob was. But he would not speak. In his savage way he was faithful to his employer, the plotting rascal in far-off Bhanipur, who had sent him on his deadly mission. The sullen Hindoo was silent, and from no other source was information to be obtained.

The Head returned at last, unsuccessful, with a clouded brow. All now depended upon the police. They were already scouring the country for the missing Nabob and the kidnapper. But what chance of success was there—in the shadows of the night—seeking a man, unknown, unseen?

The hearts of Hurree Singh's chums were heavy with dread.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER. To Save His Chum!

HARRY WHARTON was tramping on steadily towards Greyfriars.

Little did the captain of the Remove dream of the exciting happenings in his absence. He was thinking of the play that had been "mucked up," and was far from dreaming of the deadly peril that had fallen upon his Indian chum.

He had tramped through more than one little hamlet.

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on his way, where his extraordinary complexion and garb had attracted general attention. When he came at last near Friardale, he skirted through the fields to avoid the village. He did not want to run the gauntlet in the High Street as the Rajah of Bang. That costume, which was exactly the thing for the histrionic boards in the Remove-room at Greyfriars, was a little too conspicuous for the public highways.

"Hist!"

Wharton started as the muttered word fell on his ears.

He was stepping through a gap in the hedge into Friardale Lane, when it came softly from the darkness. A shadow detached itself from the darkness of the hedge. In a glimmer of starlight Wharton recognised the man he had seen at the bungalow—the naturalised German, Larson.

"Mein Gott! It is lucky that I have met you," the German muttered. "I was afraid that you had been caught at the school, Ram Das."

Wharton stood motionless.

He was so astounded that he could not have spoken, if he had wished to.

Ram Das! He understood!

The German, evidently an acquaintance of the Hindoo who had sought to entrap Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, had taken him for Ram Das in the gloom. It was a natural enough mistake. There was certainly not likely to be another Hindoo in that quiet countryside. And in the gloom it was impossible to discern that Wharton was not a real Hindoo; his make-up was perfect, and would almost have defied the light of day.

The German came closer, breathing hard.

"I came back to look for you, after putting him in safety," he muttered. "I feared that they had you! He is safe—quite safe! But, come—bitte schnell!—they are searching for Hurree Singh, and at any moment we may be seen."

Wharton's heart throbbed.

The German was starting to get through the hedge again. Harry Wharton followed him. His brain was almost in a whirl.

He could hardly think for the moment; it was rather instinct than thought that made him keep silent and follow the German without a word.

Larson started across the dark field, and Wharton hurried after him.

"I feared they had you," the man muttered, peering at the disguised junior; "that is why I did not wait with the trap. It was better to make sure of our prey—what?"

He peered at Wharton, and the junior understood that he was expecting to be reproached for abandoning his confederate.

Wharton nodded; he could not trust his voice.

If he had spoken, the German would have discovered his mistake. To avoid talk Wharton quickened his pace.

"Ja, Ja, schnell!" muttered the German. "We cannot be too quick, Ram Das. To-morrow morning the whole country will be alive with it. We must get away this night, or we are lost. And before that, you know what you have to do."

Wharton muttered something inarticulately.

"That is your business, Ram Das; I cannot do it. If you had been caught it is different; then I should have been forced. But—but it is your task; that was agreed. Mein Gott! I am not an assassin. I obey the orders of my chiefs in Berlin; but I will not stain my hands with blood if it can be helped. But if you had been caught, I should have done your work."

Wharton's heart was beating in great throbs. He could not misunderstand.

This villain was a confederate of Ram Das, and somehow—he could not guess how—somehow Hurree Singh had been kidnapped, and Ram Das had apparently been captured. The German had placed the prisoner in a place of safety, and returned to look for his accomplice, shrinking from doing the fearful work that was required, with his own hands.

Somehow, somewhere, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, his chum, was a prisoner, and doomed to be made away with by the unscrupulous rascals, to help the plans of the cunning plotters in Berlin.

The German, lurking near the school in the darkness, watching anxiously for the Hindoo, in the hope that he had escaped after all, had taken Wharton for Ram Das.

He had not discovered his mistake yet; he was not likely to discover it, until he saw the junior in the light—Wharton did not mean to let him discover it. He meant to go with the dastard to the place where Hurree Singh was hidden, and either to save his chum or to die in his defence.

Not for an instant did the junior hesitate. He thanked Heaven for the mistake the German had made, which had given him this chance.

"Why do you not speak?" muttered Larson.

Wharton's quick wit came to his aid. He stopped suddenly, and pointed back, and bent his head as if to listen, and then started to run. That was enough for the German. He broke into a run, too.

"They are after us!" he panted. "You saw——"

"Run! Run!" panted Wharton, in a gasping voice.

He had to risk a word at last. But his gasping, broken voice, as he ran hard, did not betray him.

And Larson did not waste more time in words.

At a wonderfully fleet pace for so burly a man, he dashed on across the field, and Wharton followed fast, keeping only a pace or two behind him. Ram Das, of course, would have known the destination, but Wharton knew nothing, and he was compelled to rely upon the German as his guide. He guessed that Larson was heading for the bungalow, but, of course, he could not be sure.

Larson hardly looked back as he ran. Wharton panted on behind him.

He had time to think now. He knew the fearful danger into which he was running. He was unarmed, and the German was sure to be armed. And against the burly rascal Wharton, sturdy as he was, had no chance in a struggle single-handed. And when they reached their destination, for all he knew, they might find Ram Das there. The German feared that he had been taken, but could not be sure, and Wharton knew nothing.

And there might be others; Wharton could not know. Yet not for an instant did he hesitate.

His chum was a prisoner, menaced by a cruel and merciless death. The nabob was to be put to death in the hiding-place, wherever it was, and the two scoundrels had, doubtless, planned to be far away before the crime was discovered. Before the body of the hapless nabob was found—before it was known that murder had been done, the German and the Hindoo would be safe across the sea. While the police were searching for a kidnapped junior, Hurree Singh would be lying in his last sleep, and the two rascals would be fleeing to safety. When the discovery came it would be too late!

Wharton understood it clearly. And he knew that there was but one chance of saving his chum's life.

That chance he was taking now. His own life was in the balance; but he did not heed that. He could not. Better to die with Hurree Singh than to seek his own safety, and feel a disloyal friend and a coward for the rest of his days.

The German panted on. He was on the path over the cliffs now, and Wharton could not doubt that it was the bungalow he was heading for. And, assured of that, he drew ahead of the German to prevent the man from speaking to him again.

The active junior was a better runner than the heavy German, and he easily kept half a dozen paces ahead, the German panting on behind.

As he ran, Wharton's brain was working.

The bungalow was before him in the distance; there was no light from it, but he knew where it was. There lay his chum, a helpless prisoner. And when he reached it; when there was a light; when the German understood the mistake he had made—what then? Two victims instead of one, unless his wit saved him. As he ran on through the rough rocks of the shore Wharton stumbled and fell.

And as he fell, his hand groped over the ground, and he caught up a heavy, jagged lump of rock, and rose with it in his hand. He was armed now.

The German had paused; but Wharton ran on again, and reached the bungalow, and halted, panting, in the dark porch.

The German came panting in after him.

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"HEROES OF HIGHCLIFFE!"

EVERY
MONDAY,

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ONE
PENNY.

"Ach! Now we are safe!" Larson peered back along the shore. "We are not followed; we have not been seen! But we must not linger, Ram Das; go in and do your work, and I will wait for you here. Lose no time."

Wharton panted, affecting to have no breath for speech. What if Ram Das was already in the house? Wharton could not guess. A steely glitter came into his eyes, his hand closed hard on the jagged piece of rock. There was no mercy for the assassin.

Larson put a key in the lock and opened the door. His back was to Wharton. He turned round after unlocking the door, and Wharton's right hand was in the air. Before the German could make a movement to avoid the blow, the heavy chunk of rock crashed full in his face, and he fell like a log.

A loud cry burst from Larson as he fell, and he struggled up. But as he half rose, the rock came down on his head with battering force, and he gave a groan and rolled limply on the ground.

Wharton stood panting and throbbing from head to foot.

The burly German lay at his feet, without movement. Was he stunned? Was he shamming? The rock was ready. Wharton listened. What if the other villain was in the house? There was no sound.

Wharton bent over the German. The man lay quite still. The junior laid down the stone, Larson's hand had gone into his pocket ere he received the second blow. The junior could guess for what. He dragged out the hand of the insensible man. There was an automatic pistol in the nerveless fingers. Wharton grasped the weapon with a firm grip. He was ready for Ram Das now, if the assassin was there.

He stepped into the bungalow.

There was no sound. But the junior knew that every shadow might hide a dark-skinned foe, ready to spring upon him. With his left hand, he struck a vesta, and lighted the lamp that swung in the hall.

His eyes were well about him. But there was no sound—no movement.

He unhooked the lamp, and advanced into the house, the lamp in his left hand, the automatic pistol in his right. His face was set, his eyes burning. Under the brown hue that covered his skin, he was pale as death, but his hand did not tremble.

He looked into the kitchen, where the juniors had sheltered from the rain one day a week ago—where they had first seen the German. It was empty. He moved from room to room; there were only four. In the last room a figure lay upon the floor, bound hand and foot, the head bound up with a thick cloth. Wharton set down the lamp.

"Hurree Singh!"

Still keeping the pistol in his hand, he dragged the cloth away from the junior's head, and Hurree Singh's dark eyes looked up at him. He dragged the gag from the junior's mouth. The nabob had recovered from the drug, but the German had well-secured him before he had left him in the bungalow.

For the moment, Hurree Singh did not recognise his chum in the dark-skinned figure that bent over him.

But his bronze face was impassive.

"Hurree Singh!"

The nabob started and his eyes gleamed.

"Wharton! My esteemed chum! It is you!"

"Thank Heaven I've found you!"

Wharton tugged at the cords that bound the Indian junior. He had no knife. But in a few minutes the knots were loosened, and then Hurree Singh's nimble fingers aided in the work. The nabob rose to his feet at last—free!

"My dear pal, you have saved my life," said the Indian junior softly. "It is like a dreamful vision to see you here. Let us departfully get out."

"Quick!" muttered Wharton. "That other scoundrel may come, and I do not want——"

They hurried from the room and from the house. In the porch, the German still lay where he had fallen. He was breathing stertorously, and was quite insensible. A streak of red ran from under his blonde hair.

"It was you?" muttered the nabob, with a gesture towards Larson. "You —"

"Yes. I had to."

"It was wellfully done, my esteemed pal."

"Come."

They hurried away. Not a word more was spoken till they had passed the cliff path, and were in Friardale Lane. Then Hurree Singh told of what had happened, so far as he knew. The gates of Greyfriars were wide open when they reached the school, and old Gosling blinked at them from his lodge as they came in, and gave a shout.

But they did not heed Gosling. They hurried on to the School House. In the lighted hall was a crowd of Greyfriars fellows. They caught sight of Marjorie and Clara. As they entered, there was a yell.

"Wharton!"

"Inky!"

They were surrounded in a second.

Bob Cherry kicked open Mr. Quelch's door. The Head was there, consulting with the Remove-master.

"Cherry—"

"He's come back, sir—Inky—I mean Hurree Singh!" yelled Bob.

"What!"

The Head dashed out of the study, Mr. Quelch after him. They fairly gasped with relief at the sight of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, alive and well.

"Hurree Singh!" gasped the Head. "Thank Heaven! My dear boy! But—but who is this——"

"Wharton, sir," said Harry.

"My esteemed chum Wharton has rescuefully saved my valuable life, worthy sahib," purred Hurree Singh. "I have had a narrowful escape, but all is well that is lovely in the garden, as your English proverb says."

"Hurrah!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Hip-pip-hurrah!" yelled the juniors.

The story was listened to with breathless excitement by the Head, and then by all Greyfriars. Harry Wharton was the hero of the hour. His chums could not make enough of him. Temple of the Fourth shook his hand till his arm ached.

"It was very, very brave of you, Harry," said Marjorie, with a catch in her voice. "It makes me tremble to think of what would have happened if—if——"

"It was ripping," said Miss Clara—"simply ripping."

"The rippingfulness was terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But for the esteemed and ludicrous Wharton, I should have passed through the shadowful valley of death. But as you say in your English proverb, a stitch in time helps those who help themselves——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Marjorie and Clara returned to Cliff House much comforted. For the rest of that evening, Harry Wharton was kept busy telling and re-telling his adventure, till at last he declared that he was fed up, and declined to utter another word about it.

Police-Constable Tozer had the satisfaction of putting the "bracelets" on Herr Larson, who joined his confederate in the cells the same night, and both the rascals went to their deserts in due course. And not long afterwards came the news that Lal Nalouth had been "nailed" in far-off India, and that Hurree Singh's peril was a thing of the past—news that caused much rejoicing among the chums of the Remove. But before that time came, the "Rajah of Bang" had been performed with distinguished success, without the intervention of Temple Dabney & Co.

The heroes of the Fourth agreed that they would let the Remove "rip," and the Remove "ripped" accordingly, with great success. Temple, Dabney & Co. formed part of the audience, and cheered as loudly as anybody. For the present—probably for the present only—the hatchet was buried; which was one happy result, at least, of Hurree Singh's Peril.

THE END.

(Another fine tale of Harry Wharton & Co. will appear next Monday entitled, "Heroes of Highcliffe." Order your "MAGNET" now and avoid disappointment.)

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MONEY PRIZES FOR 'MAGNET' READERS.

On the opposite page is a miniature reproduction of pages 5 and 12 of a recent issue of "The Boys' Friend." On the next page you will find miniature pages 6 and 11 of the same issue.

In the "Gem" Library out on Wednesday—No. 379—pages 7, 8, 9, and 10 will appear in the same way.

The "Magnet" Library last week contained pages 1, 2, 15, and 16, and the current number of the "Gem"—No. 378—contains pages 3, 4, 13, and 14, thus forming a complete miniature number of "The Boys' Friend."

Both the "Magnet" and "Gem"—No. 378—can still be obtained from your newsagent.

When the whole of this miniature number has appeared, competitors will be asked to detach each set of midget pages, fold and bind them up, thus making a real miniature issue of our popular companion paper. To the reader who sends in the neatest and cleanest effort.

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This competition is confined only to readers of the "Magnet" and "Gem" Libraries, and the Editor's decision must be regarded as final. Full particulars as to where and when you have to send in your effort will be found in the "Gem" Library, out on Wednesday.

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THE OPENING CHAPTERS OF OUR NEW SERIAL.



**"THE STAR
OF**

THE CIRCUS!"

A Magnificent
Story
of Thrilling
Adventure and
Circus Life.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

Sir Richard 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.

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.

To everybody's surprise, and to the disgust of Sir Richard Battingley, who had hoped that the horse would break Clive's neck, the young equestrian successfully breaks in the animal, and Cyrano wins the bet.

Adrian Deering, conceiving a liking for May Ellis, one of the circus performers, enters into an unholy compact with Madame Cymeli, a mesmerist, to influence the girl to turn from Clive Clare, to whom she is betrothed, and marry him, and for this purpose he pays the woman fifty pounds.

(Now go on with the story.)

Supplanted!

Adrian Deering handed the notes to the old woman, who had again seated herself. She looked at them with something like contempt in her face, then shook her head.

"Why, what is wrong?" asked Deering. "That's the proper amount, isn't it?"

"I dare say—I dare say!" she croaked. "But I'm an old woman, and it's an old woman's whim to prefer gold to paper."

"But you can change the notes into gold."

"I dare say—I dare say!" rejoined Cymeli again. "But so can you, and the bank is only a few doors down the street. I'll wait!"

Deering looked up at her a little angrily.

"Do you wish to insult me?" he said. "Do you suspect that I—?"

"Cymeli never suspects!" broke in the woman. "She either knows or doesn't know as the case may be. She's never half and half!"

"Don't you think the notes are genuine?"

Madame Cymeli opened her eyes in mock surprise.

"I never suggested such a thing," she returned, "but there are a lot of bogus notes about just now."

"Surely you don't think—"

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"HEROES OF HIGHCLIFFE!"

"No, no! There is no occasion to think. But you might remember that I have read your character!"

Deering winced. That the notes were genuine he well knew, and that being so, he might very well have felt insulted. But he wanted this old woman's help, and he must humour her. Without another word, then, he put on his hat and went into the street. Five minutes later he was back again from the bank. He handed Madame Cymeli fifty sovereigns. Not a word did she say as she counted the coins and tried each one with her teeth. Then, evidently satisfied, she gave a formal receipt for the money, and rose to go.

"I can rely on you, then?" Deering asked.

"Fully and completely. Within the next few days May Ellis will spurn Clive Clare, and turn to you as if she had known you for years. Farewell!"

And, without another word, Madame Cymeli hobbled into the street, leaning heavily on her stick.

Cyrano's circus had moved on to Redstoke. In spite of the changing and lively scenes inevitable to circus life, Clive Clare was feeling just now unusually dull and depressed. Somehow or other he could not throw off the memory of the incident in connection with Sir Richard Battingley.

Even as he sat in his lodgings on this afternoon, trying to read, his thoughts would wander back to that particular episode.

But, think as he would, he could not see how Sir Richard Battingley could injure him, or why he should wish to do so. And yet there was the same dull feeling within him that the baronet was his inveterate enemy.

"What absurd thoughts I'm getting into my head!" Clive at length muttered, throwing down the book and springing to his feet. "Why should I always be thinking of this man? What is he to me, or I to him? Bah! I'm getting quite down in the mouth. I shall be going melancholy mad if I'm not careful. I will shake this feeling off. I'll go and see May. She'll cheer me up."

He put on his hat, and, leaving word what time he would be back to tea, strolled down to the circus, where May had said she would be that afternoon. He could not find her at first; but after waiting for a few minutes he at length saw her emerging from the tent, preparatory to going into the town.

He advanced towards her quickly and raised his hat. As a rule, his approach was a signal for May's eyes to light up with happiness and for her step to quicken to meet him. But on this day surely she could not have seen him; for, even when Clive got quite close to her, she did not cast her eyes his way, but kept them staring somewhat vacantly before her.

"A penny for your thoughts, May," said Clive, touching her lightly on the arm.

She turned round quickly, and snatched away her arm as if stung.

Clive started back in astonishment. There was a look in May Ellis's eyes which he had never seen there before. He was mystified.

"May, what is the matter?" he asked.

She drew herself up proudly, her brow furrowing in a slight frown.

"I would ask you, sir," she returned, "not to address me in that fashion."

"Good heavens, what do you mean?"

"I mean that whatever has taken place in the past is past. Henceforth we are strangers to one another."

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

Clive reeled as though someone had struck him a blow. "You are jesting, surely, May?" he said. "Or, more probably, you are ill?"

"No," she answered. "I am not jesting, nor am I ill. I am in earnest. Henceforth you are nothing to me, and I am nothing to you."

"Nothing to me!"

A sharp spasm of pain passed through Clive's heart as he repeated the words. A choking sensation came into his throat. His eyes filled, ready to pour forth a deluge of tears, and were only restrained by a great effort of will.

May Ellis was moving off. Clive, struck motionless with astonishment for a moment, at length darted after her. She turned round on him again.

"Mr. Clare," she said, "if you have one spark of manhood in you, I would ask you not to follow me. I never want to speak to you again."

"But, May—May, remember your word."

She knit her brows again in anger.

"When I plighted my word to you," she answered, "I thought you were different. Now I know you for what you really are."

Clive passed a weary hand across his brow. It seemed to him that he must be dreaming.

"You know me for what I really am!" he repeated. "I don't understand your meaning. What has happened? Oh, what has happened?"

"I have no wish to discuss the past. I only want you to understand that in future we are nothing to one another."

Clive pulled himself together.

"May—Miss Ellis," he said, "I am completely at a loss to comprehend you. But, though I do not understand, be assured of this—that, though it break my heart to part from you, I will never by word or deed do anything to offend you. Since you wish it, I will leave you; but, before I go, may I ask if anybody has lately come between us?"

She turned on him angrily.

"What business is it of yours?" she demanded.

Her tone and manner cut Clive to the heart. In a moment his whole nature was aflame with jealousy. He, too, in his turn grew angry.

"I see!" he said, somewhat bitterly. "Another man has supplanted me in your affections!"

"What if I tell you that that is true?" she returned.

Clive gave a mirthless laugh.

"And what if I tell you," she went on, "that it is Adrian Deering?"

"Adrian Deering—Adrian Deering!"

Clive's hand flew to his throbbing brow as he repeated the name. For a moment he could say no more.

"Yes," she murmured.

A mist came over Clive's eyes, his brain seemed to whirl round and round, his chin dropped upon his chest, and a great weight seemed to be pressing upon his heart. For quite a minute he stood thus, almost unconscious of where he was.

Nature cannot stand such oppression long. Under such conditions a woman faints. Clive, by a great effort of will, threw off the numbing feeling and roused himself. He drew his hand hastily across his eyes to clear his sight, and looked up.

May Ellis was nowhere to be seen. She had gone.

Clive's Friends Witness His Trouble—Jimmie Tells a Strange Tale.

How Clive Clare got over the first few days following his interview with May Ellis always puzzled him when in after days he thought of them. If he had been depressed before, his depression increased tenfold now; for, whereas before his low spirits had arisen from vague apprehensions, they now sank below zero from a definite cause.

In connection with his professional work at the circus he had of necessity to come into contact with May; but on these occasions she had gone through her performance mechanically—wearing a smile, it is true. But now it was a smile solely for the audience—the ordinary artiste's set smile, in which Clive now had no share.

Several times he had tried to broach again the subject of their recent discussion; but on each occasion she turned from him, refusing to be drawn into conversation. So the separation between them widened daily, and became to Clive more and more a mystery as the time passed. Sometimes his feelings of depression were so great as to be well-nigh insupportable. Once or twice he thought of quitting the old familiar circus—where now every sound and sight brought him nothing but heartache—and seeking his fortune in some distant place, where time and change might tend to soften the pain with which he had been afflicted.

Clive's condition of almost abject despair did not fail to attract the notice of his three chief friends—Lieutenant

Tremaine, Roly-Poly, and Bononi. More than one earnest discussion did these three have as to the cause thereof. That there had been a quarrel between Clive and May Ellis they quickly divined, but as to its extent they were utterly ignorant.

But after a week of careful consideration and quiet investigation, Tremaine stumbled quite accidentally on a clue to the mystery.

The ventriloquist's brows were knitted and his eyes concentrated in serious thought as one afternoon he hurried towards the lodgings jointly shared by himself and the two clowns. By his side trotted Jimmie Tribbles, one of the boys attached to the circus.

"Hallo, Tremaine!" greeted Bononi, as he caught sight of the ventriloquist's grave face. "What's wrong? And what's young Jimmie doing here?"

"There's something very seriously wrong," returned Tremaine, "and it's through Jimmie that I've discovered it. It's about Clive."

Both clowns looked up eagerly.

"Yes," went on Tremaine; "I think I'm on the track at last. I'm beginning to understand what it is that's wrong between Clive and May Ellis."

"And what is it?" asked Bononi and Roly, in a breath.

"That's best told by the lad here, Jimmie"—turning to Tribbles—"tell them what you've just told me."

The youngster put up a hasty hand and brushed away a stray lock that had fallen over his forehead, and then, very much in earnest, said:

"I was a-tellin' the lieutenant what I see an' heard this mornin'. I tumbled as there'd bin a row 'tween Mister Clive an' Miss May, an', seein' as 'ow Mister Clive 'ave allus bin more ner a gen'l'man ter me, I didn't like ter see 'im down in the mouth like—"

"Bravo, Jimmie!" put in Roly. "And so you've been keepin' your eyes and ears open, to try and do him a good turn, eh?"

"'Zackly, Mister Todd—'zackly. An' what I see wiv me own cokenut-shies an' what I 'ears wiv me own scissors an' shears,* I knows ter be true."

"Yes, that's all right, Jimmie, urged Bononi; "but cut the cackle, laddie, and come to the horses. What have you seen and heard?"

"Well, Mr. Jenks, I've seen Miss May along wiv old Madame Cymeli a good bit lately, an' I've seen Mother Cymeli a-wavin' of 'er 'ands over Miss May's face like this 'ere." And Jimmie imitated the ordinary passes of a mesmerist. "An' afterwards," he went on, "I see Miss May sorter go off ter sleep, an' then arter a minute or two wake up an' walk about like as if she was a-dreamin'."

Tremaine and the two clowns exchanged significant glances.

"Yes, Jimmie?" said the ventriloquist. "Go on, my boy. What else have you seen?"

"Well, I see Miss May a-talkin' to that 'ere feller what's allus a-loafin' around the show, which 'is name is Deering', an' I've 'eard 'im a-talkin' to 'er as if 'e jest dobst on 'er."

"Yes—yes! And what has Miss May said?"

"Oh, she's answered 'im, in a sorter o' dreamin' way, that she loves 'im wiv all 'er 'eart. An' this mornin' I 'ears this cove Deering arrange wiv 'er fer to marry 'im."

"Yes—yes! And what did she say?"

"She said"—Jimmie Tribbles was getting quite excited now—"she said as 'ow she would. An' 'e said 'e'd got a licence all fixed up, ready. An' the end of it is—Miss May's a-goin' ter meet 'im tee-morrow mornin' at Old Cradleigh Church, an' they're goin' ter be spled right away—which I 'eard it wiv me own scissors and shears, in' which I ain't a-goin' fer to doubt—likewise, it's absolute gospel!"

Once Tremaine and the clowns looked at one another. Then their eyes travelled to the walls and the ground, each lost in contemplation. For a few minutes nobody spoke a word. At a gesture from Tremaine, Jimmie Tribbles departed.

Roly-Poly at length broke the silence.

"This looks fishy, Bill," he said.

Bononi nodded.

"Very fishy indeed," Roly continued. "What do it all mean, lieutenant?"

Tremaine looked up quickly.

"It's as plain as a pikestaff to me," he replied. "There's been some tricky business here, in which this scoundrel Deering has enlisted the help of old Madame Cymeli."

"And, under her influence," put in Bononi, "Miss Ellis is going to marry this Deering to-morrow morning?"

"No, she must not!" declared Tremaine emphatically. "It's planned that way. I know; but she must never marry him!"

"Why, how can—"

* Rhyming slang for "eyes and ears."

"We must stop it!"
 "But how can we prove—?"
 "We must stop it—stop it by force, if necessary!" exclaimed the ventriloquist. "We must go to any lengths rather than allow this unholy alliance to be solemnised! Do you hear, Joe? Do you hear, Bill. We must stop it, I say!"
 "We will stop it!" exclaimed both clowns, bringing their fists down upon the table with a simultaneous crash.
 "And if needs be," added Bononi, "I'll wring that Deering's scraggy neck!"
 "Well, we'll only resort to physical force if there's no other way," said Tremaine. "In the meantime, we must keep a sharp watch both on this fellow Deering and on Miss Ellis."

The Voice from the Tomb!

"Well, my fine gentleman, what do you think of Cymeli now?"
 It was the old hag herself who spoke. Once more she was in close confabulation with Mr. Adrian Deering.
 "Madame," he answered, "you are truly a wonderful woman! A few days ago, I confess, I had my doubts as to your powers, but now I am filled with admiration for them. You are, I repeat, a most wonderful woman!"
 "Ah!" returned Cymeli complacently, "you find the girl tractable now, do you?"
 "Tractable? I can scarcely believe that, little more than a week ago, she positively hated me, whilst now she dotes on me with her whole heart!"
 The old woman put up a withered finger.
 "No!" she said, with a shake of her head. "Not with her whole heart—only with her brain! In this case the heart is governed by the brain. My influence extends over her mind alone."
 "Then, if your influence passes away from her," inquired Deering anxiously, "you mean to say she will no longer care for me?"
 The ancient beldame shrugged her shoulders.
 "That is for you to decide," she returned. "I bargained to make her marry you, not to make her care for you. It is for you to make her do that."
 "Well—well," remarked Deering, "I dare say I can manage that. At any rate, she has promised to marry me. I am to meet her at Old Cradleigh Church to-morrow morning at noon, as you know."
 "Yes, I know!" croaked Cymeli—"I know! I am to be there, of course, with her father. We are to be the witnesses."
 "Quite so. Once she is married to me, nothing then can ever part us."
 "You know best about that," the old woman replied. "And now I must be going. I have arranged to see the girl in the morning, an hour or so before she starts for the church. I shall then hypnotise her anew, in order to make quite sure of my influence lasting over the ceremony."
 "But," remarked Deering, "supposing that, in the meantime, the influence should pass away? Might she not go to that fellow Clare?"
 Madame Cymeli shook her head.
 "No, no!" she rejoined. "The patient who wakes up after hypnotic influence goes first to the one who has hypnotised her. Have no fear, my fine gentleman—have no fear!"
 And the old woman departed.

The next morning Madame Cymeli had barely finished breakfast when there came a gentle tap at her door. A moment later May Ellis entered the room. She was pale and listless, and in her eyes was a strange look of vacancy. She approached Cymeli, and, with a quivering sigh, sat down in a chair.

"Ah, dearie, how are you feeling this morning?" asked the old woman.

"Oh, my head—my head!" moaned May. "It throbs and aches as though it would split!"

"Come, come! You mustn't give way on your wedding morn. You must be bright and cheerful, as befits a bride."

"But the pain—the awful pain!"

May put a weary hand to her brow.

"Oh, we'll soon take the nasty headache away," said Cymeli. She shuffled across to the other side of the room and took from a bag a bottle of peculiar shape, half-full of a ruby-coloured liquid. "Here, dearie," she said, pouring out a small quantity into a wineglass, "drink this."

May shook her head.

"No, no!" she said. "I had better not. I think that perhaps—"

"But it did you good yesterday and the day before. It will do you good again."

"But—but these dreadful pains in my head come back again always."

"Oh, that'll pass away in a little time. Drink!"

Madame Cymeli half forced the glass into May's reluctant hand as she spoke, and, while the girl slowly raised it to her lips, the old woman mumbled over some queer rhyme:

"She who this red philtre drains
 Be for ever free from pains!"

"There, dearie! Now you'll soon feel yourself again! Let me stroke your poor aching brow. Look at me, dearie. There, there!"

She pressed May's head slightly backwards, so that their eyes should meet; and then, with her other hand, made slow and mystic passes before her. Gradually the jaded look went out of May's eyes, which grew bright and animated. Her listlessness seemed suddenly to pass away, for presently she rose from the chair and put out her hand to Madame Cymeli.

"Oh, thank you, madame!" she said gratefully. "I feel quite different now. How good to me you are!"

"Oh, it is nothing, lovey—nothing at all! But I don't like to see a bonny girl like you so ill and melancholy. Now you look bright and charming. How proud Mr. Deering will be of you when he sees you!"

"Will he? You really think he will?" May asked eagerly.

"Of course he will! He'll say you are the bonniest bride in all the length and breadth of England! And you are proud of him, ain't you, dearie? You love him with all your heart, don't you, dearie?"

"Yes, I love him with all my heart!" May repeated, her eyes flashing brightly.

"And you hate and loathe Clive Clare, don't you?"

The girl's eyes changed to anger.

"Yes," she said in a strange voice, "I hate and loathe Clive Clare!"

The old hag chuckled to herself.

"And now, my bonnie one," she said presently, "it is time for you to go back to your father, who is going to take you to the church."

"But you are going, too?" May asked.

"Yes; I shall be there as soon as you are. Good-bye, dearie, for the present."

"Good-bye, Madame Cymeli."

Old Cradleigh Church was situated about half a mile out of the town. It was a very ancient building, with an ivy-covered tower, and a fine old Norman porch at the western entrance.

Whether it was as a lover of ancient architecture, or as a searcher after curious epitaphs, is uncertain; but true it is that Adrian Deering, having arrived at the church fully half an hour before the time appointed, was beguiling the interim by wandering about the churchyard, casually looking at the tombstones.

Somehow or other he got lost in thought, and stood staring vacantly at a large vault for some two or three minutes. From this reverie he was suddenly aroused by the strange sound of a deep, hollow voice, coming, as it seemed to him, from out the very vault at which he was fixedly staring.

At first he did not quite realise it; but suddenly the pronunciation of a name startled him well-nigh out of his wits.

"Adrian Deering!" said the voice.

Deering gasped.

(Look out for next Monday's instalment of this exciting yarn. Order your MAGNET early!)



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FOR NEXT MONDAY:

"HEROES OF HIGHCLIFFE!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.

Next Monday's magnificent story of Harry Wharton & Co. tells how the Greyfriars chums are once again brought into contact with their caddish rivals of Highcliffe, at which degenerate school there have been stirring times since Frank Courtenay and the irresistible Caterpillar became such staunch allies. A serious burglary is perpetrated at Highcliffe, and Ponsonby & Co., with their usual disregard for what is honourable, choose to cast suspicion upon the chums of the Remove. This stirs the indolent De Courcy to an unusual pitch of resentment, and he and Courtenay get their backs up to such an extent that Ponsonby and his precious cronies are "put through it" with a vengeance, faring very badly indeed at the hands of the

"HEROES OF HIGHCLIFFE!"

A PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

In the issue of "The Magnet" Library dated September 5th, 1914, the following remarks appeared on my "Chat" page:

"The editorial, commercial, and printing-works staffs of 'The Magnet' Library have already contributed their full quota of citizen soldiers to serve under the Flag, and I am holding myself ready to respond to the call of duty at a moment's notice. When these words are read, in fact, I shall be with the Colours."

The recent introduction of my photograph at the head of this page has called forth comment from some of my readers, who aver that an individual so comparatively young as myself should now be in the fighting-line, in accordance with the remarks quoted above. I therefore feel called upon to make a personal explanation to all my readers. Before doing so, however, I will reproduce extracts from the letters of one or two correspondents:

"Hammersmith, W.

"Sir,—In your book, 'The Magnet,' your characters are very patriotic. If you are as young as you resemble in your portrait, we demand to know why you are staying at home instead of serving your King and Country.

"(Signed) H. EVANS and J. LEVY."

"Dear Editor,—My chums and I would like to know if you are a new Editor, as in September last an announcement appeared to the effect that the Editor was joining the Colours?"

"I must say I do not think it was honourable of you—if you are the same Editor—to make such a patriotic statement without, apparently, the least intention of fulfilling it, and I expect an explanation at once.

"I withhold my full address, so that you may reply through the public medium of your 'Chat.'—Yours truly,

"INSISTENT."

I was in two minds whether to ignore the somewhat impertinent letter of "Insistent." He is certainly entitled to an explanation, but had he been anything of a sportsman he would have withheld his high-handed accusations until such

explanation was forthcoming, and all circumstances in connection with the case were made clear. For his benefit, however—as well as for the benefit of other and more worthy readers—I would say that at the time my September

"Chat" was written I had every intention of putting my words into effect. Indeed, I had actually applied for a commission in a Territorial regiment, when a combined force of circumstances compelled me to withdraw my application. No sooner was my "Chat" written than four of the five members of my staff enlisted, and the sole welfare of "The Magnet" Library and its companion papers was left in my hands. At this time I was also unfortunate enough to sustain a domestic bereavement; and, all things considered, I deemed it advisable not to relinquish my post.

If any further extenuation of my action were necessary, it is contained in the fact that my brothers—three in all—are now on active service. One is attached to the Naval Brigade, with whom he served on that memorable occasion at Antwerp, and he is now on board the armed liner, H.M.S. Otway; another is in Flanders with the 20th County of London Territorials; while the third is also at the Front with the 1st Battalion of the Rifle Brigade.

I trust that this explanation—given frankly and without reserve—will satisfy the critical demands of Messrs. Evans and Levy, and relieve the inquisitive mind of "Insistent." I may add that, prior to the present war, I saw eight years' service in the West Kent Yeomanry, and am now drilling regularly with a Home Defence Corps, so that no insinuations as to lack of patriotism can be laid at my door.

I regret that this week's "Chat" should be taken up by a subject which is of a solely personal nature; but the correspondence reproduced above has upset me not a little, and I do not think I am expecting too much when I say that the readers who have expressed themselves in such an insulting manner should send me an apology.

In conclusion, let me say that myself and staff are sparing neither effort nor energy to maintain the high traditions of "The Magnet" Library. The future of the companion papers is full of promise, and, provided I continue to have the staunch support of my hundreds of loyal chums, these journals will, when the storm-clouds have passed away, emerge stronger, better, and brighter than ever.

"MAGNET" COMPETITION RESULT.

The work of adjudication in connection with the recent competition for increasing the circulation of "The Magnet" Library has now been accomplished, and I am at liberty to announce the name of the fortunate prize-winner. Many hundreds of suggestions were submitted for my consideration, the majority of them being of great merit and ingenuity; while the final task of singling out the best effort seemed to call for the judgment of Solomon. However, after careful deliberation, I have decided to award the cash prize of one pound to:

J. F. BEARDMORE,

26, Banks Street, Blackpool,

who is to be highly commended for his clever suggestion.

The following competitors, who ran the prize-winner very close, are deserving of honourable mention:

A. E. Cox, 4, Maismore Street, Peckham Park Road, London, S.E.

J. Sibley-Hicks, 49, Harrington Road, South Kensington, London, W.

George Farquharson, 62, New Road, Brentford.

The Editor

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