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No. 283. Vol. 9. June 12th, 1915.



Mr. Shack lifted two heavy bags into view. Fish and Bunter gazed at them ecstatically. What did it matter if the bags were crammed with coppers amounting to the value of fifty pounds sterling? Fifty pounds was worth the trouble of carrying about, however heavy it was. (See chapter 13.)

In this issue—

FIFTY POUNDS REWARD!

A grand long complete school tale of Greyfriars.
By FRANK RICHARDS,

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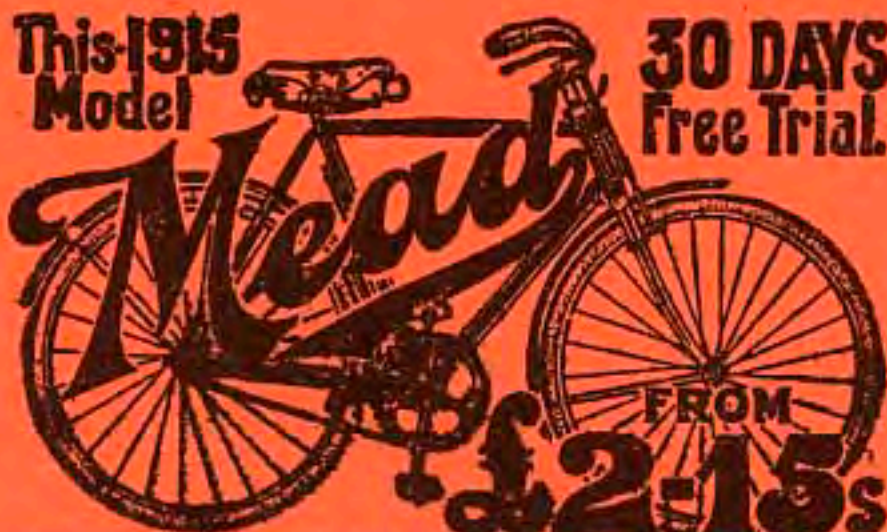
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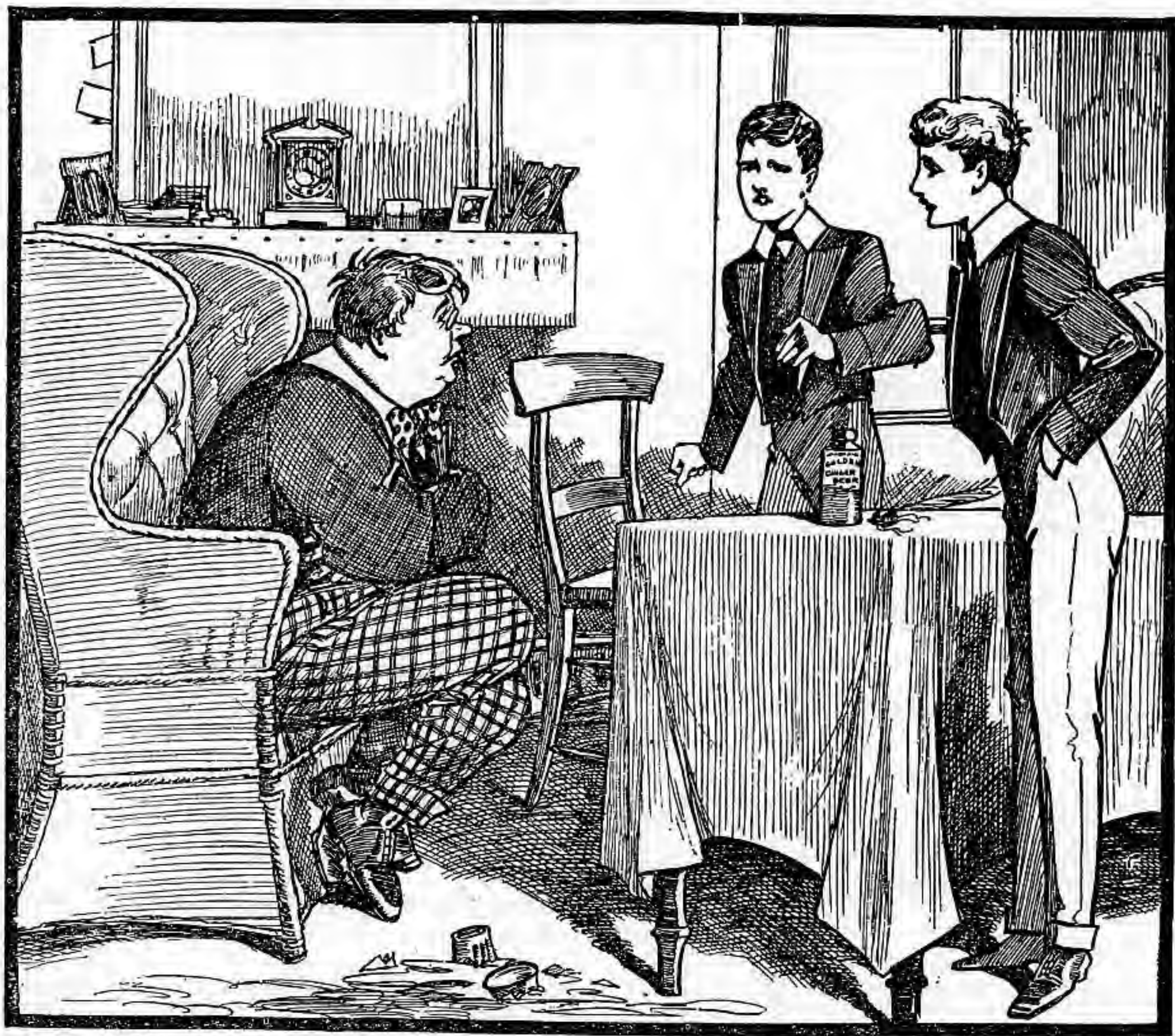


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FIFTY POUNDS REWARD!

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

By FRANK RICHARDS.



"Yow! You rotters, what are you cackling at? Fetch a doctor!" howled Bunter. "Some idiot's put strychnine or arsenic in the ginger-beer, or something. I'm dying! Oh, dear! The taste—Ugh! I'm poisoned! Oh! Ow, yow!" "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "Go ahead! We'll watch over your last moments, Buntie—" (See Chapter I.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Nice For Bunter!

"WHAT luck!"
Billy Bunter's eyes glistened behind his big spectacles as he uttered that ejaculation.
It was a warm afternoon—very warm; in fact,

hot. Billy Bunter was athirst. There was an unlimited supply of clear water from the crystal spring, so far as that went, but that was not what Billy Bunter wanted. The Remove fellows being down on the cricket-ground, Billy Bunter preferred to look through the studies in search of a stray bottle of ginger-beer or lemonade.

He started with No. 1 Study, which belonged to Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent. Billy Bunter often patronised that study on similar occasions. He had found, from long experience, that the owners of that study were less likely to bump him than the owners of the other studies, when they missed their eatables and drinkables.

And as he blinked into No. 1 Study, the first object that met his gaze was a bottle of ginger-beer standing on the table, with a glass beside it.

No wonder Billy Bunter ejaculated, "What luck!"

There was the ginger-beer, there was the glass, and there was Bunter. It was just as if Wharton or Nugent had expected his visit, and placed it in readiness for the pilferer.

Billy Bunter blinked up the passage, and blinked down the passage. Like Moses of old, he looked this way and that way, and there was no man. Then he whipped into the study.

He closed the door behind him cautiously.

Naturally, after the door was closed, he could not see that two juniors came along on tiptoe from the direction of the stairs. They were Nugent and Bob Cherry, and they were both grinning.

They paused outside the study door.

"The giddy bait is taken!" murmured Bob. "Now listen!"

From the study they heard a murmuring voice.

"Silly asses! Left this ready for themselves, I suppose, when they come in! They can't expect a chap to go thirsty in this warm weather—after all I've done for 'em, too. I'll leave 'em the bottle."

And Bunter chuckled a fat chuckle.

The fat junior did not waste time. He proceeded to uncork the ginger-beer. It was a bottle of Mrs. Mumble's best, with a label which announced that it was Gobbey's Golden Ginger-beer. There was a red-printed slip pasted over the label, which made the further announcement that the manufacturers would pay a reward of £50 to anyone who could prove that their ginger-beer contained impure ingredients. But Bunter did not trouble to read the label—he had seen that often enough before, and he knew that ginger-beer!

The cork flew out, with a very faint pop, and the ginger-beer gurgled into the glass.

Gurgle-gurgle!

Outside the study door, Nugent and Bob Cherry heard the gurgle, and waited for what would follow.

Billy Bunter filled the glass to the brim, and blinked at it with a gloating expression. Nothing could have been more agreeable on a hot afternoon. As for the cricketers, when they came in and found their ginger-beer gone—that could not be helped! It was a case of necessity knowing no law. Billy Bunter was quite a Prussian in some things.

"Here goes!" murmured Bunter. "Here's to those silly duffers—he, he, he!—and may they never forget to leave their ginger-beer on the table! He, he, he!"

And Bunter lifted the glass, and took a deep, deep drink. So deep was the drink, that he almost emptied the glass in the decimal fraction of a second.

The next second there was a crash.

The glass dropped from Bunter's fat hand, and was shattered to a score of pieces on the floor.

Smash!

"Gurrrrrrg!"

Wild and weird sounds proceeded from Billy Bunter. He staggered away from the table, spluttering, gasping, spluttering, coughing, and groaning, and doing them all at once.

"Yow! Grooo! Ugh! I'm poisoned! Yoop! Gurr! Yurrrggg! Ooooooch!"

The study door opened as Bunter collapsed into the armchair.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry, looking in.

"Anything the matter?" asked Nugent.

"Gurrrrg!"

"What's the row?"

"Yoooooggggg! Yah! Owwwwp! Groooooch!" spluttered Bunter. "I'm pip-pip-poisoned!"

"You've been scoffing our ginger-beer," said Nugent.

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"Groooch! 'Tain't ginger-beer, it's poison!" said Bunter groaning. "Oh, dear! I think I am dying! Yooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow! You rotters, what are you cackling at? Fetch a doctor!" howled Bunter. "Some idiot's put strychnine or arsenic in the ginger-beer, or something! I'm dying!"

"Oh, dear! The taste—Ugh! I'm poisoned! Oh! Ow, yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "Go ahead! We'll watch over your last moments, Bunter!"

"Ow, you beast! Ow!"

"And I'll write a poem for the 'Herald'—'Ode to an Expiring Porpoise,'" said Bob, taking out a stump of pencil.

"Grooooooch!"

"How does this go?" said Bob, rubbing his nose thoughtfully:

"Alas! alas! poor porpoise, death is near,

Why did'st thou scoff another's ginger-beer?"

"You silly ass!" roared Bunter. "I tell you I'm poisoned, and I think I am dying!"

"Well, don't mind me," said Bob; "'tain't my study. Do you mind Bunter dying in your study, Nugent?"

"Well, I think he might get along to his own study," said Nugent. "Still, if he feels very far gone, he can finish here, and I'll pitch him out afterwards."

"You rotters!" shrieked Bunter. "You—you unfeeling beasts—"

"I'll give you ten minutes," said Nugent; "then we're going to get tea. But, mind, if you're not dead in ten minutes, you go out alive."

"Gerrroooooch!"

Nugent took out his watch.

"Only nine minutes now," he said.

"Ooooooch!"

"Only eight minutes."

"Oh, you rotten beast!" groaned Bunter. "I'm poisoned! There was something in the ginger-beer. I thought it wasn't so fizzy as usual. The beasts ought to be fined for it. There was something wrong with it. It tastes like—like salt and quinine—Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothing to cackle at, you beasts! You might feel a little sympathy for a chap in agony."

"Well, I call it sympathetic to let you die in the study—in our armchair, too!" said Nugent indignantly. "Only six minutes now. Mind, no hanging it out!"

"You—you—you—"

"Only five minutes," said Nugent.

There was a tramp of feet in the passage, and Harry Wharton and Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh came in, ruddy from the cricket. They stared in surprise at Bunter groaning in the armchair, and Nugent, watch in hand, timing him.

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

"Bunter's dying."

"Eh?"

"And I'm timing him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Only four minutes now," said Nugent. "He's poisoned, you know, and he has a fancy for dying in our study. But he can't die here while we're having tea—it's not reasonable."

"Ow, you rotter!" howled Bunter. "I feel better now."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And—and I'll stay to tea."

"No, you won't!" said Nugent promptly. "You can die here if you like, but you're not staying on any other condition."

"I say, you fellows—ooooch! I say, that ginger-beer's simply rotten! It's simply poisonous!"

"So you've been scoffing our ginger-beer again, you porpoise?" said Wharton wrathfully.

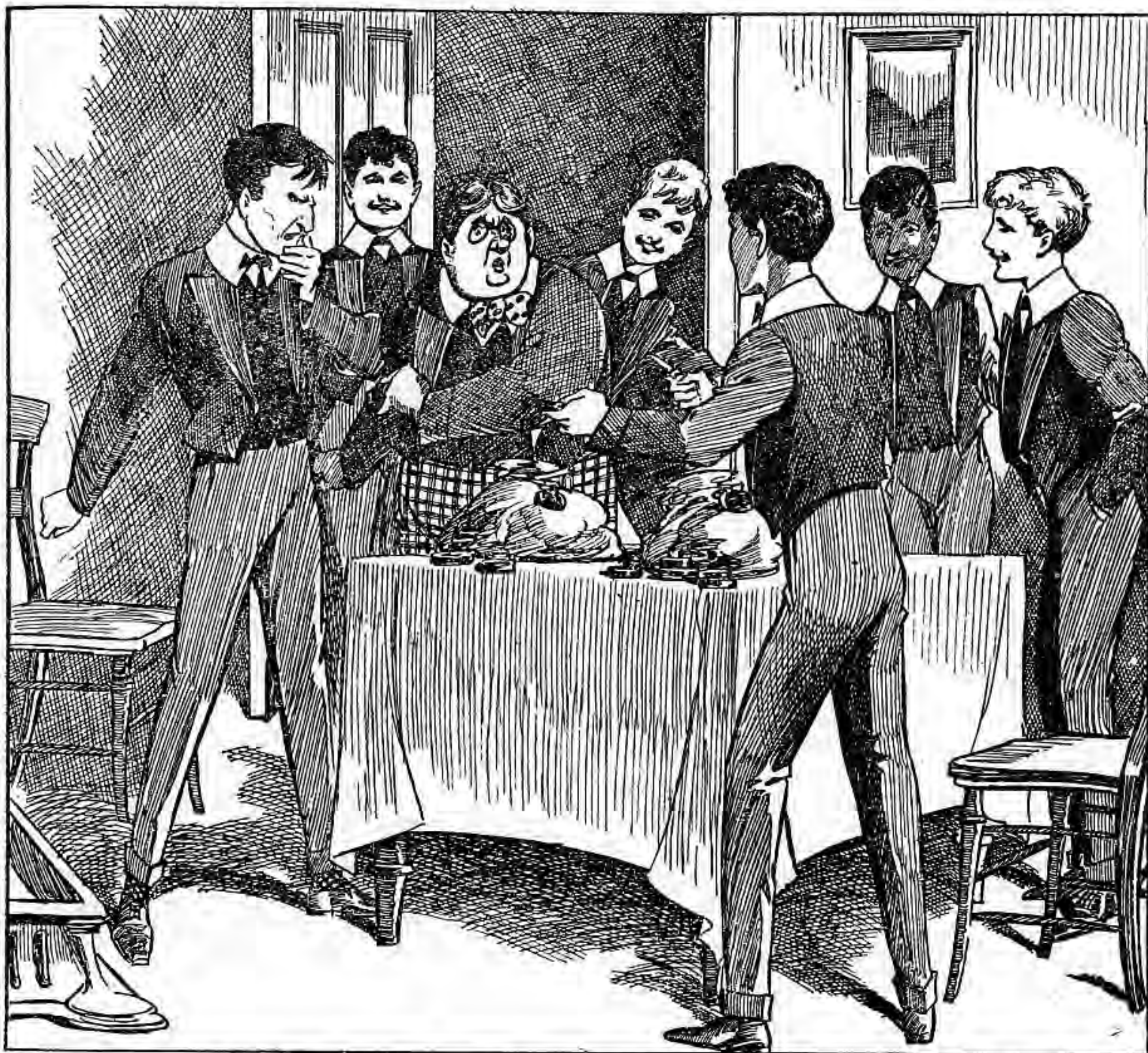
"Groooooch! It's nearly made me sick. Ow!"

"What rot! The ginger-beer was all right. Perhaps it's disagreed with what you've scoffed from some other study."

"Time's up!" said Nugent, putting back his watch.

"Now, Bunter, are you going to die or not?"

"Oh, really, Nugent! I say, you fellows, if you



"Waal, I swow!" gasped Fish, rubbing his eyes. "Weights, by gum! Shop weights!" "Sh-sh-shop w-w-w-weights!" stuttered Bunter. "Ha, ha, ha!" "The labels were right," yelled Peter Todd. "Twenty-five pounds each! Count up the weights, Fishy." (See Chapter 14.)

like to be witnesses, we can make those rotten manufacturers pay us the reward," said Bunter eagerly. "They offer a reward on the label, you know, to anyone who finds impure ingredients—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Bob Cherry—"

"That doesn't apply to ginger-beer after it's been opened and ammoniated quinine has been put in," howled Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you—you—you beast!" shrieked Bunter. "You—you—you put ammoniated quinine in that ginger-beer—"

"Why not?" grinned Nugent. "It was our own ginger-beer, wasn't it?"

"Why, you—you knew I—I—"

"We didn't know, but we suspected," grinned Bob Cherry. "We thought we'd give you a lesson about sneaking into chaps' studies and mopping up their ginger-pop."

"Ow! You rotter! I'm nearly poisoned!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've a jolly good mind to mop up the study with you!" roared Bunter.

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE SCOUTS' VICTORY!"

"Ha, ha! Go ahead with the mopping!"

"Still, to show there's no ill-feeling, I'll stay to tea," said Bunter. "I—I can take a j-j-joke."

"You can take your hook, too, you fat burglar!" said Nugent. "Hold him, Johnny, while I pour the rest of the ginger-beer down his neck. He may as well have the lot."

"Right-ho! Hold on, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter made one bound into the passage. He had had enough of that ginger-beer. Before Johnny Bull could reach him he was in Study No. 7, and the door was locked.

The Famous Five, chuckling, proceeded to have tea, and Billy Bunter, locked up in his own study, was left to enjoy as best he could the flavour of the ammoniated quinine.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Quite Honest!

"FIFTY pounds reward!"

Fisher T. Fish halted as he heard Billy Bunter murmur these interesting words. It was a couple of days after Bunter's unpleasant experience in Study No. 1.

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

Since that experience Bunter had not raided any more free drinks. One experience of that sort had been enough for him. As Bob Cherry expressed it, since then he had used no other.

"Fifty pounds!" murmured Bunter again.

Bunter was seated on a bench under the old elms in the Close, his fat brows wrinkled in thought.

"Hallo!" said Fish.

The mention of money always interested Fisher T. Fish. As he would have expressed it in his own language, that was where he lived! Fisher T. Fish generally had some little scheme on for making money, and he was reputed to be not over-particular as to ways and means. It happened, at the present moment, that Fishy was in funds, his "popper," in New York, having sent him five dollars—which, in English money, amounted to a "quid."

Fisher T. Fish was very careful with his money, and at present the "quid" reposed safely in his pocket. He didn't believe in spending money if he could help it. He preferred to think out some scheme by which his cash could be made to increase and multiply. Just now, by a really extraordinary chance, he was without a scheme, while he was supplied with cash. He was generally supplied with a scheme but out of cash.

"Fifty quid!" repeated Fish. "What are you burbling about, Bunter?"

Bunter blinked at him.

"It might be worked," he said.

"What might?"

"You're a businesslike chap, Fishy," said Bunter, "you're always swindling somebody in one way or another—"

"Why, you fat jay—"

"I'll tell you what," said Bunter, "I'll take you in!"

Fisher T. Fish sniffed.

"I guess you'd have to get up very early in the morning to take in a galoot who's cut his eye-teeth in Noo York!" he replied.

"I don't mean that—I mean I'll take you into the dodge, and you can help me work it," said Bunter. "I've been thinking it out, but I can't quite get on to how to do it. And there may be money needed, too, and I haven't any. My pater is getting mean again, he hasn't sent me any tin lately, and I've been disappointed about a postal-order I was expecting."

"Yow! Don't spring your postal-order on me, for goodness' sake," said Fishy. "I guess I know all about that postal-order. I guess I can look after my own durocks, too. You're not touching my durocks, I calculate!"

"I don't want any durocks, whatever they are," said Bunter. "It's money—that's what I shall want."

"And you're supposed to learn English at this hyer school," said Fisher T. Fish, in deep contempt. "Don't you know that 'durocks' means money? But what's the dodge? Mind, I'm not undertaking anything, but I'm willing to hear it. If there's anything in it, I'll take it in hand and run it. I'm a business man, you know that. Now, yaup it out!"

"Halves, if there's anything in it," said Bunter.

"I guess that's fair—halves," agreed Fish. "But what's the dodge?"

"Fifty pounds reward," said Bunter. "You've seen the ginger-beer labels—Gobbey's ginger-beer, you know?"

"Yep!"

"They offer fifty pounds reward to anybody who can prove that there are impure ingredients in the ginger-pop—"

Fish snorted.

"Nothing in that! That's only an advertisement."

Fish pronounced that word in his native manner, with the accent on the penultimate. "They know the ginger-beer's all right, of course!"

"I was nearly poisoned with it the other day," said Bunter.

"Honest Injun?" asked Fish.

"Yes; I suffered fearful pains—agony, in fact!"

"And it was through drinking Gobbey's ginger-beer?" exclaimed Fish, his cold grey eye lighting up.

"Yes; Bob Cherry had put quinine into it—"

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"Why, you jay," howled Fish. "You can't make a claim on that! That doesn't count."

"I know it doesn't, fathead, but I was thinking—look here, suppose somebody put something in some of it—"

"Waal?"

"And got some witnesses to prove that it was rotten stuff, you know—"

"Oh, by gum!"

"And claimed the reward," said Bunter.

"My hat!"

"I suppose that would be business—what you'd call business?" said Bunter, blinking at him. "I know the other chaps would call it swindling, but they always say you're swindling, don't they?"

Fisher T. Fish reflected.

"I guess the bottles could be opened and something put in, and then closed again," he remarked. "I calculate I could work that. But—but it's risky. Of course, it's only business. If they choose to offer a reward, it's up to any galoot to bag the reward if he can. It's up to them to keep their eyes peeled and see that they're not squeezed."

"Squeezed?" said Bunter. "I don't want to squeeze them. I want to get the reward!"

"Squeezed—that means diddled," said Fish, interpreting. "I own up, it would be sharp—rather sharp—even for business. But fifty pounds is a big sum—why, that's two hundred and fifty dollars in real money! Of course, I couldn't have a hand in any swindle. I bar that. The question is, would it be a swindle? We buy the ginger-beer, don't we?"

"You do," said Bunter. "I haven't got any money."

"Oh, you jay! I'm only putting a case. We buy the ginger-beer—well, when we've bought the ginger-beer it's ours, isn't it?"

"I suppose so."

"A galoot can do as he likes with his own property, can't he?"

"Of course he can!" assented Bunter.

"Waal, if we choose to put some salt, or quinine, or something in our own ginger-beer, that's all according to Cocker, isn't it?"

"I don't see why we shouldn't."

"Then we can cork up our own bottles again, I guess. So far, it's all O.K. Well, after that's done, we ask some fellows to take a little refreshment," said Fish, thinking it out very deeply. "They take it, and they're nearly poisoned with the ginger-beer—"

"He, he, he!"

"Naturally, they growl about it, and then we draw their attention to the label, and the fifty pounds reward offered, and ask 'em to bear witness that the stuff was simply poisonous—"

"Good!"

"We don't say anything against the stuff ourselves—it all depends on the evidence of disinterested parties," said Fish, his eyes glittering. "On their evidence, we make the claim. We're not called upon to give the company gratuitous information concerning our earlier proceedings with our own property."

"Certainly not," agreed Bunter.

"Those witnesses will think that the ginger-beer hasn't been opened before they got at it. They'll bear witness to that effect. We're not bound to contradict them—our own friends, too."

"Just so!"

"Their evidence makes out the claim, and the company will have to pay up," said Fisher T. Fish. "I guess I don't see how they can crawl out of it. It all depends on the personal character of the witnesses. You wouldn't be any good as a witness."

"Oh, really, Fishy—"

"But chaps like Wharton and Cherry and Linley—their evidence couldn't be doubted. The company would have to pay out—or we might compromise, and take half the reward to save trouble. They'd be glad to avoid publicity, I guess. I guess we could work the raffle. If there's any swindle in the matter, it rests on those chaps who give evidence against the ginger-beer."

"D-d-does it?"

"Of course it does," said Fish airily. "If they like

to make a mistake, and bear false witness out of sheer fatheadedness, it's their own look-out. The fact stands out that the ginger-beer had impure ingredients in it, and we can prove it, and we're not bound to state anything that we happen to know about the stuff having been doctored in advance. I guess this dodge is perfectly honest, Bunter."

"Good!"

"I should decline to have anything to do with a dodge that wasn't perfectly honest, of course," said Fish. "Honesty is the best policy, you know. I guess we can work the raffle. But keep it dark—keep as mum as a clam. You see, the other galoots mightn't look at it as we do. They don't understand business. Besides, if it got out we shouldn't touch the reward. Not a syllable, mind."

"Not a whisper," said Bunter. "But how are we going to work it, Fishy?"

"Leave that to me," said Fishy, in his airy way. "I guess I'll work that out. As it's a half-holiday this afternoon, we'll get to work at once. The galoots will be playing cricket, and they'll get dry, and they'll be glad of a ginger-pop, especially if they don't have to pay for it. I guess I'll buy up half a dozen bottles at once, and get 'em into my study and doctor 'em."

"Might make 'em suspicious if you ask 'em into your study for a treat," said Bunter. "They know how jolly mean you are, you know."

"Why, you fat jay—"

"I—I—I mean—"

"I guess we won't have it in my study, either," said Fish sapiently. "I'll smuggle the stuff back into the tuck-shop, and they'll conclude I've just bought it."

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter, in great admiration for the sagacity of the Yankee junior.

"And to keep up appearances, I'll take some of the stuff myself, and howl out that I'm poisoned," said Fish.

"Oh, crikey!"

"And you can do the same, Bunter."

"I—I'd rather not—"

"Rats! It's worth a little trouble to bag fifty quid!" said Fish. "You needn't drink much—only enough to keep up appearances. I guess I'll get the ginger-pop now; strike the iron while it's hot, you know. But look here, you've got to stand half the expense!"

"Stony!"

"Then you won't take halves—you'll have to be satisfied with a quarter!"

Bunter glared.

"I'll jolly well take halves, or I'll tell Wharton the whole yarn!" he exclaimed.

"Why, you fat mugwump!" exclaimed Fish indignantly. "I guess I'm only doing this for your sake—out of pure philanthropy, I guess!"

"Halves!"

"Now, you be reasonable, Bunter—"

"Halves!"

"I guess—"

"Halves!" roared Bunter.

"Waal, I guess I'll make it halves," said Fish. "This stunt is too good to be wasted, and I guess I'm going to work the raffle, some. Halves it is. But, mind, not a word!"

"What-ho!"

And Fisher T. Fish, who, like a really keen American business-man, believed in striking the iron while it was hot, scudded off to Mrs. Mumble's little shop in the corner of the Close, and forthwith purchased six bottles of Gobbey's Golden Ginger-beer, to carry out the precious scheme which he had demonstrated to be quite honest.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Partners!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"What have you got there, Fishy?"

Fisher T. Fish compressed his thin lips with annoyance. He had made his purchase, and he was coming into the School House with six bottles of ginger-beer concealed under his jacket. To conceal six bottles of ginger-beer under an Eton jacket was not easy, and Fish had to hold his arms tightly down to his sides, to prevent the bottles from slipping away. The sight of Fisher T. Fish walking, or, rather, humping along,

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NEXT MONDAY—

"THE SCOUTS' VICTORY!"

with his arms glued to his sides, naturally surprised the Famous Five, as they met him in the hall.

"Been looting?" asked Frank Nugent.

"What's the plunder, Fishy?"

"I guess I've just been getting some tuck," said Fish carelessly, and he passed on to the stairs.

The Famous Five looked after him in astonishment. Fishy was naturally anxious to keep his purchases out of sight; but Harry Wharton & Co. did not see any reason why he should carry "tuck" hidden under his jacket.

Bob Cherry, whose sense of humour was unduly developed, stepped quietly after Fishy as he started mounting the stairs, and jerked at the tail of his jacket.

Crash! Crash!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Two bottles of ginger-beer bumped on the stairs and rolled down. Fisher T. Fish made a wild clutch after them, and immediately four more bottles rolled out and crashed on the stairs.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly jay!" howled Fish.

"Ginger-beer," said Johnny Bull. "Is that for us, Fishy?"

"I guess it isn't, you jay!" growled Fishy, gathering up the bottles with a very red face. "I guess I'll make potato-scrappings of you, Bob Cherry, if you play your silly goat tricks on me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, what are you hiding your blessed plunder for?" said Bob. "Do you think anybody is going to ask you to stand treat, you fathead? We know you too well!"

"Oh, rats!"

Fisher T. Fish gathered up his bottles, and further concealment being useless, he carried them upstairs in his arms, and conveyed them safely to No. 14 Study. That apartment was shared by the American junior with Johnny Bull and Sampson Quincy Ifley Field, but it was empty now, as it was just before dinner. Fisher T. Fish locked the six bottles up safely in a box, and put the key in his pocket.

It was very exasperating that the bottles should have been seen by the very fellows they were to be "planted" on afterwards, in a doctored state. But Fish reflected that the Famous Five were not likely to "tumble" to his great stunt in a month of Sundays. They were far from being suspicious fellows, and their brains did not work on the same lines as Fishy's. If they thought about the matter at all, they would conclude that Fishy was standing himself a little treat, and was only anxious not to be asked to "whack it out" with anybody.

"I guess those galoots are too dense to smell a rat," murmured Fish. "I reckon it will be all O.K. There's only one galoot in this hyper school with his eye-teeth out, and that's me, F. T. Fish!"

So Fisher T. Fish went down to dinner in a serene mood. At the dinner-table, Billy Bunter made knowing signs to him. That was Bunter's way of keeping the secret. He grinned, and winked behind his spectacles, and generally succeeded in attracting the attention of half the Remove.

Fish looked daggers at him; but the Owl of the Remove was too short-sighted to note Fishy's expression.

When the juniors left the dining-room, Bunter rolled up to Fisher T. Fish, and demanded in a stage whisper if Fishy had "got 'em."

Fisher hurried out into the Close.

"I say, Fishy!" shouted Bunter.

He rolled out after the Yankee junior. Fishy did not stop till he reached the Cloisters.

In that secluded spot, he allowed the Owl of the Remove to overtake him. Billy Bunter rolled up panting for breath. He never had too much breath, especially just after dinner.

"I s-s-say, Fishy," he gasped, "wharrer you buzzing off like that for? I asked you— Yooooooooooooop!"

Billy Bunter concluded his remarks with a spluttering gasp, as Fish seized him by the throat and backed him up against a stone pillar.

"Grrrrrrrrh!" rumbled Bunter.

"You slab-sided jay!" hissed Fish. "Do you want to

give the whole show away? Do you want those galoots to get on to the stunt, you shirking mugwump! Hey?"

"Gurrrrg!"

Bunter's eyes almost started through his spectacles. He could not argue with Fisher T. Fish, because his breath was shut off. All he could do was to plant a fat fist suddenly on Fish's nose, which he did. Then it was Fisher T. Fish's turn to yell.

He staggered back, clasping his nose with both hands. It was a sharp, prominent nose, but Fishy felt for a moment as if it had been flattened like a pancake.

"Yow! You silly jay!" howled Fish.

"You blithering owl!" gasped Bunter.

"You fat idiot!"

"You skinny lunatic!"

"I guess I'll——"

"I know I'll——"

A fat fist and a skinny fist were brandished furiously, and it looked as if the partners would come to blows on the spot, and thus dissolve the precious partnership. But Fisher T. Fish remembered in time that that wasn't business. He lowered his bony fist.

"You jay!" he gasped. "I'd make shavings of you, only I've no time. You silly mugwump, what do you punch my nose for?"

"What did you throttle me for, you dangerous lunatic?" howled Bunter. "Don't you know it's dangerous to shake a chap when he's just had dinner. You might have given me dyspepsia or something."

"You fat mugwump——"

"You bony bounder——"

"Look hyer, that's enough gas!" said Fish. "This ain't business. I want to warn you not to give the game away, you jay! Don't blink and grin at me as if we've got a secret!"

"Well, we have got a secret, haven't we?" demanded Bunter.

"Yep, you fathead; but we don't want to tell all Greyfriars so!" exclaimed Fish. "You make me tired. If the galoots suspect what's on the game's up, and we shall get a ragging into the bargain."

"Well, you be careful, then," said Bunter. "Don't make me chase you across the Close when I want to ask you a question. Have you got 'em?"

"Yep!"

"Have you doctored 'em yet?"

"Nope!"

"Well, I'll have one of 'em," said Bunter. "I'm thirsty."

Fisher T. Fish did not reply to that. He made a sudden jump at Bunter, and grasped him, and sat him down on the flagstones with a crash, and then left him. Billy Bunter was left trying to recover his breath. Fisher T. Fish proceeded to No. 14 Study in the Remove passage.

He found Bob Cherry sitting on the table, talking to Johnny Bull and Squiff, who were putting on their shoes. Bob had a bat across his knees.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! You've come to hand out the ginger-pop?" asked Bob, as the American junior entered the study.

"Nope!" snapped Fish. "And I guess I want this study. I've got some work to do."

"Another scheme for making money?" demanded Johnny Bull. "If you're up to some new swindle, Fishy, you're going out of this study on your neck, same as last time!"

"I guess you can go and eat coke, Johnny Bull! I reckon I'd make potato-scrappings of you, only I'm busy to-day. Seen my Latin grammar?" asked Fish cunningly.

"Oh, if it's Latin grammar, you can go ahead!" said Johnny Bull. "But you know what to expect next time you start in business."

"Oh, bow-wow!"

The three juniors left the study, and Fish promptly locked the door after them. He wanted the room to himself. It would hardly have done to let the juniors catch him in the act of "doctoring" the ginger-beer.

Fish opened the box, and took out the six bottles. There came a thump at the door, and Bunter's voice came through the keyhole.

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"I say, Fishy!"

"Vamoose the ranch, you fat jay!" roared Fisher T. Fish, utterly exasperated by the persistence of the fat junior.

"Have you done it yet?"

"Nope! Shut up!"

"Then I'll have a drink first——"

"Will you absquatulate?" yelled Fish furiously.

"Oh, really, Fishy——"

"Light out, you fat toad!"

"Look here, five bottles will be enough, and you've got six——"

Fisher T. Fish unlocked the door. At that rate, the secret might as well have been shouted through a megaphone from the top of the tower. Billy Bunter rolled in, and Fish gave him a look which ought to have slain him on the spot. Then Fishy locked the door again.

"You howling jay, do you want to tell all the Remove?" stuttered Fish.

"Well, lemme have some of the ginger-beer before you doctor it," said Bunter, in an injured tone. "We're partners, ain't we?"

"I'll partner you!" gasped Fish. "Look here, see this cricket bat?"

"Yes; what——?"

"Well, if you say another word, I'll brain you with it!" said Fish. "Now sit in that armchair and shut up!"

"Oh, really, Fishy—— Yaroooh! Keep that bat away, you rotter! Oh, ow! You've busted my ribs!" yelled Bunter.

"I'll bust your silly head next time!"

"Look here—— Yow-ow-ow! Stop it!"

Billy Bunter dodged round the armchair, blinking furiously through his glasses. Fish laid the bat on the table, ready for use. Then he took a packet of Epsom salts out of the table drawer. That was what he had chosen as a new flavouring for Gobbey's Golden Ginger-beer.

But before he could commence operations, after opening the packet, there came a shake at the study door, and Johnny Bull's wrathful voice was heard.

"Who's locked this blessed door?"

Knock! Knock!

"Open the door, Fishy!"

"Can't!" yelled Fish.

"I've left my bat in there."

"I guess you can borrow somebody else's bat then."

"Let me in, you fathead!"

"Can't be did! I'm doing Latin verbs, and I can't be interrupted by a silly ass who's forgotten a silly bat!"

"Will you unlock this door?" came Johnny Bull's sulphurous tones through the keyhole.

"Nope!"

"I'll wallop you!"

"Rats!"

"Why, you—you—you!"

"Oh, absquatulate, do!"

Johnny Bull gave the door a furious shake, and "absquatulated." There was nothing else to be done, as he could not get through the keyhole. His chums were calling him from the end of the passage.

"What's the trouble?" asked Harry Wharton, as Johnny came down the passage with a flustered and frowning face.

"That idiot Fish has locked himself in the study, and won't open the door!" gasped Johnny. "I can't get my bat. I'll lay it about him presently!"

"What is he up to?" asked Peter Todd.

"Latin verbs, he says."

"Fishy swotting!" exclaimed Nugent, in surprise.

"So he says. More likely up to some trick!" growled Johnny Bull. "I'll swot him! I'll give him Latin verbs! Br-r-r-r!"

ANSWERS

The chums of the Remove went down to the cricket-ground, and soon forgot all about Fisher T. Fish. The enterprising Yankee junior was left in peace to carry out his latest scheme.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. Fishy Stands Treat!

"**T**AIN'T so jolly easy," said Fisher T. Fish, looking doubtfully at the brown stone bottles. "I guess I shall have to be careful. The blessed stuff will lose all its fizz!"

"I say, Fishy, it'll be a lot of trouble to doctor six bottles!"

"Shurrrup!"

"Better let me——"

Fisher T. Fish grasped the bat, and gave Bunter a look. The fat junior backed behind the armchair again.

Fisher carefully untied the string that secured the cork, and carefully persuaded the cork out of the bottle. He did not want to leave any signs of handling on the cork if he could help it. There was a fizz of ginger-beer, and, in spite of his care, the cork suddenly shot through his fingers. Billy Bunter had approached again, and he was just in the line of fire.

The flying cork caught him on his fat chin, and it was followed by a stream of ginger-beer. Bunter staggered back with a howl, and sat down on the carpet.

"Ow! Yoop! Oh, you fathead! Oh!"

"What did you get in the way for, you jay?"

"Grooooh! I'm smothered! Look at me!" shrieked Bunter.

"I guess I've got no time to look at you. That's one bottle wasted," said Fish discontentedly.

Billy Bunter mopped his streaming face, and wiped his spectacles, and blinked with fury. But Fish had no attention to waste on his fat partner. One bottle out of his six was done for, and it was a clear waste of a penny. The loss of a penny gave Fisher T. Fish a distinct pain.

His care with the next bottle was marvellous. He did not mean that another penny should be wasted, if he could help it.

With infinite patience he persuaded the cork out and jammed his thumb into the bottle in time. Then it was a question of introducing the salts. That was the most difficult part of his task.

He had to let most of the "fizz" escape, willy-nilly, but at last a portion of salts was introduced into the bottle, and it was re-corked and restored to its former appearance.

Bunter blinked on with a disapproving eye, and mopped his fat face.

"They'll notice that don't fizz when they open it," he said.

"They won't open it," growled Fish. "I guess I'm going to open it."

"But I tell you——"

"And you'll be opening some at the same time, and making 'em pop," said Fish. "We'll work this between us."

Bunter brightened up a little.

"That's a good idea," he remarked. "I'll open as many as you like, Fishy. I like ginger-beer in warm weather."

"Br-r-r!" said Fish.

The enterprising money-maker of the Remove laboured with the rest of the bottles. There was one more accident; but four of the bottles were completed to his satisfaction.

"I guess four will do," said Fish.

"Might as well have let me have the other two," said Bunter.

"Oh, ring off! Now we'll get these down to the tuck-shop."

Fish unlocked the door. He had been a good hour and a half engaged upon that preliminary operation, and it had not been easy work. But Fisher T. Fish was willing to expend any amount of trouble when there was a prospect of "dollars" ahead.

"Shove a couple of 'em under your jacket," he said. "We mustn't be seen getting them down to the tuck-shop. Even those jays would smell a rat if they saw that."

The coast was clear, as it happened. The Remove

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ONE
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and the Fourth were playing cricket, a Form match, and nearly all the juniors were on the cricket ground, playing or watching the play. A senior match was going on, on Big Side, too, and it also had its crowd of onlookers.

The School House was almost deserted, and there were very few fellows in the Close. Fisher T. Fish and Billy Bunter conveyed the four bottles of doctored ginger-beer unseen to the tuckshop. Mrs. Mimble was in her little parlour behind the shop. Fish gave a keen glance in that direction, but the good dame was not to be seen. She depended upon being called by a tap on the counter if a customer came in.

On the counter was a great array of ginger-beer bottles. Fisher T. Fish calmly placed the four doctored bottles along with the rest. He placed them nearest the edge of the counter. Bunter watched that proceeding in surprise.

"I say, Fishy——" he began.

"Shut up, you clam!"

"Yes, but——"

"Don't jaw! Leave it to me!" hissed Fisher T. Fish. "Go and see if the fellows are coming. They'll be in here after the innings."

Bunter rolled to the door and blinked out.

"Here they come, Fishy!"

"Good!"

Fisher T. Fish rapped on the counter sharply, and in a few moments Mrs. Mimble came out of her little parlour.

"Doughnuts, please!" said Fish.

Mrs. Mimble proceeded to serve Fish with doughnuts. There was a tramp of feet in the doorway, and a crowd of juniors came in. The Remove innings was over, and a number of the cricketers had come along for liquid refreshment before the Fourth Form innings started. A few minutes Mrs. Mimble was very busy.

"How are you fellows getting on?" asked Fish affably, with his mouth full of doughnuts.

"Oh, winning hands down!" said Bob Cherry. "Sixty, and declared after the sixth wicket. Temple's lot can't stand up against the Remove."

"So here you are," growled Johnny Bull, giving Fisher T. Fish a basilisk glare. "Now, what did you lock me out of my study for?"

"Peace, my infant," said Fish. "Don't start ragging just when I'm standing you treat. I say, I've had a remittance from my popper. Who says ginger-beer?"

"Ginger-beer!" said Billy Bunter promptly.

"You're standing treat, Fishy?" ejaculated Harry Wharton.

"Yep."

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing's the matter, I guess," growled Fish, as the juniors chuckled. "I suppose a chap can stand treat when he's in funds, can't he?"

"Excuse my being surprised," said Wharton gracefully. "Miracles don't happen every day, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't shoot off your mouth at me!" said Fish. "I guess I mean business from the word go. Change that half-crown, Mrs. Mimble. It's all right; I'll help myself."

Fisher T. Fish took four bottles from the counter. Billy Bunter burst into a fat chuckle. He understood the Yankee schoolboy's little game now. A dozen fellows had seen Fish take those doctored bottles from Mrs. Mimble's stock. How were they to guess that those bottles had been doctored in Fishy's study?

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Wherefore the cackle?" asked Bob Cherry, staring at Bunter.

"He, he, he!"

"Oh, chuck cackling like an old hen, and help me get this ginger-pop opened, you fat clam!" said Fish.

"All right, Fishy. Here's a corkscrew."

"I guess I don't want a corkscrew, fathead! Here you are—go ahead."

Fish helped himself to half a dozen more bottles.

"That's ten, Mrs. Mimble."

"Yes, Master Fish."

Bunter chuckled again. Fishy was paying twice over

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for the four bottles he had doctored. Certainly nobody was likely to suspect him of that.

Ginger-beer was popping now every minute or so as the thirsty juniors came in. Fisher T. Fish and Bunter had ten bottles to open, and if four of them did not pop, it was not likely to attract attention. Fish swamped the ginger-beer into the glasses as fast as he opened the bottles.

"Here you are, Wharton! Here you are, Cherry! Here you are, Bull! Here you are, Nugent!"

"Thanks!"

"Here's to you, Fishy!"

"May your popper's shadow never grow less."

And the juniors, warm and thirsty from the cricket, drank deeply. Fisher T. Fish and Bunter drank along with the rest. Then there was a sudden yell from Fisher T. Fish. The ginger-beer he had drunk was, as a matter of fact, as pure as any made by the great firm of Gobbey. But it was part of his game to appear to find it as bad as four of the juniors undoubtedly would find it.

"Yoooooop!" yelled Fish. "Oooooop! Grooooooop!"

"What's the matter?" demanded Squiff.

"Yow—ow—ow! I'm poisoned!"

"Yow!" gasped Bob Cherry. "What's wrong with this blessed ginger-beer? Oh, dear!"

"Ow! Oh!" mumbled Nugent.

"Poooooof!" came from Wharton.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

There was a chorus of lamentation, and loudest of all was the voice of Fisher T. Fish.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Sufferers!

MRS. MIMBLE gazed at the suffering juniors in astonishment.

Never, in all the time she had kept the school shop at Greyfriars, had she heard complaints made of the ginger-beer she sold.

But now five voices were uttering complaints, and in the most energetic manner. A sixth was soon added, Billy Bunter taking his cue from his astute partner. Bunter gave a deep groan, and collapsed against the counter.

"Ow! Ow! Ow! Fetch a doctor quick!"

"What the thunder—" said Peter Todd.

"It's the beer," groaned Bob Cherry. "There's something wrong with it. It takes like—like prussic acid!"

"What does prussic acid taste like?" asked Peter.

"How should I know, fathead? Ow!"

"It's horrible!" said Wharton, rubbing his mouth out with his handkerchief, and making a very wry face.

"What's the matter with it, Mrs. Mimble?"

"There's nothing the matter with my ginger-beer," said Mrs. Mimble, with asperity. "It's the very best."

"Well, it tastes rotten."

"Like prussic acid," persisted Bob Cherry.

"Like rat-poison," said Nugent.

"Like strychnine and tin-tacks, I guess," said Fisher T. Fish. "Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Oh, Jerusalem!"

"Fetch a doctor!" moaned Bunter. "I'm dying!"

Wharton gave the Owl of the Remove a sudden, suspicious look.

"Look here, is this a jape?" he exclaimed. "We doctored some stuff for Bunter the other day, to stop his pinching—"

"Help!" moaned Bunter. "You silly ass! Do you think I should play a trick on myself? Ow! I'm expiring!"

"I guess it isn't a trick," said Fisher T. Fish. "I took the bottles from that stack; you all saw me."

"Yes, that's so," agreed Wharton. "But there's something jolly wrong with the ginger-beer, there's no doubt about that."

"I guess I'm not going to pay for it!" howled Fish.

"You will pay for what you ordered, Master Fish," said Mrs. Mimble very firmly.

"I guess I'm not paying for poison, ma'am."

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"Mrs. Mimble ought to be prosecuted for selling such stuff," moaned Bunter. "I shall complain to the Head."

"But—but there cannot be anything wrong with it," said the good lady, in great distress. "It is always all right."

"They must have put some muck in some of it," said Johnny Bull. "It's got a horrible taste—a sort of chemical taste. But it isn't your fault, Mrs. Mimble; you didn't make it. If Fishy doesn't pay for it, we will."

"I guess I'm not paying for that kind of ginger-beer," said Fisher T. Fish obstinately. "I'm sorry for you, Mrs. Mimble, but you can't expect it."

"Really, Master Fish—"

"I guess I'll trouble you to hand me back my half-crown," said Fish firmly.

"Take it out of this, ma'am," said Johnny Bull, throwing a two-shilling piece on the counter.

"Thank you, Master Bull!"

Fisher T. Fish pocketed his half-crown.

"I guess I'm going to see a doctor," he said. "You galoots had better do the same. That stuff may injure you."

"Oh, it's only the taste!" said Wharton. "It hasn't hurt us. We've got to get back to the cricket."

"You're a jay to be reckless where your health's concerned," said Fish. "I'm going down to Dr. Pillbury at once. You come, too, Bunter."

And Fish left the tuckshop at once with Bunter. The cricketers returned to their game—four of them still with very wry faces. Billy Bunter chuckled as he walked away with Fish, and Fish gave him a glare.

"Keep it up, you fat duffer; Gosling can see you!"

Billy Bunter immediately assumed an expression of great anguish, and Gosling, the porter, looked quite alarmed as he saw him.

Fish sank down on the bench outside the lodge, and groaned. Gosling was an independent witness to his sufferings.

"Wot's the matter, Master Fish?" asked the alarmed porter.

"Oh, dear! I guess I'm ill," said Fish. "There was something wrong with the ginger-beer; it's made a lot of us ill. We're going to the doctor's."

"You'd better go as fast as you can, then," said Gosling. "Master Bunter looks simply awful."

"Come on, Bunter. I'll help you, old chap."

Bunter rolled out of the gates leaning on Fish's arm.

Once in the lane, and safe out of sight, they burst into a laugh.

"I say, Fishy, you're not really going to the doctor's?" said Bunter, as the Yankee junior kept on towards Friardale.

"Yep!"

"But—but he'll bowl us out," said Bunter, in alarm.

"He'll know there's nothing the matter with us, Fishy."

Fish snorted contemptuously.

"How's he to know?" he demanded. "He can't see inside us, can he? Just groan, and that will do the trick."

"But I—I say—" stammered Bunter.

"I guess we may want medical evidence," said Fish.

"It's easy enough to bamboozle a sawbones. Just look as if you thought them the very last word in human wisdom, and they'll swallow anything you tell 'em. I tell you, we've got to go through with it. I guess the other fellows will be along later, too. They'll get some pains, I guess."

"He, he, he!"

A quarter of an hour later, Fish and Bunter presented themselves at the house of the school doctor. Dr. Pillbury saw them at once, and was considerably puzzled by their complaint. They had drunk ginger-beer, of which a lot of fellows had complained, and they felt sick, and had sudden pains in the inside. That was the valuable information Dr. Pillbury received from them. When he spoke of an emetic, however, it turned out that their pains were passing off rapidly, and that they felt themselves already recovering.

"Tain't so very bad now, I guess," said Fish. "But we thought we'd better come to you, sir. Lots of people



Fish sank down on the bench outside the lodge, and groaned. Gosling was an independent witness to his sufferings. "Wot's the matter, Master Fish?" asked the alarmed porter. "Oh, dear! I guess I'm ill," said Fish. "There was something wrong with the ginger-beer—it's made a lot of us ill. We're going to the doctor's." (See Chapter 5.)

have been seriously ill through neglecting to see a doctor at once. I guess I don't want to run risks like that."

"Quite so," said the medical gentleman unsuspiciously. "It is always best to take medical advice immediately—immediately. Apparently some foreign ingredient must have been introduced into the ginger-beer by accident. You say that others have made a similar complaint."

"Four other galoots, sir."

"What are they doing now?"

"Playing cricket, I guess."

"Ahem! Then they cannot be feeling any serious effects," said the doctor. "I will give a—a—ahem!—a powder, which you will take in a little cold water. Let me know immediately if there should be a recurrence of the symptoms."

"You bet, sir!"

Fish and Bunter left the doctor's house, each provided with a nice little white powder in a nice little white paper. The two nice little packets were thrown into the pond as they walked back to Greyfriars. Then they proceeded to the cricket-ground to see how the other sufferers were getting on.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Win for the Fourth!

THE other sufferers were suffering.

Harry Wharton, Nugent, Bob Cherry, and Johnny Bull were the sufferers. Apart from the decidedly unpleasant flavour, they had felt no ill effects at first from the ginger-beer. They had gone back to the cricket quite cheerfully.

But a change came over them before the Fourth-Form innings was over.

Four fieldsmen showed signs of restiveness, and Bob Cherry was seen to miss an easy catch; and the astonished onlookers called him butter-fingers. It was a new thing to see Bob miss a catch.

"Anything the matter, my esteemed chum?" asked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, giving Bob a dig in the ribs as the field crossed over.

Bob gasped.

"I've got a pain," he said.

"Is the painfulness terrific?" asked Hurree Singh

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sympathetically. "Perhapsfully you had better go off, and the esteemed Temple will let us play a substitute."

"Just what I was thinking," mumbled Bob. "Ow! There it is again. It's jolly queer. I was feeling all right an hour ago. My hat! I wonder if it's that blessed ginger-beer?"

He called to Wharton.

"I'm going off, Harry. I can't stick it out. I'm feeling queer."

Temple of the Fourth cheerfully consented to see a substitute in Bob Cherry's place. He was very pleased to see the Removites cracking up under the strain of the match, as he regarded it. It was a single-innings match, and the Fourth, so far, were seven down for twenty in their innings. Harry Wharton had not troubled to complete the Remove innings, confident in the powers of the Remove bowlers to knock the Fourth-Formers out without trouble.

A little later Frank Nugent cleared off, and another substitute appeared. And ten minutes after that, Johnny Bull also requested his conge.

"I say, are we playing you chaps, or are we playing a team of substitutes?" Cecil Reginald Temple asked pleasantly.

"We'll play man short, if you like," said Wharton shortly. Wharton's face was quite pale; he was suffering himself.

"Oh, don't mench!" said Temple airily.

"Put your man in," said Dabney of the Fourth. "Put another man in for yourself, if you like, Wharton. You look simply crocked."

"Put in a whole new eleven if you like," said Temple. "It's all the same to us."

"It's that rotten ginger-beer!" gasped Wharton. "There must have been something awfully wrong with it."

"I had some, and I don't feel it," remarked Temple.

"I suppose it was only some of the bottles," said Harry.

Temple smiled.

"Sure it isn't simply that tired feeling?" he asked politely. "Fellows do get crocked, you know, sometimes, when they're playing a team above their weight."

"Why, you silly ass—"

"Oh, put in your substitutes!" said Temple. "The more the merrier. I'm sure I don't mind."

Temple did not, indeed, mind getting rid of some of the best players in the Remove, for their places to be taken by second-rate players. It gave the Fourth Form a sporting chance of pulling off the match, after all.

Harry Wharton was greatly inclined to go off the field himself. But, after Temple's remarks, he would not say anything more about substitutes. And, as captain, it was his business to "stick it out" if he could.

But the rest of that match was anguish to the unfortunate captain of the Remove.

"I say, Fishy, Wharton looks quite green," murmured Billy Bunter.

"Hard cheese!" said Fish. "I guess I'm sorry for him. But business is business, you know. In this hyer wicked world the weakest have to go to the wall."

"Look at Bob Cherry, limping away as if he's ninety years old!"

"It's rough on the galoot," admitted Fisher T. Fish. "I guess I'm willing to extend him any amount of sympathy. Sympathy don't cost anything."

"Look at Nugent's face!"

"Sad, isn't it?" said Fish. "I feel for Nugent. Nugent is a very decent chap, and I can't say how sorry I am to see him suffering like this."

"Look at Bull!" gurgled Bunter. "He's trying to tie himself up into a sailor's knot, I think."

"I hope he'll succeed, if that's what he wants," said Fish. "This is hard lines on Bull. But there's a lame duck in every business transaction, you know, and a galoot can't waste time bothering about lame ducks."

"He, he, he!"

"Don't cackle, Bunter. I call that unfeeling. There's no reason why you shouldn't be sympathetic towards a suffering fellow-creature—no reason whatever. Sympathy

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is grateful and comforting, and it doesn't cost a red cent."

"I shouldn't wonder if the Fourth beat them after all," said Bunter. "Look at Wharton, missing catches like anything! Temple's batting to him because he's missing them. Yah! Butterfingers!"

It was a great comfort to Billy Bunter to be able to shout "Butterfingers" at the captain of the Remove. Wharton had called him butterfingers often enough. It was Bunter's turn now. Every dog has his day.

The Fourth-Form batsmen were pulling ahead at last. Several of the best cricketers in the Remove were out of the eleven now—three of them, in fact—and the reserves whom Wharton was playing were very second-rate. There were reserves in the Remove who could have played Temple & Co.'s heads off, but as it happened they were not on the spot. They were out for the afternoon, never dreaming that their services would be required.

With three of the best fieldsmen gone, and another almost incapacitated, Temple & Co. had the chance of their lives, and they made the most of it.

Their score was 55 when the last man went on the wickets.

Temple was still batting, and he was in unusually good form. He knocked up 5 for the over, and the score tied.

In the next over Temple took the odd run that was required, and the Fourth Form were victors with a wicket in hand.

Temple approached Harry Wharton with a smiling face.

"A win for us—what?" he remarked.

"Looks like it!" gasped Wharton.

"About time you got off the field," said the captain of the Fourth. "I must say you look crocked."

"I feel crocked, by Jove!"

"Well, it's no wonder," said Temple generously. "After all, you put up a good game. You couldn't expect to pull it off, but you've done very well—very well for a fag Form. I congratulate you, in fact."

Wharton did not feel equal to telling Temple what he thought of him. He limped off the field feebly.

"You declared our innings too soon, my son," said Peter Todd, with a shake of the head. "No good taking chances, even against those duffers."

"Fathead!" said Wharton politely. "We should have wiped up the ground with them if we'd been well."

"The wipefulness would have been terrific," said Hurree Singh. "The illfulness is the cause of the disasterful defeat."

"We couldn't foresee the ginger-beer," groaned Wharton. "Oh, dear, I've got a pain!"

"That's jolly queer," said Todd. "I mopped up two bottles of ginger-pop, and I feel as right as a trivet. It can't all be bad."

"What I had was bad enough," mumbled Wharton. "Oh, crumbs!"

He almost limped to the School House. Fisher T. Fish met him on the way, with a very sympathetic look. If Wharton had guessed at that moment that he owed his mysterious pains to the wily Fish he would probably have felled him with his bat on the spot. But he did not guess. And Fish was genuinely sympathetic. As he had sapiently remarked, sympathy did not cost anything.

"I guess I'm sorry to see you doubled up like this," said Fish. "Lean on my arm, old chap; you look quite fishy about the gills."

"Oh, dear!"

"I guess I've been suffering some," said Fish. "I went down at once to the doctor's, and he gave me a powder. I guess—"

But Wharton did not stay to hear Fish's guesses. He crawled into the house. Billy Bunter nudged the Yankee junior.

"What about the reward, Fishy? We've got our witnesses all right now."

"Shush! That's all right. I'll spring that on them after tea," said Fish. "You keep out of it, or you'll give the game away."

Bunter blinked at him suspiciously.

"Look here, none of your little games, Fishy!" he said. "Mind, it's halves!"

"Shurrup!"
 "If you begin any of your spoof I'll tell Wharton!"
 "Dry up, you jay!"
 "And when he knows you made him lose the match he'll—"

Fisher T. Fish was glaring at Bunter with so terrific an expression that even Bunter took the cue. Peter Todd was following them in, and he was within hearing. Todd looked at them very curiously.

"What are you burbling about, tubby?" he asked.
 "How did Fishy make Wharton lose the match?"

"I—I didn't—I wasn't—" stammered Bunter. "I—I mean, I was only j-joking, Toddy!"

"Don't see the joke, myself," said Todd. "You've a weird sense of humour, Bunter. Explain the little joke to your Uncle Peter."

"Oh, really, Todd—"

"It's because I stood out of the match," said Fish. "Of course, the Remove would have won if I'd been playing, so I'm really responsible, in a way."

"Ha, ha, ha! You're a better joker than Bunter," said Todd. "You're a real humorist, Fishy!"

And Peter Todd went in.

"I say, Fishy—"

Fisher T. Fish gave his fat partner a glare of wrath.

"You flabby jay! You nearly dished the whole business!" he hissed. "If you say another word I'll give you a sockdolager that will make you see stars, I guess. Turn off the gas, you clam!"

And Fisher T. Fish stalked away. Bunter blinked after him and shook his head determinedly. He knew his Fish, and if the astute Fishy made any attempt to "spoof" his partner out of his share in the illgotten gains Billy Bunter was prepared to reveal the whole scheme to the Famous Five. And if the chums of the Remove should learn of the trick Fisher T. Fish had played upon them it was probable that Fishy's punishment would resemble that inflicted by the celebrated Mikado—"something lingering, with boiling oil in it."

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Getting to Business!

STUDY No. 1 did not look quite so cheerful as usual at tea-time.

The chums of the Remove gathered there to a late tea.

Wharton and Nugent and Johnny Bull and Bob Cherry were feeling better now. The troublesome effects of the ginger-beer had passed off. But they were still feeling a little seedy.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was the only member of the Famous Five who felt quite as well as usual. He, too, had partaken of the cheery ginger-pop in Mrs. Mimble's shop, but not of the same variety as the others. The juniors agreed that there was something wrong with the ginger-beer, and that, whatever it was, it only affected some of the bottles, not all of them. Four of the Co. had been unfortunate enough to get the ginger-beer that was affected.

Study No. 1 were at tea when Fisher T. Fish came in.

"Feel better?" asked Fish.

"Yes. All serene now."

"I guess you ought to see the doctor."

"We're all right now," said Bob Cherry.

"That's all very well," said Fish. "But something ought to be done. Hyer's six of us been suffering awful pains—fairly knocked up, in fact. People who are so careless in manufacturing their ginger-beer deserve to be punished for it. Then there's the danger that some more of it may be bad, and Mrs. Mimble will lose her custom. She won't sell much more Gobbey's ginger-beer after this."

"Not likely," said Wharton.

"Well, that's a dead loss for her," said Fish. "The company won't make any allowance for that, you know. She'll lose the money."

"Well, we can't be expected to buy ginger-beer that may be bad!" growled Johnny Bull. "I jolly well sha'n't buy any, I know that!"

"Same here!"

"The samefulness is terrific!" said Hurree Singh sagely. "I have had a lucky escape, but the proof of the pudding is the pitcher that goes longest to the well, as your English proverb says."

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Hurree Singh's English proverb made the sufferers feel a little better.

"Well, I guess it's hard lines on Mrs. Mimble to have to stand a loss like that," said Fish. "Now the warm weather's come on she's got in a big stock of ginger-beer, and it'll all be thrown on her hands."

"Blessed if I expected to see you bothering about that, Fishy!" said Bob Cherry bluntly. "You don't generally worry about other people's troubles."

"I guess I can sympathise with a poor woman put to an undeserved loss," said Fish. "It don't seem fair to me. This hyer company puts some muck in the ginger-beer, and Mrs. Mimble will lose money by it. My idea is that it's up to us to chip in."

"What can we do?"

"Write a letter to the company explaining how the rotten stuff made us ill," said Fish. "Then they'll have to allow Mrs. Mimble for the stuff she's got in stock. 'Tain't fair she should be put to a loss."

Wharton regarded the Yankee junior curiously.

"That's a jolly good idea, and we'll do it," he said.

"Blessed if you're not full of surprises to-day, Fishy."

"A chap can be thoughtful for others, I suppose," said Fish. "It'll only cost a penny stamp, and it'll save a poor woman from a loss. But I don't deny that I've got an axe to grind. I come in, too!"

"How do you come in?"

"I guess I'm going to stick them for the reward?"

"The what?"

"Look at this hyer ginger-beer bottle," said Fish.

"Look at the label. You see what it says?"

"By gum!"

"Wall, I guess I can prove that there were inferior ingredients in that ginger-beer," said Fish. "I'm after that reward. That's where I come in. But it will save Mrs. Mimble from a loss, too. Of course, that reward's mine. You fellows can't expect to touch it. It's my stunt entirely. Besides, your evidence wouldn't be relied on if you stood to make anything out of it."

"We're not after the money, you worm!" growled Johnny Bull.

"I guess I shouldn't have mentioned it to you chaps," said Fish, "only, of course, they'll send a man down to investigate before they pay over the money."

"You needn't be afraid of us claiming part of the reward," said Wharton, his lip curling slightly. "We never thought of it, and I don't know that we'd want to collar it, anyway."

"Oughtn't they to be punished for nearly poisoning you—I mean, us?" demanded Fisher T. Fish.

"Yes, rather. But it would be only decent to hand the money over to a charity, or a war fund, if they pay up."

"That's a good idea," said Bob Cherry.

Fisher T. Fish snorted.

"I guess I'm not out for philanthropy. I guess I'm going to punish them for making us ill with their filthy ginger-beer, and save old Mrs. Mimble from losing her money," he said. "If I can get hold of the reward, I'm entitled to it."

"Yes, that's so."

"In fact, I depend on your honour not to bulge in and claim part of my reward," said Fish. "It's my stunt, you know."

"Oh, cheese it! We don't want any of your blessed reward!" said Wharton testily. "Besides, if we claimed it, the company would think it was a trick, very likely."

"Exactly. What you get is the satisfaction of making 'em squirm for nearly poisoning you, and making you lose a cricket match, too," said Fish. "Besides, it'll save Mrs. Mimble from a big loss; and she's a good sort."

"That's all right."

"Then it's a go," said Fish. "We'll write them a letter, and all of you fellows can sign it."

"I—I suppose so."

"You'll give evidence of what you know," said Fish.

"You drank some of the ginger-beer, and it made you ill. That's a fact, ain't it?"

"Certainly."

"That's all that's needed. They'll send a man down

to investigate, of course. They won't pay over the money if they can help it. The man's certain to ask you if you're claiming the reward, and you'll tell him plainly, no, you're not. Then he can't possibly suspect you of spoofing. I shall claim the reward, and, with your evidence to back me up, I'll squeeze it out of them, too. I'll get a lawyer on to them if they don't pay up."

"Phew!"

"It's a clear case," said Fish, "as clear as daylight. They make the offer—hyer it is in plain print—and they've got to stand by it. They ought to be glad, too, for the state of that ginger-beer shows that there's some awful carelessness going on in the works, and they'll be able to set it right—see?"

"Yes, that's so," agreed Wharton.

"I guess I'll sketch out the letter for you," said Fish, taking out a fountain-pen. "Hyer goes!"

The Famous Five watched him in silence as he sketched out the letter. They did not exactly like Fishy's keenness after the fifty pounds. Still, there was evidently no reason why the reward should not be gathered in, in accordance with the company's offer printed on the label. And the juniors were naturally feeling sore over their unpleasant experience. It had cost them some uncomfortable hours, and the loss of a cricket-match; and they felt that it was only just that whoever was to blame should smart for it. Then there was Mrs. Mimble to be considered. Certainly the company would refuse to take back the ginger-beer as yet unsold, unless they were satisfied that there was something wrong with it; and equally certainly Mrs. Mimble would never sell another bottle of it in the school. Fishy was "out" for dollars, of course, but incidentally Mrs. Mimble would be saved from a quite considerable loss. Upon the whole, Harry Wharton & Co. felt that they were bound to back up Fish in his enterprise.

It did not take the keen Yankee junior long to sketch out the letter. As a matter of fact, he had schemed it out already. When he had finished he read it out:

"Sirs,—In accordance with your published announcement affixed to each bottle of Gobbey's Golden Ginger-beer, I claim the reward of £50, as I can prove by unimpeachable testimony that impure ingredients were used in several bottles of ginger-beer supplied by you.

"A number of boys in this school have been made seriously ill by the ginger-beer, and they are willing to give evidence to that effect in a court of law, if necessary. The evidence of Dr. Pillbury, the medical attendant of Greyfriars School, will also be forthcoming.

"I shall be pleased to see your representative, to discuss the matter with him, and to let him interview each of the boys in question to satisfy himself as to the bona-fides of the case.

"Awaiting the favour of an early reply, I remain,
"F. T. FISH."

"P.S.—Appended are the signatures of four Greyfriars boys who have suffered severe internal pains after partaking of the ginger-beer. They are willing to attest the fact in the presence of their headmaster, or of a judge."

"I guess that fills the bill," said Fisher T. Fish. "Now all you galoots have got to do is to sign."

Harry Wharton & Co. hesitated a moment. There was really no ground for suspicion, but they hesitated, somehow, to add their signatures to Fishy's precious document. They knew his tricky nature of old, and it made them distrustful.

"I guess I'm waiting," hinted Fish. "This will save Mrs. Mimble a loss of two pounds, at least, I calculate."

Harry Wharton made up his mind, and wrote his signature on the letter. Nugent and Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull followed his example.

"Good egg!" said Fish, with great satisfaction. "I guess that does it. This hyer letter will bring their man hopping along, you bet, and I guess they'll pay over the money like one o'clock to keep the case out of the papers."

"I—I suppose it's all right?" said Wharton.

"Right as rain!" said Fish; and he sealed up the letter, addressed it, borrowed a stamp from Wharton and stamped it, and walked out of the study. Fisher T. Fish did not believe in letting the grass grow under his

feet. He scuttled downstairs, and dropped the letter into the box in the hall, where letters accumulated of an evening, to be handed out by the page to the postman in the morning. There was no late evening collection at Greyfriars—a fact which was to have considerable influence upon the plans of Fisher T. Fish, if he had only known it.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter is Too Suspicious!

A PAIR of large spectacles glimmered in at the doorway of No. 1 Study, with a fat, frowning face behind them. Billy Bunter blinked at each of the five juniors in the study in turn.

"Isn't Fishy here?" he demanded.

"He's been and gone," said Nugent. "Follow his example, old chap."

Bunter didn't follow Fish's example. He came into the study and closed the door after him, with a very determined look.

"What's he been saying to you?" he demanded.

"Words," said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry! Look here, has he been writing a letter?"

"Yes."

"To whom?"

"What the dickens are you asking questions for?" exclaimed Wharton. "Go and ask Fishy about it."

"I want to know," said Bunter warmly. "I believe the spoofing rotter is trying to swindle me. You know what Fishy is. He'd welsh his own grandfather, if he had one. I believe he's scheming to do me brown, and I can jolly well tell you I'm not going to stand it. I want to know what was in that letter."

"But what have you got to do with it?" asked Wharton.

Harry's face was growing rather grim. His vague uneasiness, founded upon his knowledge of Fish's tricky character, was increasing. He had had many doubts in signing his name to Fish's precious letter, yet he could see no real reason for refusing to do so. But it looked as if William George Bunter was going to let in some new light on the subject.

"Got to do with it?" repeated Bunter, excitedly. "I've got as much to do with it as Fishy, I suppose. It's a case of halves."

"Halves in what?"

"The reward, of course."

"Fishy's going to give you half the reward?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Tain't a question of giving it to me—I'm going to have it, as a partner," said Bunter warmly. "If there's any giving, it's me that's doing the giving, as it was my idea from the very beginning!"

The chums of the Remove exchanged startled looks.

"Your idea?" ejaculated Nugent.

"Yes, rather. That Yankee boulder wouldn't have had the brains to think of it," said Bunter. "You know him—he'll collar anybody's idea, and then try to squeeze a chap out. I'm jolly well not going to be squeezed out. I told him I wanted to be present when the letter was written, but he wouldn't have it, and he dodged me. He pretended I should give the whole game away. That was only his yarn, of course."

"What game?" asked Bob.

"Ahem! Oh, nothing," said Bunter, realising that he was saying a little too much. "Nothing at all! That was only a—a—a figure of speech. But he dodged me, you see, and came here—and now I want to know what was in that letter. Have you fellows signed it?"

"Was it arranged for us to sign it?" asked Wharton.

"Of course it was. The whole thing wouldn't be any good without your evidence," said Bunter. "That was the whole plan, of course!"

"Well, we've signed it."

"Good! But was I mentioned in it?" asked Bunter anxiously. "Fishy has claimed the reward in that letter, hasn't he?"

"Yes."

"For himself?"

"Certainly!"

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"Without mentioning me?" shrieked Bunter.

"You weren't mentioned, of course. Why should Fishy mention you?"

"Why? Why, because I'm a partner—I'm having halves!" exclaimed Bunter furiously. "I knew the rotter would try to spoof me. He wants to bag the whole reward, of course. I'll show him! Where is he? I'll talk to him! If he don't put my name down at once for half, I'll give the whole game away from start to finish!"

"Suppose you tell us what the whole game is?" said Wharton quietly. "You're talking in riddles, you know!"

"I'll see Fishy first," said Bunter cautiously. "How do I know you fellows aren't just pumping me?"

"Fishy must be jolly generous to promise you half the reward," said Bob Cherry. "He was very keen on keeping us out of it. I don't see why he should promise you halves. Can't quite swallow that, Bunter." And Bob Cherry shook his head solemnly.

"Tain't Fishy giving me halves, it's me giving Fishy halves!" roared Bunter. "I tell you it was my idea!"

"You suggested to Fishy to claim the reward?"

"Yes, rather!"

"You'll have to prove that," said Bob, proceeding to "pump" the Owl of the Remove, always an easy task. "Fishy didn't say anything about its being your idea."

"He wouldn't, the rotter!"

"He's claiming the reward for himself——"

"Oh, the spoofing swindler!"

"You've got to prove that you suggested the wheeze," said Bob. "I don't see why you should. If you thought of it first, you could have come to us the same as Fishy did, and make the claim yourself."

"I couldn't," said Bunter. "I hadn't any money. I was stony, and I had to take Fishy into it. Besides, I wasn't sure that it was honest, till Fishy explained it to me. I shouldn't have done it if it wasn't honest, of course. But Fishy worked it out that it was pure business. And—and I was stony, you know."

"But what did you want money for?" asked Wharton. "We would have lent you a stamp."

"For the ginger-beer, of course," said Bunter. "I—I mean—I—I didn't want any money, of course—I—I wasn't stony yesterday, either."

Bunter's amendments were coming a little too late.

Exactly what the two rascals of the Remove had been plotting, Harry Wharton & Co. could not yet guess, but they could see that something underhand had been schemed between the two. They were determined to know what it was. The bare idea that Fish might have obtained their signatures for some scheme that would not bear the light, naturally enraged them.

"Yesterday!" rapped out Wharton, catching the word at once. "What has yesterday to do with it? It was to-day that we had the ginger-beer, not yesterday!"

"Yes, but I thought of the idea yesterday—I—I mean, that is to say——"

"What idea?"

"Oh, nothing!"

"What a fellow you are for keeping a secret, Bunter," said Bob Cherry admiringly. "No good anybody trying to get anything out of you!"

"No fear," said Bunter, with a fat, satisfied grin. "I'm as mum as an oyster, you know. I'm not giving anything away, you bet."

The egregious Owl did not realise that by that statement he was "giving away" the fact that he was engaged in some underhand scheme with Fisher T. Fish.

"And it was really your idea about claiming the reward?" said Bob.

"Mine entirely."

"And you can prove that you told Fisher T. Fish yesterday—what? If you can, of course, you've got a good claim."

"No, I told him this morning," said Bunter. "I thought of the idea yesterday, but I mentioned it to Fishy this morning. I can't very well prove it, because we were alone at the time, in the Close, you know, under the trees, but Fishy won't deny it. If he does——"

"This morning?" said Wharton.

"Yes, rather!"

The juniors looked at one another. Bunter and Fish had been planning to claim that reward, that morning—and it was not till late in the afternoon that the juniors

had drunk the bad ginger-beer. The Famous Five did not need telling much more.

"And now," said Bob Cherry sweetly, "how did you know this morning, Bunter, that the ginger-beer was going to be bad this afternoon?"

"You see, we had to—ahem! I—I didn't know, of course. As for doctoring it, of course, I never thought of anything of the kind," stammered Bunter. "I—I was only speaking—speaking figuratively, you know. Of—of course, what I meant to say really was—was—was——" Bunter was getting hopelessly tangled. "I—I really mean, that—that it was this afternoon, you know."

"Oh!"

"The fact is, I suggested it to Fishy this afternoon," went on Bunter, more confidently. "It was my idea from the very beginning, and I could have done without Fishy altogether, only I hadn't any money to buy the ginger-beer. Look here, I want you fellows to back me up. It was my idea, and Fishy's got to write a new letter, putting my name in. I knew he'd try to spoof me—but I've warned him that I'll give the whole game away if he does, and I jolly well will, too!"

"What game?"

"Oh, nothing. I know what I know," said Bunter mysteriously. "Where's that letter now? What's Fishy done with it?"

"Posted it!"

Bunter gave a howl of wrath.

"Oh, the spoofer! I'll talk to him! If he don't write another letter at once, I'll show him up! The rotter!"

Bunter bolted out of the study, slamming the door after him. He rolled away furiously in search of Fisher T. Fish.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

All Parties Are Pleased!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. looked at one another in silence for a minute or two.

Bunter's unintentional revelations had astounded them.

They had a kind of feeling that there was something behind the Yankee junior's scheme for claiming the reward, something he had not told them. They understood now what it was. The enterprising business-man of the Remove was making the Famous Five parties to a swindle. He had obtained their signatures to a false claim—there was no doubt about that now.

Wharton drew a deep breath.

"It's getting clear," he said. "I was surprised that Fishy was worried about Mrs. Mumble's loss. That was an artistic touch, I suppose, to influence us. And when he stood treat to-day, we ought to have suspected something. He never stands treat."

"I say, this is serious," said Bob.

"The seriousness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "If the honourable rotters were planning this gamefulness this morning, it is clearly demonstrated that they must have doctored the ginger-beer this afternoon. The esteemed Bunter and the ludicrous Fish are not prophets."

"It's clear enough," said Wharton, biting his lip with anger. "Don't you remember, just before dinner, Fishy was taking bottles of ginger-beer to his study, hidden under his jacket?"

"By Jove!" said Nugent, "I remember. He was trying to keep them out of sight!"

"And that's why he locked me out of the study this afternoon!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "I thought it was queer that Fishy should be swotting over Latin grammar. He was doctoring the ginger-beer!"

"Just the same as we did for Bunter the other day," remarked Nugent. "I suppose that put it into the fat idiot's head—that, and seeing the label on the bottle."

"But that ginger-pop that Fishy stood us, I thought he took it from the bottles on the counter," said Bob.

"He did," said Wharton—"he did; because he had taken it there. He was in the tuckshop when we got there after our innings, you remember. It was easy enough for him to put the bottles along with the others."

"Oh, the rotter!"

"And Fish and Bunter were only pretending to have those giddy pains," said Nugent. "They were taking us in. We had the real pains, and they were doing a little dramatic scene for our benefit."

Harry Wharton nodded. It was all clear enough now.

"It was queer that only four bottles of the stuff should be bad, and the rest all right," he said. "Only four of us had any pains. Lots of the other fellows drank ginger-beer, and didn't find anything wrong. And, you remember, Fishy opened the bottles for us, and served us. He had got them all ready for us, of course. And now I think I can guess what was in the ginger-beer. The blessed scoundrel, he's taken us in, and got our signatures to help him in a swindle!"

"The awful ass!" said Nugent. "This is a bit thicker than his usual spoofing. If he had got the reward out of Gobbey's, and it had come out afterwards that he had doctored the ginger-pop, he would have been prosecuted. It's the kind of thing people are sent to prison for."

"Prison is about the right place for him," said Harry.

"And what about that letter?" said Johnny Bull. "The villain isn't going to use our signatures. Let's go for him now, and give him a hiding, and get the letter back at once."

Johnny Bull rose to his feet. Bob held up his hand.

"Go easy!" he said. "I've got a better idea than that."

"Look here! He ought to have a good hiding!" roared Johnny Bull.

"He can have a hiding any time. First of all, we've got to get that letter. It's easy enough—it's only in the box in the hall, and it's open," said Bob. "We'll leave it there for the present."

"Why, you ass?"

"Trotter doesn't give those letters out till to-morrow morning," said Bob. "Lots of time. But we won't tell Fishy."

"Why not?"

Bob Cherry's eyes sparkled.

"Fishy's got to be punished—and we can't punish him better than by letting him think he's going to get the reward—up to the last moment. Let him think that the letter has been posted—"

"Well?"

"And he can get an answer to it the day after to-morrow. We can type an answer on Quelch's type-writer, when Quelch's out, and send it away to be posted."

"Oh, good!" said Nugent. "My cousin in London will post it."

"And the letter will tell Fishy to come and claim the reward," said Bob, with a chuckle. "We'll make an appointment with him somewhere, to meet the representative of the Gobbey Company—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"One of us chaps can be there to meet him. We'll make it after dark, and he won't know us, if we put on some of the beards and things we use in theatricals."

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"Good egg!"

"And we'll pay him over a bag of cash," pursued Bob—"a sealed bag, like you get from a bank, you know, and when he opens it—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shush!" said Bob.

The study door opened, and Fisher T. Fish looked in. There was a very anxious expression on the Yankee junior's face. The Co. could guess that he had been interviewed by Bunter, and had learned of the Owl's visit to Harry Wharton & Co. The Famous Five looked at him affably. It was not their game to let Fisher T. Fish suspect that they were acquainted with the plot.

"Posted the letter, Fishy?" asked Bob carelessly.

"Yep."

"Then it'll catch the next collection."

"Yep—it goes in the morning," said Fish. "Say, has Bunter been here?"

"Yes."

"Been gassing, I suppose?" said Fish uneasily.

"He was talking about the reward," said Bob calmly.

"He seems to think he has a claim on it, too."

"Sure!" said Fish. "That's all he was saying, was it?"

"Why, what else could he have said?" asked Bob, in surprise. "Yes, I remember he mentioned that you were a spoofer."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh come off!" said Fish. "I guess it's all right; but that fat jay is always talking out of the back of his neck, you know. I guess I'm going to let him have a whack in the reward—I'm a generous chap. That's all."

"Time we did our prep," said Bob Cherry, with a yawn.

Fisher T. Fish departed, quite satisfied. The chums of the Remove grinned when he was gone; they were quite satisfied, too.

Billy Bunter met the Yankee junior at the end of the passage, and blinked at him.

"It's all O.K.," said Fish. "They don't smell a rat; I guess I was afraid you had given it all away by your jaw, you mugwump! Mind, if you say another word to them, I'll scalp you!"

"I'm going to give the whole game away if you try to spoof me," said Bunter determinedly. "I want my name put in the letter."

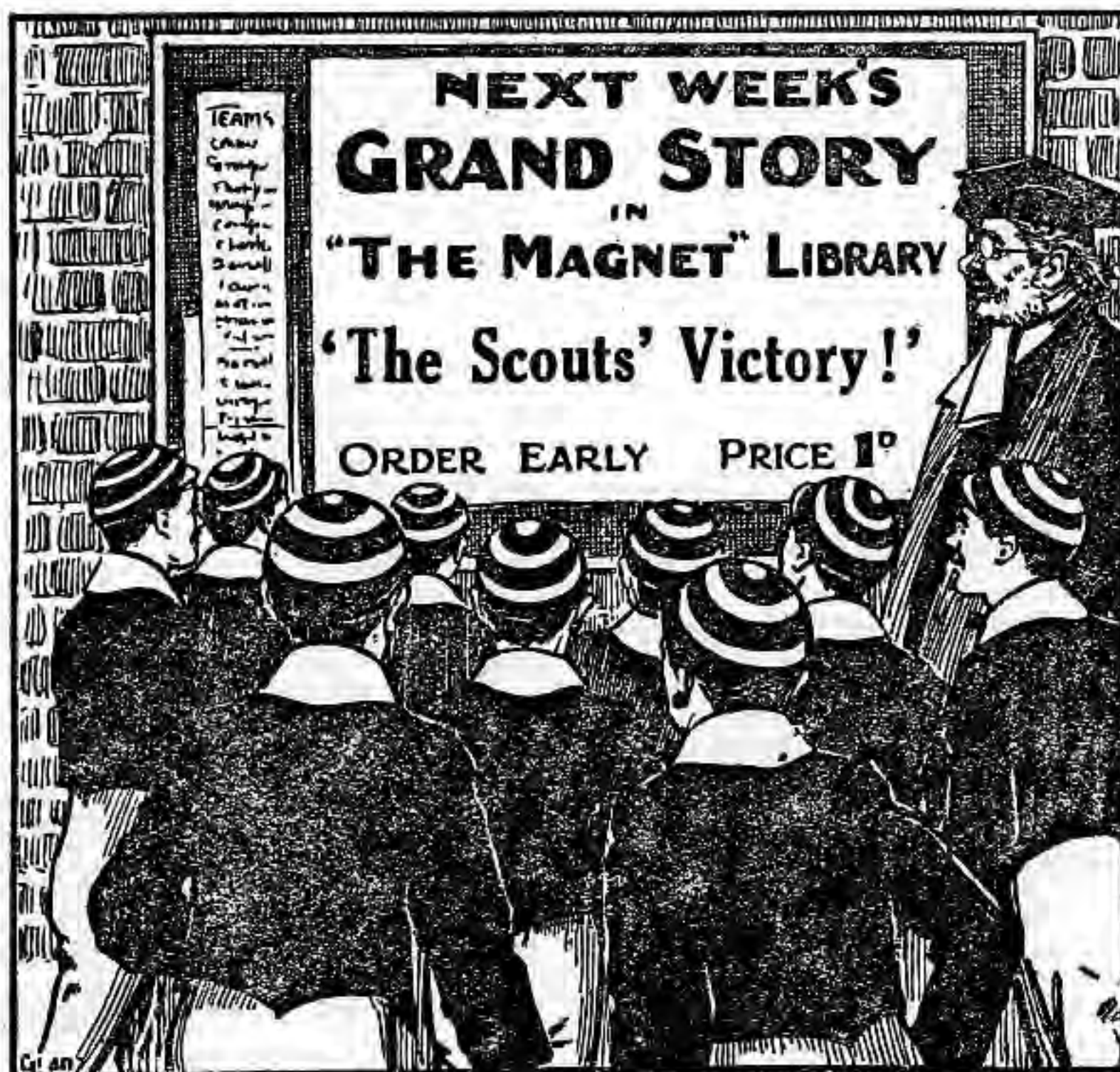
"Oh, you make me tired!" said Fish. "I claim the reward, and when I get it, I hand over half to you. That's O.K., ain't it?"

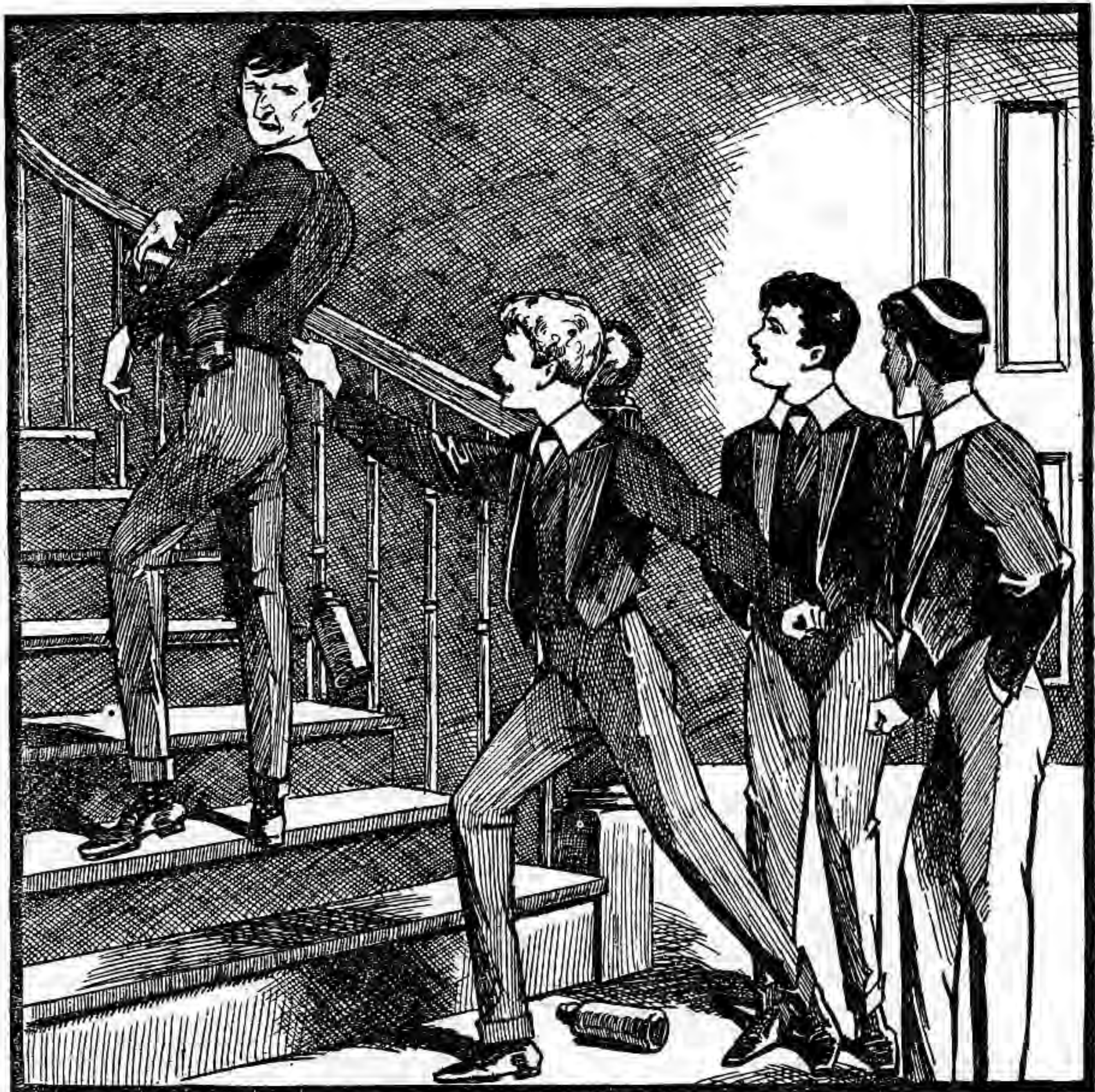
"Why can't I have my name put in the letter?" said Bunter suspiciously.

"Because it would look fishy, you jay! Do you want to give the company the impression that it's a gum-game—a scheme to squeeze fifty quid out of them?" exclaimed Fisher T. Fish irritably.

"That's all very well," growled Bunter. "How do I know you don't intend to stick to it all?"

"Haven't I given you my word?"





Two bottles of ginger-beer bumped on the stairs and rolled down. Fisher T. Fish made a wild clutch after them, and immediately four more bottles rolled out and crashed on the stairs. "Ha, ha, ha!" "You silly jay!" howled Fish. (See Chapter 3.)

"Oh, don't be funny, Fishy! Your word ain't worth tuppence, let alone half of fifty quid. I tell you, Fishy, if I don't get my half, I'm going to give the whole game away, and if you don't shell out, I'll tell Quelchy."

Fisher T. Fish looked daggers at his suspicious partner. He intended to keep faith with Bunter, if he was compelled to—and as it was in Bunter's power to spoil the whole scheme, there was no doubt that he was compelled to keep faith. So, under the circumstances, he felt that Bunter's distrust was unjustified.

"You jay!" he said. "You begin to yaup when you don't get your money, and, until then, keep your silly head shut. Now shut up—here comes that jay, Cherry."

Bob Cherry did not appear to notice the two young rascals in confabulation as he went on towards his study. And Fisher T. Fish congratulated himself once more upon the extreme unsuspectingness of the Famous Five. His opinion of their intelligence had never been at so low an ebb.

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THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Letter-Writers!

WINGATE of the Sixth looked into the junior common-room at half-past nine, and rapped out: "Bed!"

Frank Nugent was writing a letter, and he sealed it up as Wingate locked in.

The Removites marched out to go to the dormitory, but Nugent lingered, searching in his pockets for a stamp.

"Buck up, Nugent!" Wingate called back.

"Just coming; only want to slip in this letter," said Nugent.

Having found a stamp, Nugent stamped his letter, and sauntered down to the hall-stand in the wide hall, where reposed the box in which letters were placed ready for the post. It was an open box, and, when correspondence was heavy, it was sometimes full of letters for Trotter to hand over to the postman in the morning. Only when

it was a question of catching a special collection did the fellows take the trouble to go down to the letter-box in the road.

The Removites were all in the upper passage by the time Nugent reached the box in the hall. He put his letter in, and, at the same time, extracted the letter addressed in Fisher T. Fish's hand to the Gobbey Golden Ginger-beer Company. It was, of course, necessary to stop that letter being posted, since it was being posted for the purpose of making a false claim to the £50 reward. Had Fisher T. Fish posted it in the ordinary letter-box outside the school, Harry Wharton & Co. would have had no resource but to reveal the whole matter to their Form-master, so that the letter might be reclaimed. It was impossible, of course, for them to allow it to proceed to its destination, and make themselves parties to a swindle. It was very fortunate for Fisher T. Fish that the letter was where the juniors could take it themselves.

Nugent came into the dormitory with the letter safe in his pocket.

He closed one eye at his chums, as a signal that he had the letter, and nothing was said. The Removites turned in; Fisher T. Fish to dream golden dreams.

Harry Wharton & Co. turned out before rising-bell the next morning, and their first proceeding, when they were downstairs, was to burn the letter in the grate in No. 1 Study. It was a relief to them to see it crumble into ashes. That letter made a claim for which the writer could have been prosecuted, and, perhaps, sent to prison—and they had been tricked into putting their signatures to it. They breathed more freely when it was destroyed.

There was no doubt that Fisher T. Fish deserved to be given away to his Form-master, and adequately punished for his attempted dishonesty. Certainly, if Mr. Quelch had known the facts, he would have placed them before the Head, and the enterprising Yankee junior would have been expelled from the school. Fisher T. Fish's previous schemes for money-making had come perilously near to swindling, but this time he had undoubtedly crossed the Rubicon. For once, his wonderful gift for business, as he called it, had placed him well within the grasp of the law.

But naturally the juniors did not want to bring that heavy punishment on the enterprising Fishy, much as he deserved it.

And there was Bunter to be considered. Bunter was as culpable as Fish, but he was too obtuse to realise the seriousness of what he had done.

Upon the whole, the Co. felt that the case would be met by keeping the matter in their own hands, and punishing the two rascals in their own way.

They met Fisher T. Fish in the Close after breakfast, and found him with a smile on his face. The morning letters were gone, and Fish had no doubt, of course, that his precious letter had gone with the rest.

But Fishy's smile vanished, and he frowned, as Billy Bunter joined him. He hurried the fat junior out of hearing of the Famous Five at once. Bunter's rattling tongue was an incessant terror to Fishy.

Circumstances had made it necessary for him to make Bunter his partner in his latest "stunt"; but such a partner was a worry to him. He was afraid every moment that Bunter's chattering might put his victims on their guard; as, indeed, it had already done, if Fishy had only known it.

Bunter seemed to have made up his mind to haunt the Yankee junior. His distrust, instead of diminishing, was increasing. The fact that the reward was to be paid into Fishy's hands alarmed him. He knew that getting money out of Fishy was like extracting teeth.

"You mind you show me the answer when you get it, Fishy," he said. "Mind, I've got to see the letter immediately it comes."

"I guess you can leave the matter in my hands, Bunter."

"Rats!" said Bunter. "Catch me trusting you."

"Look hyer—"

"I'll jolly well keep an eye on all letters that come," said Bunter. "And if you don't show me the letter on the spot, I'll go to Wharton at once."

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"You fat jay!" grunted the unhappy Fish. "You're going to have your whack. You've got nothing to be afraid of. I'm not going to spoof you."

"I'm going to see that you don't," said Bunter cheerfully. "You see, I know you, Fishy."

After morning lessons, Bob Cherry might have been heard clicking away on Mr. Quelch's typewriter. The Remove-master allowed the juniors to type their "script" for the plays performed by the Remove Dramatic Society, and when his study was empty, they had leave to use the machine. But that morning, as it happened, it was not "parts" that Bob was typing. It was a letter which had been composed by all the Famous Five in council.

After the letter was typed, and an envelope addressed, also on the machine, Bob Cherry put them in his pocket and left the study.

In No. 1 the letter was read over, and sealed up, and then slipped into a larger envelope, with a note from Frank Nugent, in which Frank requested his cousin to post the "enclosed" in London. That large envelope was addressed to Nugent's cousin in London, and Bob cycled down to Friardale to post it before dinner.

Then the chums of the Remove waited cheerfully for the reply to come to Fisher T. Fish's precious letter.

On Friday morning, Fish looked anxiously into the rack, and so did Bunter. But there was no reply yet. On Friday afternoon, Fisher T. Fish scanned the latest delivery.

But he scanned it in vain. There was no letter for him.

"I guess it's time those galoots answered," growled Fish. "If I don't get a letter to-morrow, I calculate I'll send them a reminder."

"Had your answer yet, Fishy?" asked Bob Cherry, coming along as the Yankee junior was angrily scanning the rack.

"Nope!"

"They don't seem to be in a hurry," remarked Bob.

"I guess it'll be along to-morrow," said Fish; "or they may send a representative down without writing."

"I say, Fishy—" began Bunter.

"Oh, ring off!"

"Suppose we send them a telegram," said Bunter. "Look here, it's a half-holiday to-morrow, and I want some of the tin—"

"Oh, you jay!" growled Fish, as Bob Cherry walked away. "Do you want to tell Cherry all about it?"

The two schemers had to resign themselves to waiting till the morrow. After morning lessons on Saturday, Bunter and Fish made a "bee-line," as Fishy would have called it, for the letter-rack.

Fish gave a whoop of triumph.

"I guess it's hyer."

"Oh, good!" chortled Bunter. "I'll open it."

There it was—a letter addressed in type to F. T. Fish, Esquire, Greyfriars School, near Friardale, Kent. A typed letter looked businesslike, and there was no doubt that it was from the Gobbey Company. Fish, naturally, did not have many communications in typewriting.

Fish jerked the letter out of the rack, and made off with it. There was a yell from Bunter as he rushed in pursuit.

"Fishy—Fishy, you spoofer! Fishy, you rotter! I'm going to see that letter! Fishy, if you don't let me see that letter, I'll—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Is that an answer at last?" asked Bob Cherry. "What's the excitement about, Bunter?"

"Fishy wants to keep it to himself!" howled Bunter. "Fishy, I tell you—"

Fisher T. Fish controlled his feelings with difficulty. He slipped his thin arm through Bunter's fat one, and led him out into the Close.

The Famous Five exchanged glances, and grinned. Fisher T. Fish had his reply at last, and had no doubt that it proceeded from Messrs. Gobbey. His feelings on receiving that letter would probably have been quite different if he could have guessed that it had been composed in No. 1 Study, and typed upon Mr. Quelch's typewriter. But that was one of the many things that Fisher Tarleton Fish did not know.

"Lemme see it!"
"I guess—"
"Lemme see it, you rotter!" shrieked Bunter.
"I tell you—"

"Will you shut up your yaup-trap?" exclaimed the exasperated Fish.

The Yankee junior had hurried into the Cloisters with his precious letter, with Bunter fairly hanging on to him. Bunter was oppressed with the terror of being "done" out of his whack if he lost sight of Fisher T. Fish for a moment. Such was the result of Fishy's extensive reputation as a cute business man. If Fishy had been Bunter's best-beloved brother, the Owl of the Remove could not have clung to him more closely.

Fish opened the letter, and Bunter immediately made a clutch at it. Fish was compelled to hold it out of the tubby junior's reach in order to read it at all.

"Lemme see it, too!" shrieked Bunter.

"Cheese it! For goodness' sake give us a rest from your yaup!"

"I want to read it. I know you're trying to spoof me!" howled Bunter. "If you don't let me see it at once, I'll—"

"You blinking owl, shut up, and read it," said Fish.

It was barely possible that Bunter's nervousness was not without reason. Certainly Fishy would have kept the letter to himself if he could.

But Bunter had his way, and the pair of them read the letter together. A fat and a thin face beamed with equal satisfaction. For this is how the typed letter ran:

"Dear Master Fish,—Your letter of the 3rd inst., containing a very serious charge against our company, to hand. In such a matter we do not care to mention names, but you will understand to what we refer.

"We do not wish our business to suffer damage from the publicity of a charge of this kind, whether well or ill-founded, and we may, therefore, say at once that we shall not dispute the claim.

"The witnesses whose names are signed to your letter are unimpeachable, and we do not dispute their statement concerning the pains and other discomforts alleged to have been suffered on the occasion you mention.

"Our Mr. Shack will call to arrange the matter with you, but for reasons which are obvious to you, he will not call at the school. There is no need to attract undue attention to the matter.

"We have, therefore, arranged for our Mr. Shack to meet you at a spot within a reasonable distance of Greyfriars, where he will hand over to you the reward—i.e., fifty pounds, in a sealed bag. You will sign a receipt, absolving us from all further claims of any kind.

"Our Mr. Shack has instructions to wait for you on Monday evening, at half-past eight o'clock precisely, outside your school gates, on the other side of the road. We ask you, as a favour, to keep the matter from general knowledge. No purpose can be served by idle talk on the subject.

"No further correspondence is necessary.

"We are, yours faithfully,

"THE COMPANY."

Fisher T. Fish and William George Bunter read that letter through, and read it through again, and yet again. They had expected to score, and yet they could scarcely believe in their good luck.

Fishy had been quite prepared for objections on the part of the company; for a strict and jealous investigation of his claim; for a dispute, and perhaps a close bargaining on the subject of the reward.

The complete surrender of the company in this manner was a relief and a pleasant surprise.

"By gum!" said Fish. "By Jerusalem! I guess they know we've got them where the hair's short—what?"

"Fifty pounds!" said Bunter, his little round eyes opening like saucers behind his spectacles. "Fifty whole quids, Fishy!"

"I guess it's O.K. Two hundred and fifty dollars!" said Fish. "And what a climb-down—hey? They wouldn't have answered like this if you'd written the letter, I guess. It's the way I put it. I let 'em have it straight. I made 'em savvy that I meant business—"

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CHUCKLES,
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cold business, sir, from the word go. I hit them just where they live, my boy."

"They must be awfully afraid of it getting out," said Bunter, rubbing his fat hands. "I suppose it would do their business a lot of harm if it became public."

"Sure! I calculated on that," said Fish. "I knew that'd make 'em reasonable, but I allow I never expected them to come down such a wallop as this. Of course, they're afraid of their stuff getting a bad name. I expect my mention of the doctor fetched them a bit, too. It wouldn't do them any good to have it known that boys in a public school were made ill by their ginger-beer, and a doctor had to be called in. Might ruin the whole bizney."

"And their stuff's all right all the time!" grinned Bunter.

"I guess that's the cream of the joke."

"He, he, he!"

"But I reckon they've got an uneasy conscience, all the same," said Fisher T. Fish sagely. "I dare say they're working inferior ingredients into it, you know, and they're afraid of being bowled out. There may be an American in the firm, you know, introducing smart business methods. It's a great dodge, you know, to get a good trading reputation by selling a really good article, and then to put in inferior manufacture and make a tremendous profit before the public finds you out; that's how we do business over there. P'raps they've been picking up some American smartness, and really making inferior stuff. This letter reads jolly like it."

"Then it serves 'em right to make 'em pay up," said Bunter, with righteous indignation. "If they're dishonest they ought to suffer for it. I never could stand anything dishonest."

"Of course, it serves 'em right," said Fish. "If they get the worst of a bargain it serves 'em right for getting the worst of it—see? A galoot's business in this world is to get the best of a deal. I guess I've got no sympathy to waste on lame ducks."

"Fifty pounds!" murmured Bunter ecstatically.

"Two hundred and fifty dollars, by gum! And how jolly secret they are about it!" chuckled Fish. "You see, there's no heading on the letter; they haven't used their business paper. If we showed this letter in public they would be able to disown it—see? That's smart."

"But they couldn't, when they've written it," said Bunter.

"But why couldn't they? They've only signed it 'The Company'—nothing to identify them. I guess that's real slick. I reckon they sized it up that we might try to stick them for some more after they've paid up the reward, if they gave us a handle against them," said Fish. "That's why they're going to give us the money in bags, of course. Cheques and banknotes leave traces behind 'em, but there's nothing to prove that money has been paid over. They want to have it in their power to deny the whole transaction if they like. Oh, they're smart—I allow they're smart—but not quite so smart as Noo York!" And Fisher T. Fish chuckled with great satisfaction.

"Fifty pounds!" murmured Bunter.

"I guess it suits us better for the whole bizney to be kept dark, too," said Fish. "So long as they pay up I don't care."

"If they're so jolly nervous about it we might make 'em pay over again," said Bunter, apparently having profited by his business association with Fisher T. Fish. Fish shook his head.

"They'd fight the case if we did that," he said. "They could deny having admitted anything, you see. They're going to hush it up if they can. I guess we'll be satisfied with the fifty quidlets."

Bunter blinked at him suspiciously.

"You mean you're going to try for some more afterwards, and keep me out of it," he said.

Fisher T. Fish did not reply to that remark. Perhaps that businesslike idea was really in the back of the Yankee junior's mind.

"Monday evening," he said. "We shall have to get out over the wall; the gates are locked at dark. We

can do that, I guess, or, rather, I can. No need for you to come, Bunter."

"I'm coming."

"Better leave it to me," urged Fish.

"And I'm going to have half the reward handed to me," said Bunter grimly. "You'd come back with some yarn about losing it, or something."

"Look hyer, Bunter, if you can't trust my honesty—"

"He, he, he!"

"What are you cackling at, you bloated jay?"

"Your honesty!" cackled Bunter. "Don't be funny, Fishy, old man. This ain't a time for your jokes. I'm coming out with you to meet Mr. Shack, and if you try to go without me I'll tell all the fellows at once!"

"I guess you can come," said Fish reluctantly. "But look hyer, Bunter, you can't expect halves, considering that I did the whole bizney, and found all the capital required. Now you be reasonable. I'll hand you ten quids."

"You'll hand me twenty-five," said Bunter. "Why, it was my idea from the beginning. You wouldn't have thought of it; you haven't brains enough."

"I guess I can lay over any brains you can produce in this sleepy island!" snorted Fish. "You did make the first bare suggestion I allow, but I worked out the whole scheme. I expended hard cash for the ginger-beer. I had all the trouble of doctoring it, and I paid six cents for the salts I used. If you take twenty per cent. you do well—very well."

"Halves!"

"Now, I want you to be reasonable. Where are you going, you jay!" howled Fish, as Bunter started off.

"I'm going to tell Wharton the whole game!"

"Hold on, you—you mugwump! Hold on, I tell you!" shouted Fish, in alarm.

"Is it halves?"

Fisher T. Fish suppressed a groan.

"Yep; it's halves," he said.

"And we're going together to get the cash?"

"Yep!"

"Done!" said Bunter. "And you try to dodge me on Monday night, Fishy, and I'll blow the whole game, and you'll jolly soon be made to hand back that money to the people you've swindled!"

"Swindled, you fat duffer! This isn't a swindle. I haven't said that their ginger-beer's bad, have I?" demanded Fish. "I guess I haven't said a word about it. It's only what Wharton and Cherry and Nugent and Bull have said. It all rests with them. If they're bearing witness to what isn't true it's their look out, not mine. They ought to be a bit more careful what they sign. But mind, not a word; if they smell a rat the whole game will be queered after all."

"And it's halves?"

"Yep!"

"I say, Fishy, you might as well lend me a quid off my half," said Bunter.

"Oh, come off!"

"Well, make it half-a-quid," said Bunter. "I've been disappointed about a postal-order, Fishy, and I happen to be hard up to-day. Lend me half-a-quid, and you can take it back out of my twenty-five."

"Bow-wow!"

"Well, I can get it from somebody else!" growled Bunter. "Skinner will lend me ten bob soon enough when I tell him I'm getting twenty-five for certain on Monday."

Fisher T. Fish looked alarmed.

"Not a word to Skinner, you jay! Skinner's awfully keen; he might suspect something."

"Oh, rot! I'm stony!"

"Besides, he wouldn't believe you."

"Yes, he will, when I tell him about that letter."

"You—you silly clam!" howled Fish. "I tell you it's got to be kept dark, or we shall be bowled out at the finish, and not get the reward at all. I guess I shall be on tenterhooks, anyway, till I get my fingers on the durocks."

"Well, you lend me half-a-quid, then," said Bunter. "Why can't you, when we're getting fifty pounds on Monday?"

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Fisher T. Fish snapped his teeth.

"You jay! You'll spoil it all yet!" he grunted. "Look here, I'll lend you ten bob, on condition you hand me back fifteen out of your twenty-five quid on Monday."

"You blessed shylock!" said Bunter indignantly. "But all right, it's a go."

A half-sovereign changed hands, and Bunter made a rush for the tuck-shop. The fifty pounds on Monday seemed a dead cert, but it was so tremendous a stroke of luck that Bunter couldn't help having a lingering doubt in the back of his mind. He was glad to realise upon his expectations to the extent of ten shillings at least.

But Fisher T. Fish had no doubts.

Never had the Yankee junior been so thoroughly satisfied with his smartness and slickness. He had proved, to his own satisfaction at least, that it wasn't necessary for him to wait till he left school to show his wonderful gifts as a smart business man. There was only one drawback, and that was that he had to go halves with Bunter. That was really exasperating, but owing to the extremely shady nature of the transaction there was no help for it.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Great Expectations!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. were busy that afternoon, while Fisher T. Fish was dreaming golden dreams and Billy Bunter was expending exactly ten shillings in refreshment, liquid and solid, for his inner man.

The Famous Five cycled down to Courtfield and paid a visit to Mr. Lazarus. Mr. Lazarus had a second-hand store, where anything and everything could be obtained at reasonable prices. It was possible to purchase anything, from an elephant's tusk to a Prussian's helmet, at Mr. Lazarus's.

The Co. had often made all sorts of purchases there, but on the present occasion their purchases were a surprise to the old gentleman, who could not imagine in the least what they wanted the articles for. Their purchases were, like Sam Weller's knowledge of London, "extensive and peculiar."

For they purchased a number of old weights which had been knocking about Mr. Lazarus's shop for years on end without finding a sale. What the schoolboys could possibly want with a battered old set of shop weights was a mystery to Mr. Lazarus.

But they evidently did want them, for they bought them, and paid the price of them in cash—not a very high price. Then they bought a couple of very strong bags, with locks and keys, large enough to hold the whole collection of weights. As the weights weighed nearly half a hundredweight altogether, the juniors were fairly well loaded when they quitted Mr. Lazarus's establishment.

But when they rode back to Greyfriars School they came with empty hands. The bags and weights had been disposed of somewhere en route, and when the juniors came in there was nothing about them to indicate that they had made those mysterious purchases.

That evening they asked Fisher T. Fish how he was getting on with the Gobbey Golden Ginger-beer manufacturers. They found Fish disinclined to impart information.

Now that the testimony of the chums had served his turn Fishy had no further use for them. If the company had sent down a representative to inquire into the matter, as Fish had expected, the four juniors who had suffered from the ginger-beer would have been needed, as their evidence would have been most important. But as the company had chosen to compromise without a fuss, Fisher T. Fish was done with them.

So the Yankee junior was extremely off-hand. He did not feel inclined to confide his business to them.

"You had a letter from the company to-day?" Bob Cherry asked him.

"Sure," said Fish.

"Well, why don't you show it to us?"

"I guess it wouldn't interest you," said Fish. "I'm managing it all right. You leave it to me."

"Are they sending a man down?" asked Johnny Bull.

"You see, we ought to see the man if he comes," said Harry Wharton. "As we're the witnesses, we're bound to see him, Fishy."

"I guess it isn't necessary."

"Look here, is a man coming or not?" asked Nugent.

"Nope; there's nobody coming here."

As "our Mr. Shack" was not actually coming to the school, this was barely within the truth—not near enough for George Washington, perhaps, but near enough for Fisher T. Fish.

"Oh," said Bob. "But are they going to send you the reward, Fishy?"

"I guess I shall rope it in," said Fish vaguely.

"But don't you want our evidence?"

"Nope; that's done with."

"But surely they'll make an investigation before they pay over the money?" said Johnny Bull.

"I dare say they know their own business best," said Fish, as he walked away to avoid further questions. It seemed to him that the Famous Five were showing signs of "hankering" after a share in the reward, and Fish did not mean to part with so much as a Continental red cent, as he would have expressed it. It was bad enough to have to go halves with Bunter. Fishy regarded it as judicious to draw a veil of mystery over the proceedings until the cash was safely in his hands.

In Study No. 1 the Famous Five gathered later that evening, and proceeded to draw up a document. That document duly completed, it was deposited in Bob Cherry's pocket. Then the juniors looked over the "props" of the Remove Dramatic Society, and selected the articles that would be required on Monday, when "our Mr. Shack" was to call on Fishy. Fisher T. Fish remained in sublime and blissful ignorance of their proceedings. Fishy prided himself on the number of things he knew, but the real identity of "our Mr. Shack" was not one of them.

The next day—Sunday—Fisher T. Fish seemed to be walking on air. All his thoughts were directed towards the interview arranged for Monday evening.

His thoughts went farther, too. With the sum of twenty-five pounds, he would have capital in hand to carry out all sorts of schemes—visions of wealth floated before his dazzled eyes.

On Monday Fishy could scarcely contain his eagerness. Billy Bunter was also in a state of great expectation.

After morning lessons Bunter extracted another loan from Fishy—five shillings this time. Fishy's cash was running short. It was agreed that Fishy was to have seven-and-six in return for it out of Bunter's "whack" in the plunder that evening. Bunter did not mind—he would have pawned his back hair for an immediate supply of cash when he was hard up.

Afternoon lessons were a long-drawn-out bore and worry to Fish. Mr. Queleh was down on him several times for inattention in class. But how could a fellow be attentive to lessons when he was thinking of twenty-five pounds that were to be handed over to him in the course of the evening—the fruit of a slick and smart business operation?

But lessons were over at last; and then Fishy "mooched" about, aimlessly waiting for evening. Billy Bunter "mooched" about, also, with a businesslike eye on Fishy. He did not intend to give the 'cute business man a chance of dodging him at the last moment, and "bagging" the whole of the reward. If the whole fifty pounds ever reposed in the clutches of Fishy, Bunter knew that it would not be easy to extract his half.

As the evening grew older Fishy's excitement increased. He mooned about restlessly, closely watched by Billy Bunter.

Certainly, if the Famous Five had had an eye on Fisher T. Fish, they would have guessed that something was on. But they did not seem to be taking any notice of him—somewhat to his relief.

Soon after dusk Harry Wharton & Co. went out for a sprint in the Close. There they made their way to the wood shed, and, by the light of a bike lantern, a bag was unpacked.

The door of the wood-shed was bolted, and the Famous Five, with subdued chuckles, set to work.

Bob Cherry, as the tallest of the Co., was chosen for

the part. He drew on a large pair of trousers and a coat over his own clothes, and donned a big pair of boots. Wharton decorated his face for him, affixing a thick brown beard and a curly moustache and heavy eyebrows. A pair of spectacles, with plain glass in the place of the lenses added to the disguise, as well as some daubs of grease paint, which gave him a ruddy complexion.

The juniors chuckled gleefully as they watched the metamorphosis.

A bowler hat finished Bob Cherry's outfit, and then, though it was possible to see that he was disguised, it was not possible to see that he was Bob Cherry. And in the gloom of the lane outside the disguise would pass muster easily enough.

"All serene now," said Wharton. "Kim on!"

The lamp was blown out, and the five juniors cautiously left the wood shed. Keeping in the shadows, they stole away towards the school wall. Bob Cherry was bunked up to the top of the wall.

"You know where to get the bags," murmured Wharton.

"You bet!"

"You won't have to carry them far. All serene?"

"Right as rain!"

Bob dropped into the road outside, and his comrades scudded back to the School House. Bob Cherry crossed the road into the field beyond the hedge, and extracted two heavy bags from their hiding-place in a hollow tree. Harry Wharton & Co. strolled into the School House, chatting cheerfully about cricket.

"Anybody seen Fishy?" asked Harry, as they came into the common-room. "Oh, here you are, Fishy! Up to a game of chess?"

"Nope!"

"Oh, let's have a game!" said Wharton amiably.

"It's only eight—plenty of time for prep. You were going to show me how they play over there, you know—in the Yew-nited States."

"I guess I've no time," said Fish. And he walked out of the common-room, with Bunter on his track.

"I say, Fishy, it's nearly time," murmured Bunter, in a stage whisper, in the passage.

"Shut up, you silly clam!"

Fisher T. Fish hung about for another quarter of an hour. Then, determined to be early at the rendezvous, he scuttled out into the dusky Close, and the Owl of the Remove scuttled after him. Four juniors watched them go—and grinned.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Reward!

"GIMME a bunk up, Fishy!"

"Oh, rats!"

"Gimme a bunk up, you rotter!" said Bunter fiercely. "You know I can't climb the wall by myself, you least! You want to leave me behind."

"I guess—"

"All right. I'll call Wharton, and ask him—"

"Hold on, you fat mugwump! I'll bunk you."

Billy Bunter clambered up the wall like a fat beetle, bunked up from below by the Yankee junior. The wall had been Fishy's last hope, as it were. He had hoped that Bunter would not be able to negotiate it. But Billy Bunter was sticking to Fishy that evening like his shadow. Fishy had no more chance of getting rid of Bunter than Sinbad the Sailor had of getting rid of the Old Man of the Sea.

Bunter reached the top of the wall gasping and snorting. The slim Yankee junior climbed up after him.

"Come on!" growled Fish.

"Grooh! I'm out of breath! And you shoved my nose against the wall, you beast! I'm hurt!"

"Shut up! Do you want Gosling to hear you, you clam?" said Fish, in a ferocious whisper.

"Yow! You've nearly broken my nose!"

"I wish I'd quite broken your neck!" said Fish savagely. "Stick there, if you like, you oyster, till the cows come home!"

Fish dropped into the road. Bunter promptly dropped after him. He rolled over in the road and gave a yelp; but he picked himself up quickly and bolted after Fish.

It was very dark in the lane, but a light gleamed out over the school gates. Fisher T. Fish and his partner carefully avoided that light. They did not want to be spotted by Gosling through the bars of the gate.

"Ten minutes yet," said Fish. "Keep out of sight, and don't sport like a dashed rhinoceros! I suppose you don't want to tell all Kent and Essex that we're out of bounds, do you?"

The minutes passed very slowly to the waiting juniors. They were out of bounds, which was a serious matter if they should be caught. But the half-hour rumbled out from the clock-tower at last.

There was a footstep, and a rustle in the hedge. Fisher T. Fish and Bunter made a simultaneous rush for the spot.

In the deep gloom they saw faintly a big man in an overcoat, with a bowler hat, thick beard and moustaches and spectacles.

"Mr. Shack, I guess?" said Fish, breathlessly.

"Yes," came a deep voice. "You are——"

"Fisher T. Fish."

"You are not alone!" exclaimed Mr. Shack, with a start.

"This is my pardner," said Fish. "It's all right."

"But it was arranged——"

"It's all O.K. This galoot knows the whole bizney, and he's as mum as a clam," said Fish. "Where's the durocks?"

"The—the what? I do not speak German."

"That ain't German—that's English!" snorted Fish.

"I mean, where's the cash? Where's the reward?"

"Fifty pounds," said Bunter.

"Follow me. I do not wish to be seen."

"Sure!"

The bearded man disappeared through the hedge, and Fish scrambled after him, and after him went William George Bunter. Their hearts were thumping with excitement now. Sure as they had felt, it came as a relief to them to find that Mr. Shack was really there with the reward all ready for them.

Mr. Shack led the way through the deep gloom half across the field, to a big tree. Under the tree he halted, and the two rascals of the Remove halted, too.

"My instructions are to deal with you, Master Fish. I require a receipt for the money to be signed, and then I hand you fifty pounds."

"Yep!"

"Halves!" gasped Bunter. "You haven't got it quite right, Mr. Shack. I take half. Don't you give it all to Fishy. You give me half."

"Shut up, you clam! We'll divvy up afterwards," whispered Fish hurriedly. He was fearful of the effect Bunter's excitement might have upon Mr. Shack. He could not feel secure until the money had been paid over.

"We won't divvy up afterwards," said Bunter fiercely. "I'm going to have my whack now."

"The reward is in two bags," said Mr. Shack. "For reasons that you doubtless understand, it was impossible to bring you a cheque, or even banknotes."

"I savvy."

"You do not object, I presume to small coin. You see, the company does a large penny-in-the-slot business, and always has a large number of coppers to dispose of," said Mr. Shack.

That statement was quite correct; and Mr. Shack did not add that the coppers were in those bags, which perhaps would not have been quite correct.

"My aunt! You haven't brought us fifty pounds in coppers, I suppose," ejaculated Fisher T. Fish.

"I have carried out my instructions, Master Fish, but if you object to the form of payment, I will take these bags away, and refer the matter to——"

"No fear!" gasped Bunter, before Fish could speak. "Don't be a silly idiot, Fishy. Coppers are all right. We can change 'em with Mrs. Mimble—she always wants change—or at the post-office. Don't be a silly fathead!"

"I guess it's O.K.," said Fish, who naturally hadn't any intention of letting Mr. Shack take the reward away

again, in howsoever inconvenient a form he might have brought the money. "I guess we're satisfied."

"Here is the receipt. I require this paper to be signed before handing over the reward. I have a fountain-pen here."

"Hum! Let's see the spondulicks first," said Fish cautiously.

"Here are the bags, but you must not touch them till you have signed the receipt. Such are my instructions."

Mr. Shack lifted two heavy bags into view.

Fish and Bunter gazed at them ecstatically. What did it matter if the bags were crammed with coppers, so long as the coppers amounted to the value of fifty pounds sterling? Fifty pounds was worth the trouble of carrying about, however heavy it was.

Fish struck a match and looked at the bags. On each of them was a label, inscribed with the words "Twenty-five pounds."

"I guess that's all right," said Fish, as the match went out. "I guess——"

"I'm taking one of them," said Bunter.

"Hold!" rapped out Mr. Shack. "I am instructed to deal with Master Fish. If this boy—what is his name?"

"Bunter."

"If Master Bunter takes one of the bags, I shall require him to sign the receipt also. I cannot part with the reward otherwise. I have no choice but to carry out my instructions."

"All right. I'll sign it," said Bunter impatiently.

"I'll sign it first, if you like. Where do I sign?"

"Here."

Mr. Shack spread a paper out on the cover of a pocket-book, and passed a fountain-pen to Bunter.

"Name in full, please," he said.

"Right you are!"

The Owl of the Remove wrote down "William George Bunter" in his sprawling hand, and passed the pen to Fish. The Yankee junior signed "Fisher Tarleton Fish." In the glimmering starlight there was light enough to write, though not to read, what was written on the paper. The two young rascals had been prepared, of course, to sign a receipt.

"Thank you!" said Mr. Shack. "My business here is concluded. I trust we shall hear no more of this matter."

"I say, this bag is locked!" exclaimed Bunter.

"Quite so," said Mr. Shack. "I have naturally not been entrusted with the keys. You may break the locks, as the bags will remain with you. Good-night."

"But I say——"

Mr. Shack strode away.

"I guess it's all right. We can open 'em in the study," said Fish. "Safer to open them there, too. We don't want a flood of blessed coppers rolling out in this field. I guess this is O.K. Fifty pounds, by gosh!"

"I say, this bag's jolly heavy."

"Leave it there if you don't like to carry it," chuckled Fish.

The Yankee junior picked up his bag and started off. It was a terrific weight for the far from athletic Fish. As for Bunter, he groaned and gasped under the weight of twenty-five pounds.

"I swow!" gasped Fish, as he reached the hedge and plumped the bag down in the road for a rest. "This does weigh something, by gum!"

"Groo! Help me with this bag, you beast!" came Bunter's gasping voice from the gloom of the field.

"Oh, go and eat coke! I guess I've got enough to do with my own. What a blithering jay to bring it all in coppers."

"The silly idiot!" groaned Bunter. "They've no right to work off coppers on us. Blow their penny-in-the-slot machines! Oh, dear!"

"Oh, buck up!"

With great exertions the reward-hunters dragged the bags along the road to the school wall where they had climbed out. But here a fresh difficulty arose. How were the bags to be got over the wall?

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Bunter, sinking down on his bag and snorting for breath. "I—I'm tired! How are we going to get the beastly things in? Ow!"

"Shut up, you mugwump, you'll be heard!" hissed Fish.

"Well, how are we going to get 'em in?" howled Bunter. "We can't lift the blessed things over the wall!"

Fisher T. Fish rubbed his long nose thoughtfully and cogitated. It was only too clear that the bags could not be lifted over the wall. They could hardly carry them, let alone lift them over the wall.

"I guess the galoot ought to be pole-axed for bringing us this stuff," said Fish savagely. "The silly jay! The howling mugwump! But I calculate it can't be helped. Blessed if I should have thought that even twenty-five quid's worth of coppers would have weighed so much. We shall have to get a rope, and tie it on, and drag 'em over."

"You fathead, we haven't got a rope!"

"I guess I shall have to cut in and get one."

"Oh, buck up, and don't stand there jawing," said Bunter ungratefully.

Fisher T. Fish climbed over and dropped in, and cut away to the wood-shed. It was about ten minutes before he returned with a rope. Sitting astride of the wall, he let it cautiously down to Bunter.

"Tie it on the handle, and I'll pull it up," he said. "Then the other—"

"And then you'll cut off with both, and leave me out here," said his partner, with a snort.

"Oh, you suspicious jay—"

"I'll tie it on to both of 'em," said Bunter. "Then you can come down and bunk me up, and we'll pull 'em up together."

"Look hyer—"

"Oh, don't jaw!"

"You suspicious clam—"

"You spoofing Yankee—"

After that exchange of compliments, Fisher T. Fish decided to do as his partner requested. Bunter was holding on to the bags, and he would not trust Fishy an inch, so there was evidently nothing else to be done.

Once more, with great labour, the fat junior was bunked up on the wall. There he had to rest for a good five minutes before he had breath enough to help in hauling up the plunder.

"How long are you going to keep me waiting, you fat idiot?" said Fisher T. Fish, between his teeth.

"Grooh! I'm out of breath! You knocked my nose on the wall again, you rotter! I believe you did it on purpose! Groooh!"

"Lend a hand here, you owl!"

Two pairs of hands, fat and thin, grasped the rope, and the bags came slowly up the wall. Fish and Bunter were both spluttering breathlessly when those heavy bags of plunder were landed at last.

It was an easier matter to lower them into the Close. Then Fish and Bunter scrambled down after them. Billy Bunter clutched his bag at once, with a suspicious glare at Fish. He really seemed to anticipate an attempt at highway robbery.

"Get it in quietly," muttered Fish. "We don't want those galoots crowding round asking for a share."

But the partners were not destined to get their plunder in quietly. As they staggered across the Close under their burdens, there was a rush of feet and a buzz of voices, and a crowd of grinning Removites surrounded them.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Fifty Pounds—Avoirdupois!

"WHAT is it, Fishy?"

"Let us lend a hand!"

"Shove it this way, Bunter!"

Nugent and Johnny Bull collared Bunter's bag, and there was a ferocious roar from William George.

"Gimme my bag! Gimme my money!"

"Money!" shouted Peter Todd.

"My hat! Have you been robbing a Rothschild?" asked Harry Wharton. "Is that bag full of money?"

"You give it to me," said Bunter. "You can help me carry it in, if you like, but you're not going to have any of it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess you can lend me a hand," said Fisher T. Fish. "Don't drag it away, please—I guess I'm keeping hold of it—but you can help me. It's a hefty weight."

"But what is it?" asked Vernon-Smith.

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"Durocks, I guess," said Fish. Now that the reward was safely in his hands, Fisher T. Fish was not averse to showing off his plunder. "I guess I've scored this time, you galoots. What do you think of two hundred and fifty dollars—what?"

"Gammon!"

"The gammonfulness is terrific!"

"I guess you'll see," said Fisher T. Fish. "You help me carry this bag into my study—"

"Bring it into the common-room," said Wharton.

"Let's all feast our eyes on it. Don't be alarmed, Fishy; we sha'n't ask you to share out."

"I calculate you could ask till you were black in the face, and you wouldn't freeze on to a single dime!" snorted Fish.

Ready hands helped in carrying the heavy bags into the house, but Fisher T. Fish and Bunter did not let them go. The big bags were rushed into the common-room, and bumped on the table. An army of juniors gathered round, the Fourth as well as the Remove. They were all grinning. It occurred to Fisher T. Fish afterwards that the fellows had been told what to expect. But, naturally, it did not occur to him just then.

"Twenty-five pounds each!" chortled Billy Bunter.

"Yep! That's the figure!"

"But where did you get it?" asked Temple of the Fourth.

"It's the reward," said Bunter. "The reward from the ginger-beer company, you know, for spotting that their ginger-beer was rotten, and it was my idea from the beginning, but I'm letting Fishy have half."

"And they've paid you in gold?" asked Tom Brown, with a chuckle.

"Coppers," said Fish. "It seems they had a lot of coppers on hand, and they worked them off on us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at," said Bunter. "Lend me a knife, somebody. I'm going to rip this bag open."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! is that the loot?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, coming into the common-room with a cheery, smiling face. There was a smudge of grease-paint still on Bob's healthy cheeks, but he bore no resemblance whatever to "our Mr. Shack."

"This is it, I guess," said Fish. "Didn't I tell you I'd work the rifle—what? Didn't I tell you I'd stick 'em for the reward? I guess they ain't up to dealing with a real cute galoot from Noo York. I guess I've got the durocks—I've got the goods, my infants."

"Well, let's see the goods," said Harry Wharton. "I'll believe there's money in those bags when I see it."

"Can't you see the label—twenty-five pounds?"

"But it might be twenty-five pounds of anything," said Johnny Bull. "Might be twenty-five pounds avoirdupois, you know."

"Oh, scat!"

There was no unlocking the bags, but the partners were anxious to get at their wealth, and they slashed the bags open with pocket-knives. Round the table the juniors were crammed, watching.

The bags were quickly open.

Inside, there were parcels wrapped in brown paper.

"There's the durocks," said Fisher T. Fish, loftily.

"Now, don't let it roll over the floor when I undo this paper."

Fisher T. Fish whipped open the paper.

Then he gasped.

There was a stuttering gasp from Bunter at the same moment, as he also uncovered his loot.

A heap of metal weights, ancient and battered, was disclosed.

The Yankee junior gazed at his prize like a fellow in a dream.

Bunter was speechless. His eyes were almost starting through his spectacles.

From the crowd of juniors came a wild howl.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Waal, I swow!" gasped Fish, rubbing his eyes. "Weights, by gum! Shop weights!"

"Sh-sh-shop w-w-w-weights!" stuttered Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The labels were right!" yelled Peter Todd. "Twenty-five pounds each! Count up the weights, Fishy."

Fisher T. Fish turned almost green.

It was quite right, each bag had contained twenty-five pounds, exactly as Mr. Shack had stated.

Only they were pounds avoirdupois!

Such a joke could not have been played with dollars, as Fisher T. Fish remarked afterwards; but owing to the ancient, played-out, moth-eaten system in vogue in a sleepy old island, Fishy's smart Yankee leg had been pulled—he had been paid his twenty-five pounds—avoirdupois!

Twenty-five pounds in ancient, battered, worthless shop weights!

The expression on Fishy's face made the juniors scream. Fisher T. Fish could not really believe his eyes. Billy Bunter could hardly believe his spectacles.

"Waal, carry me home to die!" stuttered Fish.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a swindle!" shrieked Bunter. "There isn't any money at all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Did you sign a receipt?" shrieked Johnny Bull.

"Sure!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, you can have that receipt back," said Bob Cherry. "Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows, kindly look this way!"

Bob Cherry took a paper from his pocket and pinned it on the wall, and all eyes turned upon it. There was a roar of merriment. Fisher T. Fish gazed at the paper and wondered if he was dreaming. Billy Bunter blinked at it, and rubbed his glasses, and blinked again. For the document ran:

"I hereby acknowledge the receipt of fifty pounds—avoirdupois—in full payment, as a reward for attempting to swindle the Gobbey Ginger-Beer Co. I also hereby acknowledge that I doctored the ginger-beer, and spoofed some fellows into drinking it afterwards, with the intention as aforesaid of swindling the company. I hereby thank those fellows for burning the letter I wrote to the company, and for writing a reply to it themselves on Mr. Quelch's typewriter. I hereby admit that I am a spoofing rascal, and ought to be in a reformatory.

"Signed: WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER,
FISHER TARLETON FISH."

"Waal, by gum! Oh, Jerusalem crickets!" gasped Fisher T. Fish. "How—how—how did you get my signature on that paper?"

"How did you get mine?" hooted Bunter.

"It was our Mr. Shack!" said Wharton, amid howls of

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laughter. "Our Mr. Shack, alias Robert Cherry of the Remove."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You!" shrieked Fisher T. Fish, as Bob Cherry drew a brown beard from his pocket, and wagged it at him.

"You! Oh, you jay! You mugwump!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then—then my letter never went to the company at all!" yelled Fish, as the full meaning of that "receipt" dawned upon his smart Transatlantic brain.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No jolly fear!" said Wharton. "And jolly lucky for you it didn't, or you'd be in chokey by this time, you swindler! When we found out you had doctored the ginger-beer, we should have told the facts, if they'd sent a man down. And where would you have been then?"

"In chokey!" grinned Johnny Bull. "And the right place for him, too!"

"You—you—you found out!" said Fisher T. Fish weakly. "You—you've been pulling my leg all this time?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We have—we has!" grinned Bob Cherry. "A smart American leg, made in Noo York—and we've pulled it!"

"Oh, you galoots! Oh, dear!"

"Now bump 'em for their swindling," said Johnny Bull.

"I—I say, you fellows, I wasn't in it at all!" yelled Bunter, in alarm. "It was all Fishy! He said it was honest; he said it was business!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I thought all along it wasn't honest!" hooted Bunter. "I told Fishy so all the time. In fact, I was going to refuse to touch the money——"

"You fat clam!" screamed Fisher T. Fish. "Gimme my fifteen bob! I want my fifteen bob! I'm going to have my fifteen bob, that I advanced you out of your share——"

"I decline to have anything whatever to do with you, Fishy," said Bunter. "You're dishonest!"

"My fifteen bob——"

"The transaction is closed, as far as I'm concerned. I refuse even to discuss the matter. I'll thank you not to speak to me. You're an unscrupulous and dishonest person!"

"Fifteen bob!" gasped Fish wildly. "I've advanced that fat mugwump fifteen bob on the strength of his share!"

That was the climax. The japers had intended to make Fisher T. Fish suffer for his sins, but they had not expected that final touch. That Fishy had advanced hard cash—to be repaid out of the twenty-five pounds avoirdupois—was too rich. The juniors wept with merriment. The common-room rang with laughter. Fishy's unaccustomed supply of cash was gone, and in the place of it he had a battered set of shop-weights.

Fisher T. Fish simply crawled away. For once, for a short time at least, the cute and self-satisfied Yankee junior was completely crushed, and he crawled away to hide his diminished head, leaving his Form-fellows howling like hyenas.

The Bunter-Fish partnership was dissolved. During the next few days Fisher T. Fish made almost frantic endeavours to extract fifteen shillings from Billy Bunter. He did not succeed. Bunter was not only stony, and quite incapable of restoring the fifteen shillings, but he took up a lofty attitude, and declined to have anything whatever to do with a dishonest person like Fish. All Fishy could do was to carry his battered set of weights down to Mr. Lazarus's in Courtfield, where he sold them to Mr. Lazarus for the munificent sum of one shilling. And even that shilling Fisher T. Fish was glad to get in exchange for the Fifty Pounds Reward!

THE END.

(Next week—"The Scouts' Victory." Don't miss this fine yarn, it is one of Mr. Richards' masterpieces! Order next Monday's MAGNET now!)

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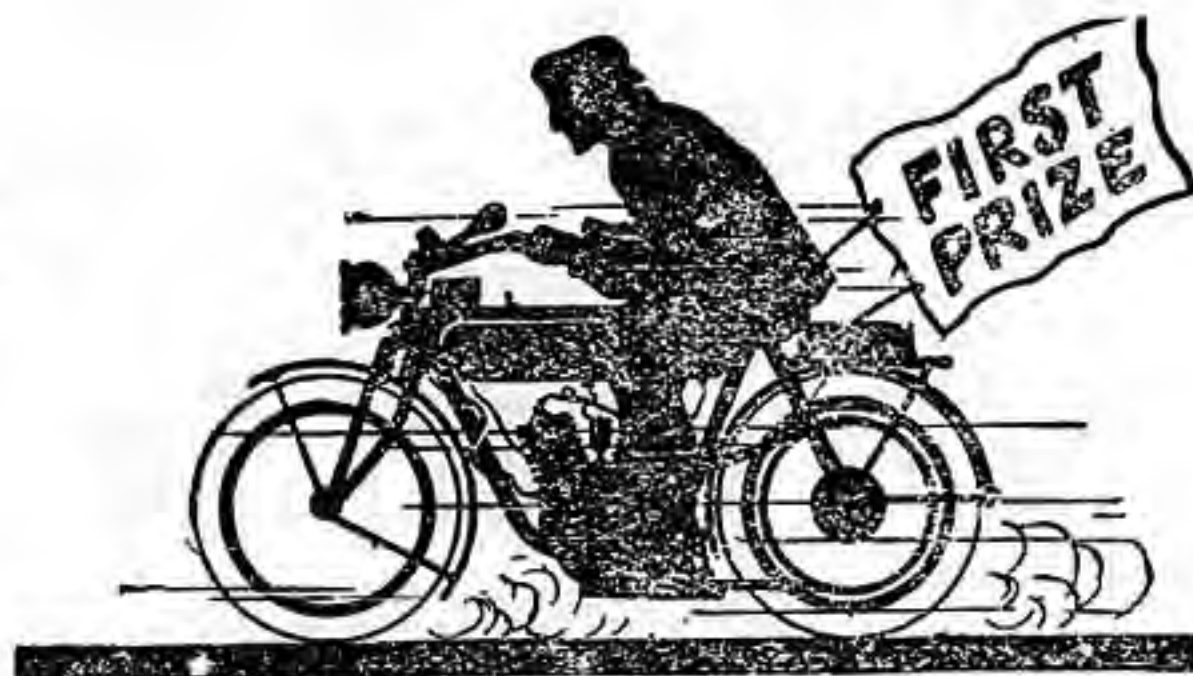
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THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Man in Black.

"Shake a leg, you yellow-faced baboon! Up with it, or, by thunder, I'll come and make you!"

The tone was worse than the words, and Dick Damer paused in the act of stepping out of the blazing Australian sunshine on to the wide, cool verandah of Warlindi, and stood with a startled expression on his pink-and-white face.

There came a bumping as of furniture being moved inside the house, and a panting sound.

"Got it up at last, have you?" snarled the same voice.

"Put it down and fetch the rest. Be smart, or—"

The threat that followed will not bear repeating, and Dick went rather white. For a moment he was on the point of turning tail and bolting back the way he had come.

But he had travelled half-way round the world to reach this particular house, and in spite of his spick-and-span, pink-and-white appearance, the boy had plenty of pluck.

He paused, drew a deep breath, then seized the bell-handle and gave it a nervous jerk.

There was a long pause—so long that Dick's hand moved again towards the bell. But before he could ring a second time the door opened.

Dick saw a heavy, bloated-looking man, with a fat, flabby face and thick, black hair and eyebrows. His clothes were black, so was his tie; even his finger-nails shared in the general mourning. He looked like a funeral mute off duty.

"Who are you?" he asked, in a thick, husky voice. "What do you want?"

"I—I'm Richard Damer," stammered Dick. "I have come to see my uncle—my Uncle Nicholas Damer."

The other turned up his eyes with a sanctimonious expression.

"You are too late, my young friend. I regret to say that you are too late. Mr. Damer passed away last Tuesday week."

Dick's jaw dropped.

"Dead!" he gasped. "You don't mean to say he is dead?"

The fat man shook his big head and sighed heavily.

"Alas, it is too true! He had been ailing for a long time, but the end came very suddenly. I was with him to the last."

"Did—didn't he leave any message for me?" Dick managed to ask.

The other shook his head.

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"He never mentioned you. I never even knew that he had a nephew."

"B-but he wrote to me to come out," said Dick. "Here's his letter. He said he would give me work, and that I could live with him."

"I know nothing of that. He never spoke of you to me. I was his partner. Crane is my name—Wesley Crane."

Dick could find no words. He was too staggered to speak. Wesley Crane watched him with an odd expression in his prominent eyes.

"You've come from England?" he asked presently.

"Y-yes; in the Baramula. I only got in this morning."

"Then you're staying in Sydney?"

"I'm not staying anywhere. I left my box at the wharf, and came straight up. I—I couldn't afford to stay at an hotel."

Crane wagged his great head again.

"Ah, very sad! Well, I can't ask you to stay here. This place is to be sold, and I am busy taking an inventory. But since you are my late partner's nephew, I will do what I can for you."

He took out a pocket-book and scribbled a few words on a leaf, which he tore out.

"Here is the address of a friend of mine who will put you up for the night. To-morrow come to my office in Water Street, and I will see what work can be found for you."

Dick was touched.

"Thank you very much!" he said gratefully. "It is very kind of you indeed."

Crane put out a thick, grimy hand.

"That's all right," he said. "Well, I'm busy now. Good-bye!"

Dick's head was in a whirl as he tramped back down the long white road in the hot glare of the Australian sun. He was sixteen, but looked younger. That was the fault of Miss Emma Neate, the aunt who had looked after him since the death of his parents, eleven years before. She had never sent him to a boarding-school, and the result was that, though a well-grown youngster, he had precious little idea of fending for himself. He knew rather less of the world than the average boy of twelve.

Miss Neate herself was not much better, and it was pure ignorance on her part that had caused her to invest most of her money in a wild-cat mining scheme. When it failed, and she was left with barely enough to live on, she had jumped at the chance offered to Dick by his Australian uncle, and sent him straight out to Sydney by the first ship.

The news of his uncle's death had shocked Dick, but as he had never seen him, he naturally did not feel any particular grief. The one question which filled his thoughts during that long walk back to the tram-head was whether the soft-spoken Mr. Wesley Crane was the same person whom he had heard using the appalling language which had greeted his ears at his first approach to Warlindi.

It hardly seemed possible, yet there were ugly doubts in Dick's mind. Of one thing he was quite sure. He did not like the man, and dreaded the prospect of working for him.

At last he reached the tram. By this time he was pretty well played out. He fell asleep in a corner, and woke to find the tram at rest and the conductor shaking him by the shoulder.

"All change, sonny. This here's the terminus."

Dick jumped up with a start. He took the address from his pocket.

"Can you tell me where this is?" he asked.

The conductor glanced at it, then at Dick.

"Bendigo Hotel, Wharf Street. Be you staying there?"

"Yes; just for the present. I was told to."

The conductor grunted.

"Tain't much of a place. Still, I suppose you knows your own business. Go straight down that street till you gets to the water's edge, then second turn on the right."

Dick thanked him, and walked on. The sleep had refreshed him, but he was desperately hungry. Passing a little cook-shop, he went in and asked for a sandwich. As it was being cut he put his hand in his pocket to find some money.

He drew it out, and hastily tried the other.

A cry of dismay escaped him.

"What's the matter?" demanded the man behind the counter, in a surly tone.

"I—I've been robbed!" stammered Dick. "My purse is gone!"

"I've heard that tale afore!" remarked the other, with a sneer. "Out you gets—quick!"

This fresh misfortune fairly staggered Dick. True, the purse had only held a sovereign in gold and a little silver, but it was all he had in the world. No doubt it had been taken from him in the tram. At any rate he was now absolutely penniless. He could not even pay the few pence due on his box. Not knowing what else to do, he went straight on to the Bendigo.

This was a narrow-fronted inn standing in a dirty, noisome alley running off the wharf. Over the door was written, "John Bale, licensed to sell beer, spirits, and tobacco." The look of the place and the smell of it made him sick, but there was no help for it. He went in.

A surly-looking, heavy-jowled man in shirt-sleeves, stood behind the bar.

He eyed Dick suspiciously.

"Who are you? What do you want?" he demanded.

"My name is Damer. Mr. Crane sent me," answered Dick humbly enough. "He said I was to stay the night."

"Crane? Oh, Wesley Crane?" The man's tone became less surly. "All right. I'll fix you up. Where's your things?"

Dick explained, and spoke of the loss of his purse.

"More fool you to carry a purse! But don't you worry. I'll send across for your box. Had your dinner?"

"I've had nothing since breakfast," confessed Dick.

"Take some o' them biscuits and cheese"—pointing to a basket on the counter. "Supper'll be ready soon."

Dick helped himself gratefully. Then Bale showed him a room. It was a stuffy little cupboard of a place, and looked out on a filthy back-yard. His aunt's house had been the last word in cleanliness, and the squalor made Dick shiver. He flung open the window, and sat on the edge of the bed, feeling as miserable as a lost puppy.

He had left the door ajar, and presently heard low voices somewhere across the passage. He did not pay much attention. He was too unhappy.

It was something familiar in one of the voices that roused him, and he was up like a shot, and across the room.

"Who is he, anyway?" It was Bale who spoke, and, though little more than a hoarse whisper, Dick caught the words distinctly.

"That's no business of yours. I don't want him here, and that's enough for you!"

Dick's heart began to beat quickly. Now he was certain of the second voice. It was Wesley Crane's, and, though as low-pitched as Bale's, there was an angry note in it.

"It's risky," answered Bale softly. "The cops have been giving me a heap o' trouble lately. S'pose someone seed him come in here?"

"Suppose nothing. He only landed this morning. He don't know a soul in the town, and no one knows him. You do as I say, and I'll make it right with you."

At this moment someone opened the street door. There came heavy steps in the bar. Dick heard Bale jump up hastily, and quickly closed his own door.

After a bit he opened it again, and stood just inside, straining his ears. But there was no more talk. All the same he had heard enough to make him horribly uneasy. He felt instinctively that it was himself that Crane had been referring to, and began to think that the best thing he could do was to clear out at once. But the idea of wandering about Sydney at night without a penny in his pocket daunted him, and before he could make up his mind Bale stuck his head in.

"Supper's ready!" he said gruffly. "This way!"

The dining-room matched the rest of the place, and the cloth on the table looked as though it had not been changed for a month.

"Sit down, sonny!" said Bale, as he pulled a chair up and seated himself. "Have some coffee, will ye?"

Dick thanked him.

"Milk and sugar?" asked Bale genially.

"Please!" said Dick.

The coffee was a pleasant surprise, black and strong and

bitter, but far better than Dick had expected. He was thirsty, and drank nearly the whole cup, while Bale helped him to bread and a plateful of thick stew.

Dick put away two mouthfuls, then stopped and looked at his plate.

"What's the matter? Ain't it good?" asked Bale.

"It—it's all right," said Dick slowly, as he passed his hand across his forehead in a dazed fashion. "B-but I don't feel very well."

Bale watched him for a moment or two before replying.

"It's a bit hot in here. You want a breath o' fresh air."

"That's it," said Dick, in a queer, thick voice. He wondered vaguely what was the matter with his tongue. It felt too big for his mouth. There was something amiss, too, with his eyes. Bale, sitting just across from him, seemed to be growing. He became as big as a giant, then shrank slowly to the size of a dwarf.

"Come along!" said Bale briskly. "Come on outside!"

As Dick rose to his feet, Bale opened a door at the back of the room, and led the way through a dark, narrow passage.

Dick followed uncertainly. His head was spinning in a most unpleasant fashion.

There was another door at the end of the passage. As in a dream Dick saw Bale open it.

"Here ye are, sonny!" he said, and the voice seemed to come from a long way off.

As he stumbled past, Dick felt a vigorous push from behind which sent him headlong forward. He plunged into pitchy darkness, the floor gave way beneath him, and he felt himself falling. He brought up with a stunning crash, and that was the last he knew.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Master of the Rainbow.

Dick opened his eyes. He was still in darkness, and strange noises filled his ears. His head throbbed heavily, and for a time he was content to lie still.

Slowly he became aware that the whole place was swaying with a long, steady swing, and after a bit it came to him that he must be back in his own cabin aboard the Baramula, and that the events of the past day had been only a bad dream.

He shut his eyes tightly, and tried to sleep.

The next thing he knew a yellow light shone in his face, and, looking up, he saw bending over him a tall Chinaman in a blue blouse. His face looked as if it had been carved out of old ivory, and his left ear was missing, giving him an oddly lop-sided appearance.

"Hallo!" said Dick faintly. "Who are you? Where am I?"

The Chinaman paid no attention whatever to the question.

"Cap'n Clipp's—he wantum see you."

"Captain Clipp's? Who's he?"

"He tell you plenty soon. You come along o' me."

Dick sat up, which set his head swimming worse than ever. The light showed him that he had been lying on a wooden bunk in a small, low-ceiled cabin. The place was cleaner than Bale's hotel, but the reek of stale salt water, old clothes and oilskins was thick enough to cut with a knife.

As Dick's feet reached the floor there was a lurch which sent him flying, and if the Chinaman had not caught him he would have pitched on his head against the opposite wall.

"Thanks!" gasped Dick, and then the Chinaman, keeping fast hold on him, led him out of the cabin and up a steep companion ladder.

A blast of fresh cold wind met him as he got his head above the hatch, and his bewildered eyes took in the fact that he was on the deck of a small sailing vessel, which was lying over to a stiff breeze, and tearing across the sea through the starlit darkness of a clear night.

Overhead he saw the loom of tall white sails, and on either side the foam-tipped waves, while astern streamed away a long wake, milk-white with gleaming phosphorescence.

The Chinaman gave him little time to take in his surroundings. He led him straight to the deck-house, and pushed him in through the open door.

Dick blinked in the bright light of a large swinging oil-lamp. The first thing he saw was a table. Behind the table sat the biggest man he had ever seen in his life—big, at least, so far as breadth went. He seemed perfectly square, and his face was huge and of a bright brick-red. Between his teeth was a long black cigar.

As Dick came in he took this out of his mouth and looked the boy up and down with a hard, penetrating stare.

"Waal, I -wow!" he growled contemptuously. "I always knowed Bale was a fool, but this here's the limit! What good d'ye think you are?" he barked suddenly, in a voice that made Dick jump.

"Are ye dumb?" he continued savagely, for Dick, sick and dizzy and bewildered, had not answered.

"Can't ye speak, ye pink-faced puppy?"

Dick flushed hotly. The insult pulled him together.

"I don't know what you are talking about!" he answered sharply. "Where am I? How did I come aboard here?"

"Wants to know where he is!" said the big man, in a tone of bitter sarcasm. "Asks how he came aboard! Wonders why we left his nurse ashore?"

He rose suddenly to his feet, and it gave Dick a shock to see how short he was compared with his enormous breadth. With one spring he was round the table, and caught Dick by the shoulder with his gigantic hand.

"See here, my lad," he said threateningly, sticking his great red face close up against Dick's. "I'll tell ye this much. You're aboard the Rainbow, and I'm the only man in her what's got the right to ask questions. You remember that if you value your health, I'm cap'n, an' you're cabin-boy, and anything else I've a mind to make you."

So far from scaring him, the captain's hectoring tone roused Dick's spirit.

"That's all nonsense!" he answered boldly. "I've been drugged and chucked on board here against my will. I demand to be put ashore!"

For a moment the captain stared as if he could not believe his ears. His red face grew redder still, his eyes looked as if they would start out of his head. Then his rage boiled over.

"Put ye ashore?" he roared. "I'll put ye ashore!"

He picked up Dick in both hands, holding him by the neck and the slack of his coat, and swinging him up level with his head as though he had been a baby, rushed out of the cabin and across to the rail. For a horrid moment Dick was certain that the brute was going to fling him overboard.

At the last moment he changed his mind.

"That's too easy!" he growled, and, spinning round, made for the companion. Without ado he pitched Dick headlong down into the darkness below.

"That's lesson number one!" he bellowed after him. "If you expects to live to make a man, you better not ask for number two."

As for Dick, he lay helpless and more than half stunned at the foot of the ladder. His luck had held thus far—that he had fallen on a pile of oilskins. But for that he would probably have been killed. He would certainly have broken half the bones in his body.

Next thing he knew the tall Chinaman was beside him, the lantern in his hand.

"You velly foolish," he said reprovingly. "Chang allee same wonder boss he no kill you."

"I don't care whether he kills me or not!" sobbed out Dick, beside himself with pain and rage. "I'd as soon be dead as like this!"

"You no talkee that way to-morrow," answered Chang calmly. "You sleepec one time. Feel all light to-morrow."

He helped Dick to a bunk, gave him a blanket, and left him. Dick, aching all over and miserable beyond words, lay there feeling that he would never sleep again.

But the very violence of his emotions exhausted him, and now that the schooner was well out to sea her motion became more regular and easy. Presently he dropped off, and did not wake until daylight was streaming through the open scuttle overhead.

For some minutes he lay wondering vaguely where he was and what had happened. Then he remembered, and started up.

Overhead someone was scrubbing the deck. He heard the water swishing across the planking. His throat was burning. He crawled out, put on his coat and boots, and moved towards the ladder.

Just then Chang appeared, coming down.

"Feel all light?" he asked and though his face and voice were wooden as ever, Dick felt there was a gleam of kindness somewhere behind.

"I'm better, thanks," he said. "Could I have a wash and some water to drink?"

"Plenty water in sea. You go topside, dlav a bucket. Cap'n Clippis he still asleep."

Dick went on deck. It was a beautiful morning. The breeze had fallen light, but the schooner, with topsails set, snored through the clear blue waves. No land was in sight.

The only people on deck were three Chinamen—one at the wheel, the other two busy scrubbing and cleaning.

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Dick drew a pail of cool sea water, stripped to the waist, sluiced himself well, and felt fifty per cent. better. He was going to put on the same clothes again, but Chang called him below and gave him a suit of blue dungaree which was not much too big for him.

He had just finished changing when breakfast was brought in—bread, fried pork in a mess-kid, and a black liquid which bore some faint resemblance to coffee, though it smelt chiefly of molasses.

Six Chinamen, including Chang, shared the meal with Dick. They ate in absolute silence, and seemed to take no more notice of the white boy than they did of the hideous brass joss which stood at the end of the fo'c's'le with a couple of punk-sticks burning before it.

Chang, who seemed to be cook, picked up the empty kid and bread-pan, and vanished silently. The others went on deck, leaving Dick alone.

Presently Chang came back.

"Hey, boss he want you. Talkee him one piecay. Sabee?"

Dick's heart sank, but he comforted himself with the thought that nothing could be worse than last night, and anyhow, he was feeling more like himself again.

He found Cripps in the cabin aft. The big man surveyed him with a sardonic grin.

"Still feelin' gay, sonny—eh?"

"Not particularly," answered Dick.

"That's right. It don't pay fer kids like you to get giving back-talk to their skipper. Savvy?"

He waited for this to sink in, then continued:

"See here, young feller, you listen to me. I ain't altogether angry because you stuck up ter me last night. Shows you've got something back o' that pink-and-white baby face o' yours. D'ye know anything about a ship?"

"Nothing," confessed Dick.

"Ye don't look as if ye knowed much about anything, and that's the truth," said Cripps, grinning again. "Still, ye can learn, and I'm the man to learn ye. I'm a-going to learn ye, too, whether ye likes it or not, so you make up your mind to that. We don't keep no loafers aboard the Rainbow. Now, you mind what I say, and do what I tell ye, and this cruise'll be all right for you. But get gay again, and I'll make ye wish ye'd never been born!"

"I don't seem to have much choice!" said Dick bitterly. "I've got to make the best of it!"

Cripps glared a moment, then burst into a loud laugh.

"You got sense all right. Now go forrard and help Chang peel the spuds. You'll learn galley work fust, and then, if you're good, I'll teach ye navigation. Git!"

Dick got. He felt he would a deal rather peel potatoes in Chang's company than remain aft with the formidable Cripps.

The next few days passed quietly enough. The weather remained perfect, and the Rainbow's crew hardly needed to touch a rope.

They were all Chinese, and the most silent lot imaginable. They talked among themselves, but except Chang hardly any said one word to Dick.

The Rainbow herself was a beamy, powerful craft of about 120 tons. But what her job was or where she was bound Dick had not the foggiest notion. He tried to sound Chang, but all the answer he got was:

"Boss, he tell you when he get leady."

On the fourth day the weather changed. The breeze fell light, and it turned blazing hot. It was a stinging, steamy heat which made Dick feel as if he could not breathe. The pitch grew soft in the deck seams, and the crew went about their work stripped to the waist.

About eleven in the forenoon Dick, who was sitting in the door of the galley cutting up meat for the soup, heard a sudden shout from up forward.

"Hyah! Hyah!"

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Chang, who was in the galley, jumped out. At the same moment Cripps, who had been lying in a long chair under the awning aft, sprang to his feet.

"What's up?" he bellowed. "What's biting you, ye blamed galoot?"

He hurried forward as he spoke.

"What is it, Chang?" asked Dick eagerly.

"I tink um ship," answered Chang, who was staring out to sea, shading his eyes with both hands from the brassy glare.

"Ship! Where?"

Chang pointed, and presently Dick caught sight of a craft of some sort which, to his inexperienced eyes, was a mere blur on the throbbing horizon.

Meantime, Cripps, up in the bows, was staring at the vessel through a pair of glasses. A little knot of Chinamen stood silently around.

Cripps lowered his glasses. There was a look of excitement in his face which Dick had never seen before.

"Port—port your hellum!" he shouted to the man at the wheel.

The Rainbow came round with her bows pointed straight for the distant vessel. At that moment a puff filled her sails and the water began to bubble under her forefoot.

"What is it, Chang?" asked Dick. "Why are we going to her?"

"I tink um leck," answered Chang. "What call delect."

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Derelict.

Dick ventured forward. Cripps was still gazing fixedly at the strange ship, which was now rising rapidly into sight.

"She's in trouble," Dick heard the skipper mutter. "She's in trouble; I'll swear to that. Ay, that's her ensign upside down at the mizzen. Wish my eyes was better."

He glanced round and saw Dick.

"Here, you! Your eyes are better than mine. Take a hold of these glasses."

He handed them to Dick, who, after one or two efforts, managed to focus them.

"What's the two flags on the boom, aft?" demanded Cripps.

"One's square," said Dick. "It's red and white. The other's pointed and the same colours."

Cripps brought his great hand down with a slap on his leg.

"Thought so!" he cried joyfully. "That means 'in need of assistance.' Now see if you kin see if there's anyone aboard."

"No, sir. I can't see anyone. There are no boats, either."

"Derelict—derelict! That's what she is. An', by gosh, there'll be pickings!" Cripps' great red face shone with a savage eagerness. There was a queer gleam in his eyes. He looked so different that Dick stared at him in amazement.

"Sonny," said Cripps, "ye got eyes if ye ain't got sense. An' ye talk English, which these Chinks can't do. I'll take ye along, derned if I won't."

Dick did not answer, but a shiver of excitement ran through him. He was beginning to understand now. He knew what salvage meant. He realised that, if this ship had been abandoned by her crew, the Rainbow, by taking her into port, could claim a heavy sum from her owners.

Soon they were close enough to view her without glasses. She was a square-rigged ship of about a thousand tons, and stood high in the water. There was no sign of life about her, and she rolled listlessly to the long send of the slow Pacific swell.

"What did they leave her for?" growled Cripps, in a puzzled tone. "Why did they leave her? There hasn't been no weather. Her masts is all standing."

As Dick had no ideas on the subject he did not venture to reply. The Chinese crew were equally silent while the Rainbow, little more than drifting before a succession of catpaws, slowly bore down on the derelict.

Suddenly Cripps woke up and began to roar out a succession of orders.

The crew fled to obey, and a minute or two later the schooner was lying to, head to wind. A boat was rapidly lowered, and with Cripps at the tiller, Dick in the bows, and two of the Chinks pulling, drove rapidly across the calm swells towards the derelict.

"Look!" cried Dick suddenly. "What's that?"

A brown triangular something had suddenly cut the water between the boat and the abandoned ship.

"Gosh, it's a shark!" said Cripps. "Ay, dozens of 'em. There's dead folk aboard. The sharks know."

In spite of the heat Dick shivered. In all his sheltered life he had never so much as seen a dead man.

As the dinghy drew up towards the stern of the derelict, Dick saw her name emblazoned on the taffrail. It was THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 383.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE SCOUTS' VICTORY!"

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ONE
PENNY.

Kauri. Coming nearer, he suddenly caught a whiff of some powerful odour—a whiff so rank it made him almost choke.

"She—she's afire!" he gasped.

"No, she ain't," cried Cripps, smiting his thigh again. "No, she ain't. That's not smoke. It's gas. Ay, I've got it now. Carboys broke loose down below. Carboys of acid. That's it! No wonder it drove the chaps off her."

It was a job to board her, she was rolling so, but Cripps managed to catch a bight of rope hanging over the rail, and swung himself up.

"Here, you, Dick, you come aboard! Others stay in the boat. Sharp, now, kid, unless you want to make a meal for one o' them long-toothed gentry!"

Dick's heart was in his mouth as he followed, and he bruised his shins cruelly as he scrambled over the rail.

Once aboard, the reek was simply suffocating and the heat like that of a furnace.

Cripps glanced round the empty decks.

"She's abandoned, sure," he chuckled. "Oh, it's a wind-fall—a proper windfall!"

He hurried forward to the hatch. The cover was on, but he whirled it off. The gas poured out in suffocating clouds, and he staggered back.

"Let it blow out. It'll be all right in a minute," he gasped. "Here, you Dick, find an axe and burst open that forward hatch!"

Dick ran into the deck-house. There were axes in a rack on the wall. He got one out, and was turning when there came a sound which startled him so that he as nearly as possible dropped his heavy weapon.

The sound was a groan, and it came from quite close at hand.

Next moment he had turned up the cloth over the table in the middle of the room, and was looking down into a pair of open eyes.

"So there's one alive after all!" he gasped, and, getting hold of the owner of the eyes, who was lying between the table and the wall, he dragged him out into the open.

By his weight he thought he was a grown man, but when he got him into the light he saw that, though big and heavy framed, he was only seventeen or eighteen years of age. He was a tall, finely-made young fellow in brown jeans, with the bluest eyes Dick had ever seen, curly hair of a chestnut red, and a heavy square jaw.

"What the blazes have you got there?"

Cripps's voice made Dick start.

"A boy. He's alive!"

Cripps swore savagely. Then his face cleared.

"It's all right," he said, in a tone of relief. "Only a cub of a cabin-boy. He can't interfere with our salvage. If I thought he could I'd—" he did not finish his sentence, but Dick shivered inwardly as he realised that the captain of the Rainbow would stop at nothing which lay between him and his prey.

"Call one o' them Chinks up, and get the chap aboard the schooner," ordered Cripps. "Sharp now, while he's still looney with the gas. Less he knows of all this the better."

Dick obeyed. As he went back to the stern he saw Cripps, with a handkerchief over his face, make a bold plunge down the companion.

It was no easy job lowering Dick's almost insensible find into the dinghy. But they did it at last, and pulled back to the schooner.

The crew of the dinghy took her straight back to the Kauri, but as Dick had had no orders to return, he stayed to look after the youngster. Chang and he between them got him below and laid him on a bunk. Chang felt his pulse and bathed his face with cold water.

"He all light pletty soon," observed the Chinaman.

The words were hardly out of his mouth before there came a curious deep booming sound which seemed to come from everywhere at once, yet from nowhere in particular. It rose with startling suddenness, growing from a drone to a high-pitched shriek.

(The continuation of this thrilling yarn will appear in next Monday's "MAGNET" Library. Place a regular weekly order NOW, and avoid all risk of disappointment, as the exciting developments in later instalments will cause a very big demand, and your newsagent may not be able to supply you. So Order Now—before it is too late.)

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YOUR EDITOR.

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"THE SCOUTS' VICTORY!" By FRANK RICHARDS.

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"THE SCOUTS' VICTORY"

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"I have no hesitation in denouncing such people as extremely prejudiced and narrow-minded. Mr. Richards has succeeded in imparting to his characters the touch of real life.

"Wharton and Cherry are, to my mind, everything that British boys should be—high-spirited, fond of adventure, yet withal, possessing the ability to distinguish between right and wrong.

"With sincerest congratulations to Mr. Richards, and heartfelt wishes for the future success of the 'Magnet,' I close, according you permission to publish this letter, and hoping, indeed, that you will do so.

"Long may the 'Magnet' continue to flourish!—Yours most respectfully,
FATHER OF TWO (J. S.)."

I thank my Manchester friend most cordially for his well-spoken words of appreciation. It is to the genial influence of such gentlemen as he that the "Magnet" Library owes no small share of its wonderful success.

The day is not far distant—of that I am certain—when this bright little journal will be welcomed in the household of the sternest parent.

I hope any of my chums whose fathers and mothers disapprove of the companion papers will ask them to read this letter from "Father of Two." It should at least have the effect of inducing them to read through one of the copies; and when this is done I have little doubt as to the ultimate result.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

"An Old Wallasey Reader."—Thank you for your letter. I note your suggestion, and will act upon it in the near future.

Frank Penn (King's Cross).—Very many thanks for obtaining new readers.

"A Loyal Reader" (Newport, Mon.).—Many thanks for your cheering letter.

D. H. C. (London).—Sorry, but "The Greyfriars Herald" is unobtainable from newsagents.

H. A. and N. C. (Dewsbury).—There are forty boys in the Remove Form, and Bunter is fifteen years of age.

T. A. Russell (Herne Hill).—The places you mention are fictitious. The age of Marjorie Hazeldene is fifteen.

G. Ball (Lewisham).—The character you mention will be in the limelight again shortly. Best wishes.

"A Worried Reader" (Greenock).—If there is a gymnasium in your district you would be wise to attend same.

W. E. Rickman (Southsea).—Many thanks for your interesting letter. I well remember the story you speak of, and am not surprised that your father enjoyed it. Best wishes.

"Three Brighton Girls."—Vernon-Smith is, I agree with you, an admirable character, and one can have nothing but praise for the splendid way in which he has lived down his past.

G. W. Nickerson (Grantham).—The character you mention will reappear shortly. Glad to hear you are so infatuated with Bob Cherry.

Louis K. Lavigne (Exeter).—I note your remarks about Bunter, and will have a chat with Mr. Richards on the subject as early as possible.

"A Constant Reader" (Portsea).—Squiff is not a member of the Famous Five. Johnny Bull, on his return from abroad, resumed his place in that select circle.

G. P. (Hastings).—If your father has forbidden you to read "The Magnet" Library I cannot advise you to do anything but obey his wishes. It is hard luck on you, but the parental word is law.

Dan Smith (Coventry).—Many thanks for your letter and promise of support.

B. C. A.—Thanks for suggestion, which is duly noted.

T. R. Fisher (Upper Norwood).—Yes; I am well acquainted with the school you mention. You have my very best wishes.

H. G. (Birmingham).—Mr. Prout's oft-repeated statement that he was once a crack shot in the Rocky Mountains may be treated as a piece of Berlin journalism.

M. S. Brown (Dublin).—Many thanks for your letter and loyalty to "The Magnet" Library.

L. A. Hatley (Malden).—More will be heard of the characters you mention later on.

R. Hounsell (Hackney).—"The Magnet" Library commenced its prosperous course in 1908, and the title of the first story was "The Making of Harry Wharton."

W. V. Y. (Leeds).—Sammy Bunter is twelve years of age, and weighs nine and a half stone.

Joe West (Chester).—Loder's age is seventeen; and Wally D'Arcy, of St. Jim's, is twelve.

Neil Campbell and Chums (Glasgow).—The matter you mention is already under consideration.

G. W. Read (London).—Many thanks for your letter and suggestion.

Frank Holmes (Hull).—I have to thank you for your kindness in obtaining new readers.

The Editor



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