

MAULY'S FLIRTATION

A Magnificent New Long Complete School Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars.



No. 285. Vol. 9. July 3rd, 1915.



Miss Bella, a very charming young lady of about seventeen, was standing by the table, apparently taking orders from Lord Mauleverer. His lordship had plainly been giving extensive orders already. His table was almost loaded. There were cakes, and biscuits, and ices, and fruits, to be seen, hardly touched, if touched at all. Miss Bella was regarding him with an amiable and somewhat curious smile. (An amusing scene in the grand long complete school tale in this issue.)



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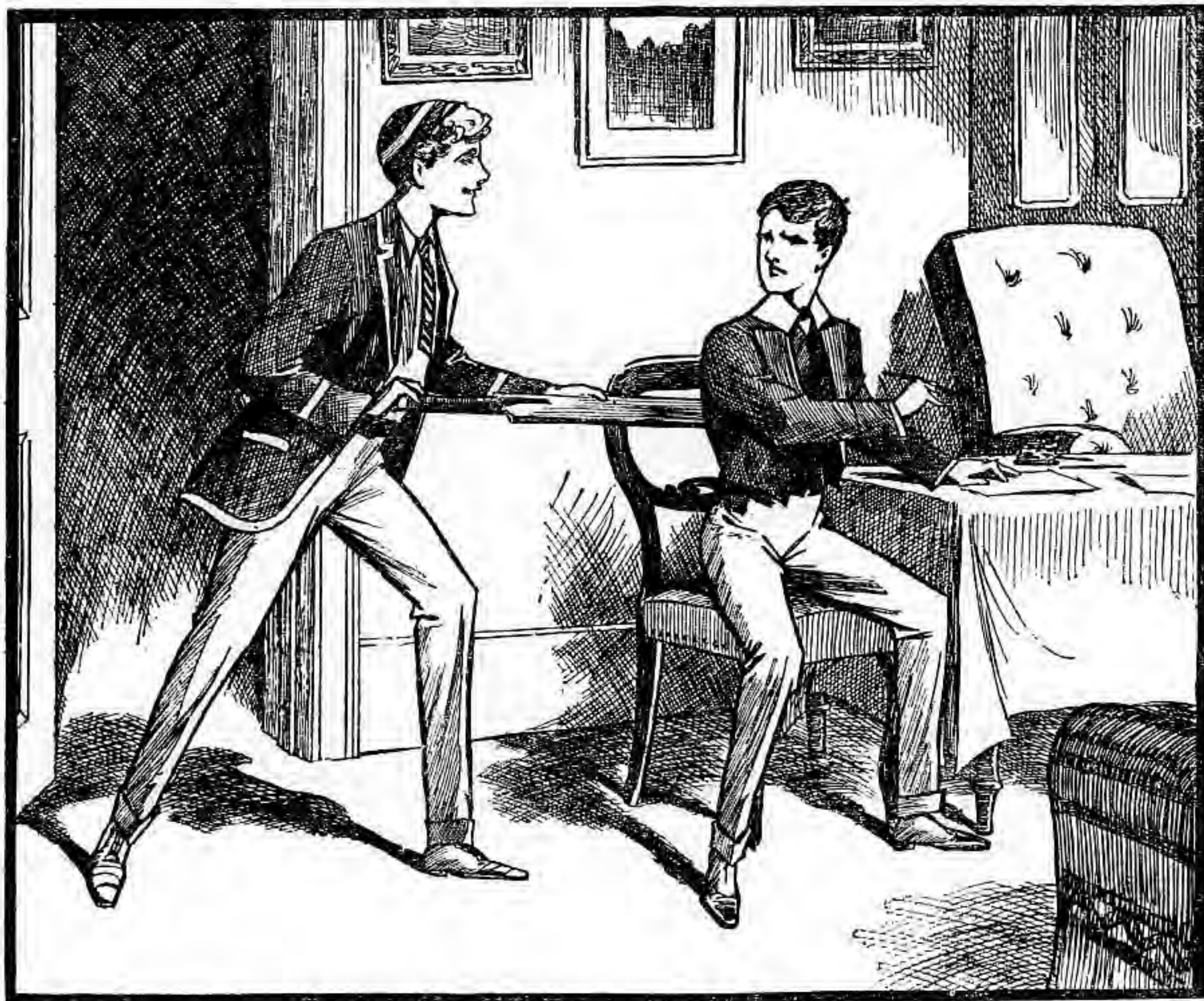


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finished with, to a
friend.

MAULY'S FLIRTATION!

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

By FRANK RICHARDS.



Bob Cherry swung his bat forward, and gave Lord Mauleverer a lunge in the ribs. "Oh, begad! What the dooce—oh!" murmured the unfortunate Mauly. (See Chapter 1.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Lord Mauleverer is Busy!

"MAULY!"

The powerful voice of Bob Cherry, which his Form-fellows sometimes likened unto the dulcet tones of a megaphone, boomed along the passage.

"Mauly!"

Lord Mauleverer certainly ought to have heard his name called. Nearly everybody in Greyfriars could hear

it. It would have awakened the celebrated Seven Sleepers if they had been within range.

But there came no reply from Mauly's study. Lord Mauleverer was there, but apparently he was turning a deaf ear.

Bob Cherry growled. He had his bat under his arm, and was just going down to the cricket. Harry Wharton & Co. were waiting for him in the passage. Bob came along to Mauleverer's door and bumped his bat on it.

Crash!

There was no need for Mauleverer to say "Come in!" That crash sent the door flying open. Bob Cherry strode into the study.

"Mauly, you ass!"

Bob expected to see the slacker of the Remove reclining on the sofa, or sprawling in the armchair. To his surprise, Lord Mauleverer was seated at the table, with a pen in his hand, of which he was chewing the holder. There was a sheet of impot paper before him, and there was a deep wrinkle in his noble brow. For once in his life the slacker of the Remove appeared to be giving his brain some exercise.

"Mauly!"

His lordship did not look up. Bob Cherry swung his bat forward and gave his Form-fellow a lunge in the ribs with the business end. Then Lord Mauleverer seemed to wake up.

"Oh, begad! What the dooce—oh!"

"Didn't you hear me call you?" demanded Bob indignantly.

"Yaas."

"Why didn't you answer, then?"

"Busy."

"You're wanted, you fathead!" said Bob. "Did you think I was calling you for nothing?"

"Yaas."

"Why, you ass, what are you up to? Lines?"

"Yaas."

"You haven't done much so far," said Bob, with a glance at the sheet of paper, which presented a beautiful blank to the view.

"Can't get it to go," said Lord Mauleverer, with a worried look.

"Eh? You can't get what to go?"

"It."

"Are you evolving lines out of your own mighty brain?" demanded Bob, in astonishment.

"Yaas."

"Why can't you copy them out of Virgil?"

"Wouldn't do."

"Why not?"

"Begad, how you do bother a fellow!" said Lord Mauleverer plaintively. "Can't you run away and play cricket?"

"You're wanted, fathead!" said Bob. "There's a man downstairs with a parcel for you—a whacking big parcel."

"Oh!"

"Well, aren't you going to see him?"

"No."

"Shall I tell him to come up here?"

"No."

"Then what is he to do?"

"Anythin' he likes!"

Lord Mauleverer turned his attention again to his blank sheet of paper and resumed chewing his pen, apparently considering the matter now satisfactorily settled.

Bob Cherry put his head out of the study doorway and called along the passage to his chums at the head of the stairs.

"Send the man along here," he said; "Mauly's here."

"Right-ho!" said Harry Wharton.

"The man's coming here, Mauly, you ass!" said Bob. "It's a man from Bunbury's, in Courtfield. Have you been ordering tuck?"

Lord Mauleverer's reply was amazing.

"Bars!" he said.

"What?" howled Bob Cherry.

"Bars!"

Bob looked closely at Mauly. Lord Mauleverer was a champion slacker, and he had his own peculiar manners and customs. Some of the fellows thought he was a silly ass; while others averred that he was a born idiot. He was certainly extremely absent-minded, and had an amazing gift for forgetting names and dates. Only that morning he had told Mr. Quelch, in class, that the Punic Wars were waged under Henry the Eighth, and that Hannibal had defeated the Romans at Waterloo.

But it had not been hitherto suspected that Mauly was "off his rocker." But just now it seemed indubitable that he was wandering in his mind—if, as Bob remarked afterwards, he had any mind to wander in.

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Bob looked at him searchingly, and with some alarm.

"Would you mind saying that again?" he asked.

"Bars!"

"What do you mean?"

"Don't bother!"

"If you're going off your onion, Mauly——"

"Do shut up, old chap! Bars—and stars!"

"Bars and stars!" said Bob Cherry dazedly.

"Yaas."

Lord Mauleverer dipped his pen into the ink and began to write. His powerful brain was working at last. Perhaps the lunge of Bob Cherry's cricket bat had jolted it into action. Bob's eye followed his pen, and this is what he read:

"Her eyes are like stars,

And when I am far away I feel like a prisoner behind bars!"

"You—you're not doing that for Quelch?" gasped Bob Cherry. "Quelch gave you Latin lines this morning? He didn't mean you to make up poetry, Mauly. I suppose that is poetry?"

"Yaas."

"Isn't the second line a bit out of proportion to the first?" asked Bob, with a chuckle. "Rather too many feet—or too many yards—what?"

"I suppose it ought to be cut down a bit," said Mauleverer thoughtfully. "Or perhaps I could lengthen the first line. Her eyes are like bright and shining evening stars, f'rinstance!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"How am I to write a sonnet with you buzzing like a Zeppelin in my ears?" said Lord Mauleverer. "Do go away and play cricket!"

"I suppose that's for the 'Greyfriars Herald'?" said Bob. "As one of the sub-editors, I warn you that sonnets are at a discount. Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's your parcel!"

The man with the parcel had arrived. Harry Wharton & Co. came along the passage with him. They knew the man by sight—he belonged to the confectioner's in Courtfield. The size of the parcel looked as if Lord Mauleverer had been ordering tuck on an unusually large scale.

"Standing a feed to the whole Form, Mauly?" asked Johnny Bull.

"No!"

"Ere's your parcel, sir," said the man. "There ain't anything to pay."

"Thanks!"

"It's a long walk from Courtfield, sir."

"Yaas."

"Werry dry weather, sir!"

"Yaas. It's summer, you know."

"Makes a man thirsty, sir!"

"Yaas."

The man laid the parcel on the table, and looked expressively at the absent-minded Mauly. His remarks on the weather had not been intended simply for the purpose of imparting general information to the school-boy earl. He lingered for a moment and fumbled with his hat.

"Werry dry weather, sir!"

"Yaas—there's been no rain lately," said Lord Mauleverer.

"Well, good-arternoon, sir!"

"Good-afternoon!"

"Mauly, you ass, haven't you a tanner about you?" said Bob Cherry.

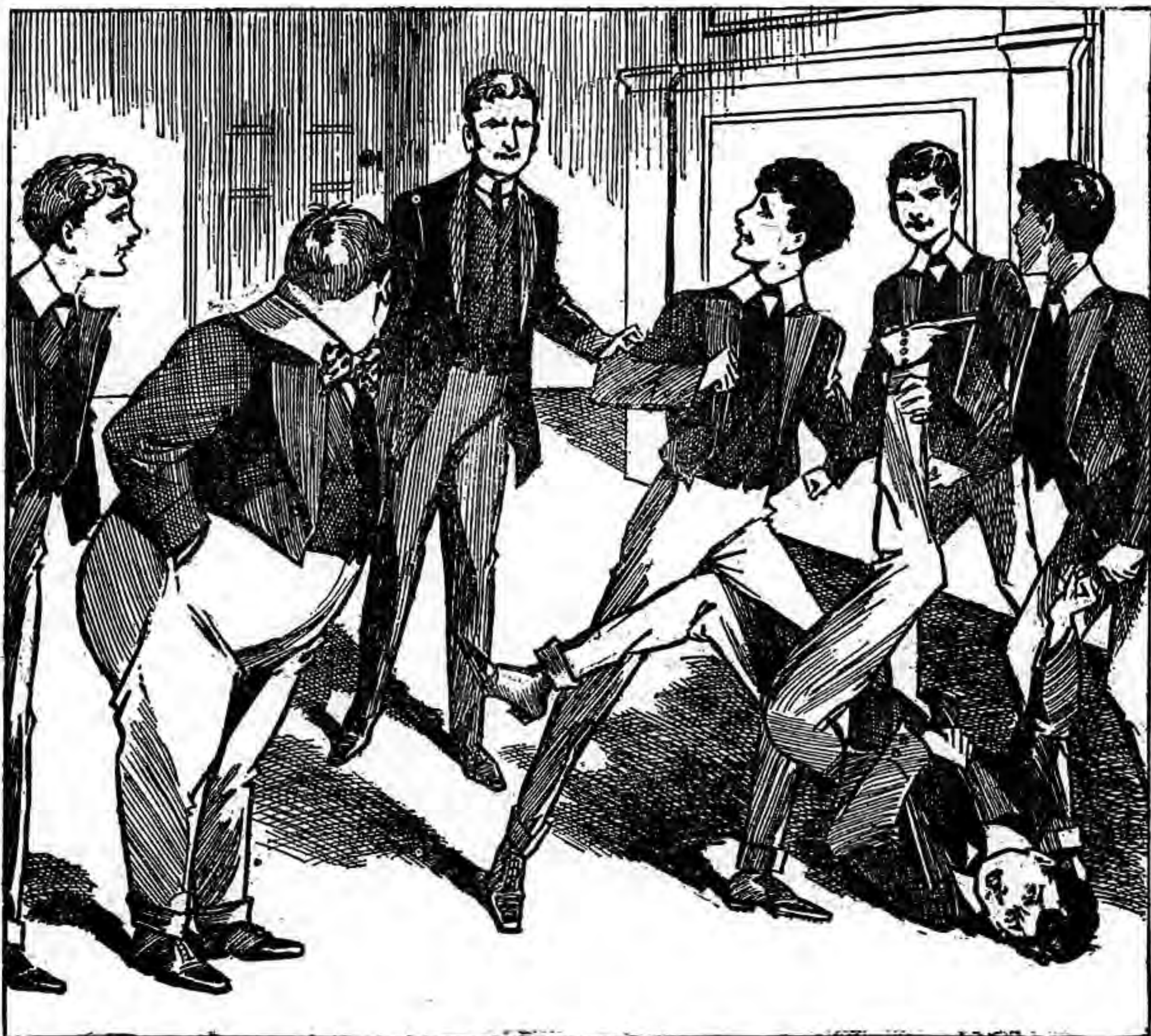
"Oh, begad!" ejaculated Lord Mauleverer, with a start; and his hand went to his pocket. "Here, George—your name is George, isn't it?"

"Willyum, sir."

"Yaas, I knew it was somethin'," said Lord Mauleverer. "Here's a bob. Dear me, I haven't a bob. I suppose half-a-crown will do. Thank you so much, Thomas. Good-afternoon!"

"Thank you kindly, sir," said Willyum. "I'll drink your 'ealth, sir." Willyum departed, looking quite satisfied.

A fat face, adorned with a large pair of glasses, looked eagerly into the study as the man from Bunbury's departed. Billy Bunter's eyes were glued upon the big parcel at once.



The juniors in their haste lowered Mauleverer head first. He rolled into the doorway, and sprawled at Mr. Quelch's feet. "Oh, begad!" he gasped. "What is this absurd horseplay for?" exclaimed the Form-master severely. (See Chapter 3.)

"I say, Mauly, shall I open your parcel for you?"

"Eh? That isn't my parcel."

"What!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Didn't you order the things?"

"Not that I remember."

"Why, you ass, here's your name written on it!" exclaimed Bob. "It must be for you."

"Begad!"

"The blessed ass has ordered the things and forgotten all about them," said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"I say, you fellows, you can buzz off," said Billy Bunter. "I'll look after Mauly's parcel for him. Mauly, old man, I'm not bothering you—"

"Yaas!"

"I'll open the parcel, old chap."

"I won't be bothered with that parcel," shouted Lord Mauleverer. "It can't be for me. Take it away and bury it!"

"Oh, really, Mauly, if you don't want it I'll take it away to oblige you," said Bunter at once. "I'd do more than that for a fellow I like. Shall I take it away, Mauly?"

"Yaas!"

Billy Bunter did not need telling twice. He rolled

out of the study with the parcel under his fat arm, and disappeared.

"You fellows coming down to the cricket?" shouted Squiff's voice from the passage.

The Famous Five left the study, feeling considerably puzzled. Lord Mauleverer was left to go on with his sonnet.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Mysterious Mauleverer!

IT was a half-holiday that afternoon at Greyfriars, and the Remove were playing the Shell on Little Side. The demands of cricket soon drove Lord Mauleverer and his affairs out of the minds of the Famous Five. But when the match was over, and the Shell beaten by a comfortable margin of twenty runs, the curious matter of Lord Mauleverer's parcel recurred to them. Bob Cherry wore quite a thoughtful look as the chums of the Remove refreshed themselves with ginger-beer after the game.

Bob Cherry had a liking for the schoolboy earl, and he often stood by him—in his way. Sometimes he would rush him down to the cricket by the scruff of his neck,

NEXT
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"THE SCHOOLBOY LAWYER!"

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

and he never saw him in an armchair in the common-room without tilting him out of it. He would help him to make up his mind about getting up in the morning by squeezing a wet sponge down his neck, or swiping him with a pillow. All of which marks of friendship Lord Mauleverer received without gratitude, but with undisturbed equanimity.

"There's something up with Mauly lately," Bob Cherry told his chums over the ginger-beer in the school shop. "I'm getting quite alarmed about him. You know what a slacker he is, but lately he's taken to walking. He walks down to Courtfield, and that's a good distance. Then you heard how he talked to Quelch this morning. Hannibal at Waterloo was past the limit, even for Mauly. I really thought Quelch would bite him."

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Indian member of the Co., nodded his dusky head sagely.

"I have noticefully observed that the esteemed Mauly is queerfully different," he remarked. "Yesterday he was talkfully conversing with his ludicrous self."

"Then that parcel," said Bob. "He must have ordered the things and clean forgotten. And he must have ordered them without wanting them, as he let Bunter walk off with the parcel."

"It is queer," agreed Harry Wharton.

"Off his rocker," remarked Johnny Bull. "He was always pretty near it, and now he's quite off."

"But the cream is, that he's writing a sonnet," said Bob. "That's what he was doing this afternoon, writing a sonnet. He's taken to poetry."

"Great Scott!"

"He may be ill," went on Bob. "There's certainly something up with him. I think an eye ought to be kept on him."

The chums of the Remove agreed that an eye should be kept on Mauly. Now that they came to think of it they had all noticed that the schoolboy earl seemed different from usual of late. He had seemed pre-occupied, and he had been more absent-minded than usual, and sometimes he had been seen with a troubled wrinkle in his brow.

It was not easy to guess what might be troubling Mauly, who enjoyed perfect health, and was rolling in money. He had more money, indeed, than was good for any boy; but, though he was careless with it, it had never led him into harm. He had never shown any signs of following in the footsteps of the Bounder, for instance; his tastes were honest and simple, though generally expensive. What could be troubling the mind of a fellow so remarkably fortunate in his circumstances was a mystery.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked into his study when they went in to tea. But the study was empty.

"Stole away!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Looking for Mauly?" asked Hazeldene, coming along the passage. "He's gone out. I passed him going to Courtfield hours ago."

"What the dooce is he always going to Courtfield for?" said Bob, as the chums went into No. 1 Study to tea. "He trots down there every day after lessons, and every half-holiday now. Something's up."

"I remember he was late for locking up last night," said Nugent. "Gosling let him in as a special favour."

"The tipfulness was probably terrific," remarked Hurree Singh.

"Probably!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

The Famous Five looked round for Lord Mauleverer when the juniors went into Hall for calling-over that evening. They did not see him among the crowd that poured into Hall.

Mr. Quelch, the Remove master, was taking roll-call, and when he came to the M's there was a pause.

"Myers!"

"Adsum!"

"Mauleverer!"

No reply.

"Mauleverer!"

When a fellow was absent at roll-call, Mr. Quelch had a way of repeating his name crescendo, like the voice of the Great Huge Bear in the nursery story. When Mr. Quelch spoke like the Great Huge Bear it was time for

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all the Remove to look very serious, and mind their p's and q's.

There was a painful pause, and then Mr. Quelch uttered a sound strongly resembling a snort—if so dignified a personage as a Form-master could be supposed to snort—and marked down Mauleverer as absent.

"The ass!" remarked Bob Cherry, as the juniors streamed out of hall after call-over. "He's done it this time."

Lord Mauleverer had evidently "done it." It was a serious matter to miss last roll-call. Harry Wharton & Co., who were really a little concerned about the noble Mauly, strolled down to the big doorway of the School House, and looked out into the dusky Close. There was no sign of Lord Mauleverer coming in.

The juniors dispersed to their studies to do their preparation, wondering what had become of the schoolboy earl. Wharton and Nugent, in No. 1 Study, had just finished their evening task, when Wingate of the Sixth looked in. The captain of Greyfriars was looking very serious.

"Have you seen anything of Mauleverer?" he asked.

"My hat! Hasn't he come in?" asked Nugent. "Hazel saw him going down to Courtfield this afternoon. Haven't heard anything since."

"He hasn't come in," said Wingate. "It's nearly nine o'clock. Mr. Quelch is very annoyed. You don't know where he's gone?"

"Only to Courtfield—what place I haven't the faintest idea," said Wharton. "He can't have had an accident, surely."

"It's very odd," said Wingate. "If he hasn't had an accident he's jolly well going to have a licking, that's certain."

Wingate left the study frowning.

"Something must have happened to him," said Wharton uneasily. "The duffer couldn't stay out to nine o'clock without a good reason."

All the Remove were on the qui vive now. It was drawing near to bedtime for the Form, and Mauleverer had not come in. Fellows stood in the doorway looking out into the starry Close, wondering what had become of him. Billy Bunter brought the news that Mr. Quelch had telephoned to the police-station in Courtfield to ask whether an accident had been reported. Bunter had "happened" to be near Mr. Quelch's key-hole while he was using the telephone, so he knew all about it. There were few things Billy Bunter did not know something about.

"Oh, where and oh where can he be?" sang Skinner softly. "Has anybody here seen Kelly?"

But nobody grinned at Skinner's attempt at humour. The fellows were feeling anxious about Mauly. The quarter-past nine chimed out from the tower. There was a sound of a bell buzzing from the direction of the gates.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he comes at last!" said Bob Cherry, in great relief.

Was it Mauly?

Across the starry, quiet Close they could hear Gosling opening the gates. Then an elegant form came sauntering up the drive to the house, and, as it came closer, in the starlight they recognised Lord Mauleverer.

"Here he is!"

"Mauly, you ass!"

Lord Mauleverer paused on the steps, and looked in surprise at the group of excited juniors.

"Begad!" he remarked. "Anythin' the matter?"

THE THIRD CHAPTER:

Billy Bunter Sees It All!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. simply glared at his lordship.

They had been feeling anxious and uneasy, wondering whether an accident had happened to old Mauly, and were really in a very disturbed state of mind. Now he sauntered in at a quarter-past nine, and calmly asked if anything was the matter. Their anxiety was changed suddenly into exasperation, and they were greatly inclined to seize him on the spot and bump him hard.

"Nothin' happened—what?" asked Lord Mauleverer, looking round. "What's the excitement about, my dear fellows?"

"You silly ass," roared Bob Cherry. "Where have you been?"

"Why haven't you come in?"

"We thought there'd been an accident."

"You burbling fathead!"

"Begad! I suppose I have left it rather late," said Lord Mauleverer calmly. "Is Quelch waxy?"

"Tearing his hair!" said Skinner. "Simply raging!"

"Oh, dear!"

"Where have you been?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Only to the cinematograph."

"The—the what?"

"The cinematograph—pictures, you know," said Lord Mauleverer innocently. "I really couldn't get away sooner. Awful bore to have to get back, anyway."

"You—you—you've been to the pictures, and stayed out till this time!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Oh, bump him!"

"Here, I say— Let go, you know! I— Oh, begad—"

The exasperated juniors collared Lord Mauleverer, and he was whirled into the air. He was about to descend on the doorstep with a bump which he would probably have remembered for some time, when Mr. Quelch strode upon the scene.

"Is that Lord Mauleverer?"

"Oh! Ahem!"

The juniors hastily lowered Mauleverer. In their haste they lowered him head first. He rested on his head for about a tenth part of a second, and then rolled into the doorway and sprawled at Mr. Quelch's feet.

"Oh, begad!" he gasped.

"What is this absurd horseplay for?" exclaimed the Form-master severely.

"Ahem! We—we were anxious about Mauly, sir," said Bob. "We—we thought there might have been an accident, so—so—"

"Get up immediately, Mauleverer!"

"Oh dear!" groaned Mauleverer, staggering to his feet.

"Oh, begad! Where's my hat? Yes, sir. Good—good—evening, sir!"

"What do you mean, Mauleverer, by staying out without permission till after nine o'clock?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch angrily.

"Nothin', sir."

"What!"

"I didn't mean anythin', sir."

"Mauleverer," thundered Mr. Quelch, "this impertinence—"

"Begad!" said Mauleverer, in dismay. "I wasn't being impertinent, sir. I—I was only answering your question, sir. I didn't mean anythin'—nothin' at all, sir, 'pon my word, sir!"

"You are a stupid boy, Mauleverer!"

"Yaas, sir."

"Why have you stayed out so late?"

"I was at the cinematograph, sir, and I never really noticed how the time was passin', sir."

"The cinematograph! You have stayed in the cinema until this hour?"

"Yaas, sir."

"Follow me to my study, Mauleverer."

"Certainly, sir!"

Mr. Quelch rustled away, and Lord Mauleverer followed him. The expression on the Remove-master's face showed what Mauly had to expect in the study. The door closed on them, and the juniors did not see the painful scene that followed. But they heard!

There was a regular "swish-swish" that lasted minutes, interrupted only by curious ejaculations, such as "Ow!" "Wow!" "Yah!" "Begad!" "Grooh!"

Then the study door opened, and Lord Mauleverer came out.

He had his hands tucked under his arms, and his aristocratic face was a picture of anguish.

He gave the Removites a mournful look, and passed upstairs without a word.

When the Remove fellows came into the dormitory they found Lord Mauleverer sitting on the bed, rubbing his hands, and mumbling.

"Feel pretty bad?" asked Peter Todd.

"Ow! Yaas."

"Serve you jolly well right!" said Harry Wharton

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warmly. "Blessed if I ever heard of such an idiot! You made us all anxious about you!"

"Sorry! Yow!"

"And you were at a silly cinema all the time!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Wow! Yaas."

"But how deuced long did you stay there?" exclaimed Vernon-Smith. "You must have stayed long enough to see all the pictures twice over."

"Wow! I shouldn't wonder. Ow!"

"Did you see them all twice over?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"I don't know. Ow!"

"You don't know?" exclaimed half a dozen voices.

"Groo! How should I know, when I wasn't lookin' at the pictures?" exclaimed Lord Mauleverer. "Don't be an ass!"

"You weren't looking at the pictures!" shrieked Bob.

"Ow! No!"

"Then what were you at the cinema for?"

"Time I turned in," said Lord Mauleverer. And he began to take off his boots.

The Removites stared at him. It was curious enough that Lord Mauleverer should have gone to the cinema and forgotten all about locking-up and calling-over and preparation. But that he should have gone there without intending to look at the pictures—that put the lid on, as Bob Cherry remarked.

"Mad!" said Skinner. "Mad as a hatter! It isn't uncommon, I believe, for habitual idiocy to develop into lunacy."

"Tumble in," said Wingate, looking into the dormitory.

The Removites turned in. After lights out there was a steady stream of questions directed toward Lord Mauleverer's bed from the other beds.

Lord Mauleverer did not answer one of them. He seemed to be either deaf or fast asleep. Not a word did he utter, and the curiosity of his Form-fellows had to remain unsatisfied. Bolsover major hurled a boot at him, and even that did not draw the schoolboy earl.

The juniors gave it up at last, and settled down to sleep.

When the Remove turned out at the clang of the rising-bell in the morning Lord Mauleverer was the object of many curious glances and more questions, but he dressed in silence, and was the first out of the dormitory. Billy Bunter joined him in the quadrangle. There was a fat grin upon Bunter's face.

Billy Bunter had been thinking it out, and he thought he had found a solution of the mystery. Lord Mauleverer's story of having stayed a whole evening in the cinema without even seeing the pictures was a little too steep for Bunter. It was all quite clear to Bunter, in fact. He saw it all. At all events, he was quite satisfied that he did. Lord Mauleverer had been on what Skinner and Snoop and the other "dogs" of the Remove would have called a "razzle," and the cinema story was a "whopper"; that was how Bunter worked it out.

He found Lord Mauleverer walking in the Close, with his hands driven deep into his pockets, and a thoughtful wrinkle in his brow. Mauleverer walked away quickly as he spotted Bunter, but the Owl of the Remove was not to be dodged. He puffed after the schoolboy earl and overtook him.

"Hold on, Mauly!" he gasped. "Don't walk so quick, old chap. I've been looking for you. It's all right."

"Eh—what's all right?" asked Lord Mauleverer.

Bunter winked.

"Rely on me," he said impressively.

"Oh, don't bother!"

"I'm going to keep it dark," said Bunter. "Don't you worry. You can rely on me. I know how to keep a secret."

Lord Mauleverer gave a start.

"You see, I'm a bit keener than the other chaps," chuckled Bunter. "I can see it all. But I'm not going to say a word."

"Begad!"

"I know all about it, but you can rely on me as a pal," said Bunter. "You know, I'm a discreet chap."

NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE SCHOOLBOY LAWYER!"

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

"You fat rotter!" ejaculated Lord Mauleverer. "You've been watchin' me—what?"

"Oh, really, Mauly——"

"Look here, you keep it dark," said Lord Mauleverer earnestly. "You don't understand how serious it is, Bunter."

"He, he, he! I do."

"I mean, it's a serious matter—I'm in dead earnest," said Lord Mauleverer. "You wouldn't understand, of course—a fat bounder like you. You never think of anythin' but eatin' and drinkin'. But it's serious. Don't you say a word. I leave it to your sense of honour, Bunter."

"Rely on me!" said Bunter impressively. "You can trust a pal."

"But you're not my pal," said Lord Mauleverer innocently.

"Oh, really, Mauly! Look here, if you don't want me to treat you like a pal, you can say so," said Bunter warmly. "If you don't want me to keep it dark——"

"Begad! But I do, you know," ejaculated Mauleverer. "Awfully dark, you know. The fellows would chip me no end. Keep it dark, Bunter, there's a good chap."

"You leave it to me," said Bunter. "I'm as mum as an oyster. You know how I can keep a secret. I say, Mauly——"

"Yaas?"

"Can you lend me half-a-crown? I'm expecting a postal-order shortly, and then I'll settle up."

Lord Mauleverer looked fixedly at Bunter, and then, without a word, dropped half-a-crown into his fat palm, and walked away.

Billy Bunter chuckled. He looked as pleased as if he had discovered a gold-mine—as indeed he had!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Unknown Samaritan!

"PARCEL for you, Master Wharton!"

The Remove had come out after morning lessons, and Harry Wharton & Co. were chatting in the Close, when Gosling came up with that announcement. The Famous Five were discussing a rather important matter—a shortage of funds in the Co. Money was tight, as they say in the City.

There could not have been a more favourable moment for the arrival of a parcel, and the Famous Five all brightened up at the announcement.

"Corn in Egypt!" said Bob Cherry. "Is it a hamper, Gossy?"

"No, Master Cherry, it ain't a 'amper," said Gosling. "It's jest a parcel. It come while you was in class, so it was left at my lodge."

"Trot it out," said Wharton, "and if there's anything decent in it, Gossy, I'll give you——" He paused.

"Yes, Master Wharton?"

"A bun!" said Wharton.

Gosling snorted, and went into his lodge. The parcel was handed out—it was a large parcel, of a good weight, carefully tied up. There was no inscription upon it at all, and nothing to indicate where it had come from.

Wharton regarded it with a somewhat puzzled look. Somebody had evidently sent him that parcel, but it could not have come from home, as it had not come by post.

"Who brought that here, Gossy?" asked Harry.

"Man left it, sir."

"He said it was for me?"

"Yes."

"Did he say whom it was from?"

"No."

"May be a blessed hoax," said Nugent. "Some cheerful idiot may have sent you a parcel of stones and shavings, as we did to Coker once. Better open it."

Wharton opened the parcel on the bench outside the lodge. But the contents were not as Nugent suggested. The first article that came to light was a huge cake, which could not have cost less than five shillings. Then there was a cardboard box of jam-tarts—two dozen of them. Then a further assortment of pastry.

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"Well, my only hat!" ejaculated Wharton, "who the merry deuce has sent this?"

"Isn't there a letter?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Not a sign of one!"

"A blessed anonymous parcel of tuck!" said Bob, in wonder. "Some giddy unknown friend knows we're hard up, I suppose. It's jolly queer."

"You're sure this is for me, Gosling?" asked Wharton doubtfully.

"Which the man said 'Master 'Arry Wharton,' as plain as you like," said Gosling.

"Well, you're 'Arry Wharton, old chap," grinned Bob Cherry. "This is a joyful surprise, and I vote we give Gosling all the money we've got about us."

"Oh, Master Cherry!" said Gosling, almost overcome by the idea of such generosity.

"I mean it, Gossy," said Bob. "You take that parcel up to the study, and you'll see."

Gosling folded the paper round the parcel again, and conveyed it to No. 1 Study in the Remove passage. Then, in the study, the five juniors gave him all the money they had about them. Gosling held out a horny hand for it—but two fingers would have been enough. Harry Wharton placed a penny in his hand, Bob Cherry added a halfpenny, Nugent followed it up with a farthing, Johnny Bull contributed another penny, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a flourish, added three half-pennies. The whole sum amounted to fourpence-farthing, and Gosling gazed at it, and grew almost purple.

"There you are, Gossy!" said Bob Cherry. "Don't spend that in riotous living, old chap. If I may offer you advice, I should suggest putting it by for your old age."

Gosling left the study without a word. He did not feel equal to replying to the humorous young gentlemen of the Remove.

On the study table, the parcel was unpacked. The Co. unpacked it with great satisfaction. All doubts on the subject of tea were set at rest now, thanks to the generosity of Wharton's unknown friend. Somebody had spent a sovereign at least on that parcel. That last resource of the stony, tea in Hall, vanished into the background again.

"This is jolly odd," remarked Wharton. "I'm blessed if I can guess who's sent it. Somebody who knows me may have been in Courtfield, and sent it as a surprise—but he might have put a note in it. Can't be my uncle—he'd have written."

"It's a good Samaritan, anyway," said Nugent. "There's enough here to feed half the Form. Might as well have a little party to tea."

"Good egg! I don't want to be ungrateful, but it really looks as if there's somebody dotty in this bizney. Mauly had a parcel of grub yesterday, and he said it wasn't for him. He let Bunter take it. Now there's one for me—and I can't guess whom it comes from," said Wharton, perplexed.

"Never mind—we've got it, and that's the chief point. And we'll jolly well lock it up, or Bunter will have this as well as Mauly's."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The tuck was safely locked up in the study cupboard, and the juniors went down to dinner. After dinner, they issued their invitations for the feed. Peter Todd and Vernon-Smith, Mark Linley and Tom Brown, Bulstrode and Penfold and Micky Desmond and Squiff, were the guests to the feast. The provisions were ample, and the Famous Five naturally wanted to "whack out" their good luck. But they could not help feeling puzzled by the arrival of the parcel, and the other fellows were puzzled, too, when they heard of it. There was a good deal of speculation on the subject of Wharton's unknown friend.

After lessons that day, Wharton ran down Lord Mauleverer in the Close, as he was going down to the gates. Mauleverer had been keeping out of the way of the chums of the Remove. He had dropped into quite solitary habits of late, and he had been seen "mooching" about the Cloisters by himself, apparently in deep thought. Harry clapped a hand on his shoulder and stopped him.

"Not going out, Mauly?"

"Yaas."

"There's a feed on in our study," explained Wharton. "We've had a parcel of tuck—it's dropped from the skies, and we're celebrating. We want you to come."

"Thanks awf'ly."

"Come on, then."

"Can't! I'm goin' for a walk."

"Oh, bosh!" said Harry. "What do you want to go for a walk for, a blessed slacker like you, Mauly?"

Lord Mauleverer grinned.

"I'm chuckin' up slackin'," he explained. "Haven't you told me heaps of times to buck up? Well, I'm buckin' up. Takin' to walkin'. I'm gettin' quite great on walkin'. Good-bye!"

"I say, Mauly!" Billy Bunter came puffing up excitedly. "Mauly, old man—I say, hold on a minute, I want to speak to you—it's awfully important—" Lord Mauleverer was hurrying on. "Mauly, do you hear? Stop, you boulder!" Bunter put on a spurt, and caught his lordship by the sleeve, panting, "Look here, Mauly—"

"Oh, begad! I'm in a hurry!"

"I suppose you can lend an old pal half-a-crown, even if you are in a hurry?" exclaimed Bunter.

"Oh, yaas!"

"Thanks! I'll settle this out of my postal-order!"

Lord Mauleverer grunted, and walked quickly out of the gates. Billy Bunter blinked at the half-crown with much satisfaction, and Wharton looked very curiously at Bunter. Bunter caught his glance, and blinked at him defiantly.

"I've heard about your measly feed," he remarked disdainfully. "Well, I'm not coming. You haven't asked me, but I wouldn't come anyway. You can go and eat coke! I'm jolly well in funds now!"

"You mean Mauly's in funds," said Wharton laughing. Bunter snorted.

"Naturally, he lends a half-crown to an old pal when he's asked," he said. "I'm going to settle 'em all up out of my postal-order. I'm keeping count, of course. Why shouldn't Mauly oblige me, especially after all I've done for him?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! I've done a lot for old Mauly; saved him from getting the sack, very likely," said Bunter. "I'm not going to tell you anything, Wharton. You can't keep a secret."

"A secret!" said Harry.

"Oh, don't try to pump me!" said Bunter, with a very knowing wink. "I'm mum—mum as an oyster. Why shouldn't old Mauly have a bit of a plunge if he likes? I'm rather a blade myself, when the money will run to it. I like having a high old time. I'm an awfully reckless dog, really. Well, I can sympathise with Mauly. If I had as much tin as he has, you can bet I'd paint the town red, too!"

"So Mauly's painting the town red, is he?" said Wharton, with a stare.

"I'm not going to tell you anything. I'm keeping Mauly's secret dark—very dark. You won't get a word out of me. If Quelchy knew about Mauly going on the razzle, he would get it in the neck, and no mistake. Why shouldn't a fellow have a giddy time, what?"

"You silly, fat duffer!" exclaimed Wharton wrathfully. "Do you mean to say that Mauly has been playing the giddy goat, you—you fat fathead?"

"I know what I know," said Bunter mysteriously. "Some fellows are keen, and some are not. I'm one of those who are. But I can keep a secret, and I'm jolly well not going to give Mauly away. You won't get a word out of me. I'm not going to get old Mauly the sack. Mauly's my pal."

And Bunter rolled away to Mrs. Mible's little shop, to expend his pal's half-crown in refreshments liquid and solid; and Wharton joined the tea-party in the study with a very thoughtful expression on his face.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Quite a Surprise!

"MASTER Cherry!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Gossy, old duck!" said Bob Cherry affably.

"Which there's a parcel for you."

"Eh?"

"A parcel," said Gosling.

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE SCHOOLBOY LAWYER!"

It was Friday morning, and lessons were just over. The chums of the Remove were expecting anything but that announcement. In spite of the handsome feed of the previous evening, supplies still remained over from Wharton's mysterious parcel, and so, though funds had not risen, the Famous Five were in no anxiety about the commissariat. The announcement that a parcel had arrived, this time for Bob Cherry, made them stare.

"By post?" demanded Bob.

"No; left 'ere by a man this 'ere morning."

"Sure it's for me?"

"Which the man said so. 'Ere it is, sir, and which it's 'eavy," said Gosling.

Bob Cherry took the parcel in wonder. Nothing was written upon it; but if the man who had left it had stated that it was for Robert Cherry, evidently it was for Robert Cherry.

Bob carried it up to his study, No. 13, where it was opened by the chums in conclave. There was a big cake inside, a large bag of biscuits, several glass jars of preserved fruits, and other delicate comestibles. Bob's eyes grew wide and round as he looked at them.

"Anybody know what this means?" he asked, looking round.

"It is an esteemed conundrum," said Hurree, Singh. "Some humourful sahib is pulling your honourable leg."

"Well, any chap's welcome to pull my leg on these lines," said Bob. "I've no objection, I'm sure. But I'd like to know what it means. There's more than a quid's worth of stuff there."

"Must be the same Good Samaritan," said Johnny Bull.

"The same blessed lunatic," said Nugent. "Man must be dotty to send parcels of tuck to fellows without giving his name."

"The dottiffulness is—"

"Terrific," said Bob. "Still, if it's for me, I'll accept it, with thanks, and long may he wave. Gentlemen, this study stands the feed to-day!"

"Hear, hear!"

When the news of Bob Cherry's parcel spread, fellows came from near and far to look at it, and there was much speculation on the subject of the mysterious philanthropist who had sent it. Somebody, apparently, was amusing himself by sending parcels of tuck to the Remove fellows, but he must have found it a very expensive amusement. The juniors could not make head or tail of it; nothing like it had ever happened in their experience. It seemed ungrateful to suppose that the unknown "Good Samaritan" was "balmy," but really it looked like it.

When the tuck was locked up in the cupboard, the Famous Five proceeded to Gosling's lodge to ask some questions. They were naturally anxious to get to the bottom of the mystery if they could.

"Gossy, my son, didn't the man leave any message along with that parcel?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Nothin'!"

"Only said it was for me?"

"Yes, Master Cherry. And wot I says is this 'ere, the 'Ead wouldn't approve of all these 'ere things being sent in, not if he knew it," said Gosling.

"Keep it awfully, fearfully dark, Gossy, and I'll give you a currant bun," said Bob. "Was it the same man that brought Wharton's parcel yesterday?"

"Which it was," said Gosling, with a loud snort—apparently caused by the offer of a currant bun.

"Do you happen to know the man by sight, Gossy?"

"Course I does, Master Cherry."

"Oh, you do!" exclaimed Bob. "Who was it, then?"

"Which it was William, the man from Bunbury's."

"The man who brought the parcel for Mauly," said Bob. "So they've all come from the same place. Well, it beats me."

"We could bike down to Bunbury's and ask them," remarked Johnny Bull, as they left the porter's lodge. "Only, if the chap is keeping his identity secret, he may have some reason for it, and it would look ungrateful to go asking questions about him."

"Yes, I suppose we don't want to look inquisitive," said Bob. "But it's jolly queer. May be some humorous

relation playing a joke; but I don't quite see where the joke comes in. Still, if he wanted us to know his name, I suppose he'd send a note with the tuck. It would look rather mean to go asking questions about him, I suppose; like looking a gift-horse in the mouth. But I feel jolly curious about it, all the same."

The juniors all felt curious, but it seemed that their curiosity was to remain unsatisfied. Still, there was the tuck; and that day Bob Cherry's study was a land flowing with milk and honey.

About half the Remove crammed themselves in the study at tea-time, on Bob's generous invitation. Indeed, Bob's invitations were so generous that there was an overflow meeting in the passage, and hardly a crumb remained after tea of that generous donation from an unknown donor.

Lord Mauleverer was not there. He had gone out on his bicycle. The slacker of the Remove had taken to cycling now. As a rule, his handsome and expensive "jigger" reposed on the stand for weeks unused. Now he had taken it into use at last; an unaccustomed exertion that excited much remark. Billy Bunter honoured the feed with his presence. He had extracted another half-crown from Mauly before Mauly went out, but he was prudently putting that by for a rainy day. All was grist that came to Bunter's mill.

There was much speculation in the Remove as to whether there would be any more mysterious parcels, and who was likely to be the recipient. Some of the fellows were eagerly awaiting the morrow, and hoping that their names were known to the mysterious philanthropist.

But besides the mystery of the parcels, there was another matter that was occupying the thoughts of Harry Wharton & Co. Bunter's mysterious allusion to a secret he was keeping for Mauly had not been forgotten. And Bunter, in his usual manner of keeping a secret, had made several more deep and sly allusions, which made the chums of the Remove uneasy.

It did not seem probable that simple old Mauly was "playing the giddy ox," like the Bounder in the days before his reform, and like Bunter himself when he was ambitious to shine as a "blade." But Mauly's curious absences, and his silence on the subject, the peculiar secretiveness he had developed of late, gave some colour to the suspicion. It was barely possible that old Mauly, who would never have got into trouble by himself, might have fallen in with some rascal who was exercising an evil influence over him; perhaps some fellow like Ponsonby of Highcliffe. On Friday, Lord Mauleverer came in just in time to give his name at roll-call, and his friends noticed that he looked very preoccupied and distraught.

There was only too plainly something wrong with Mauly. Every day of late he had been in hot water with his Form-master for neglecting his preparation. He had not missed calling-over since the severe lesson he had received, but he was out of gates as long as he was allowed to stay out. Asking him questions was not much use, for he declined to reply to them. But his kind friends were getting quite anxious about him.

In the common-room that evening he sat with a book, instead of doing his preparation, but he was not reading; he was plunged in thought. Wharton, glancing at him, saw a smile break out on his face occasionally, always to give way again to a thoughtful expression.

"Done your prep, Mauly?" Wharton asked him at last.

"Yaas—I mean no."

"Aren't you going to do it?"

"Yaas."

"There isn't much time before bed, old chap."

"Yaas."

"Quelchy will be waxy, you know."

"Yaas."

"I say, you fellows!" It was the voice of Billy Bunter. "I say, who's going to lend me a bike to-morrow afternoon?"

The question was not addressed to anybody in particular. Apparently Bunter left it open to all the Remove and the Fourth to rush in with offers of bikes. Nobody rushed in. In fact, there was a chilling silence.

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"I say, you fellows!" repeated Bunter. "I say, Bob, old man!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Are you going to lend me your bike to-morrow afternoon?"

"Is that a conundrum?" asked Bob. "Well, I'm not good at conundrums—"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"But I'll try. Lemme sec. Because one chalks his walks, and the other walks his chalks," said Bob.

"Look here—"

"Isn't that the answer?"

"You silly ass!" roared Bunter.

"All serene. I'll try again. Because one rode a horse, and the other rhododendron," said Bob cheerfully.

"'Tain't a conundrum, you fathead!" howled Bunter.

"I want somebody to lend me a bike to-morrow afternoon. Why can't you lend me yours?"

"Because one sails on the seas—"

"Look here—"

"And the others seize on a sale."

"You—you—you fathead! I say, Harry, old man—"

"Not so much of your 'Harry, old man,'" growled Wharton. "And you can't have my bike. You twisted the pedal last time, and it hasn't been mended yet."

"I don't want your old creak with a twisted pedal, Wharton! I say, Franky, will you lend me your bike?"

"Ask me another," said Nugent.

"Well, I think some of you chaps might lend me a bike, after all I've done for you," said Bunter. "Still, I suppose Mauly will. You see, it's important. I'm taking a lady out for a ride to-morrow afternoon."

"My hat!"

"Bunter the lady-killer!" grinned Skinner. "Well, he'll be a lady-killer right enough, if he gets near her on a bike!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You needn't glare at me, Bob Cherry. 'Tain't Marjorie."

Bob Cherry turned crimson.

"You fat worm—" he began.

"Who is it?" asked Skinner. "Let's have the name of the lady. Does she think you good-looking, Bunter?"

"I fancy so," said Bunter, with a smirk.

"Well, I must say it's awfully kind of Bunter to take a blind girl out on a half-holiday," said Skinner.

"She ain't blind," said Bunter.

"Eh? If she thinks you're good-looking, she must be."

"If you're going to make rude personal remarks, Skinner, I decline to tell you anything about it. I'm accustomed to jealousy," said Bunter loftily. "Some fellows are admired by girls. Other fellows are always down on them. Bella wouldn't look at a skinny-faced bounder like you, Skinner."

"Begad!" said Lord Mauleverer, looking up.

"I say, Mauly, old man, you'll lend me your bike to-morrow," said Bunter. "I want it very particularly. You see, I can't disappoint Bella."

"Eh?"

"I'm going to call for her and take her out for a ride," said Bunter. "She bikes a lot, you know. Awfully ripping girl. You should see the looks she gives me when I go in for a jam-tart."

"Oh, shut up!" growled Bob Cherry.

"I'd try and hide it if I were jealous of a chap, Cherry," said Bunter, with a sniff. "'Tain't your fault you ain't good-looking, and you can't expect a girl to look at a long-legged bounder like you. A girl likes a chap with a figure." Bunter drew himself up into a graceful attitude.

"And a circumference," said Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm used to jealousy. I say, Mauly, you'll lend me your bike, old sport. You wouldn't like me to disappoint Bella."

"Bella who?"

"Bella Bunbury, you know—that awfully nice girl at Bunbury's. Here, I say, Mauly, wharrer you up to? Yaroooooh!"

All the Removites were surprised—Bunter most of all. The slacker of the school seemed suddenly endowed with an energy worthy of Bob Cherry at his best. He sprang



Miss Bella was in the garden. She was not alone. A good-looking young fellow in khaki was there also, talking to her under the trees. He had a sergeant's stripes, and one arm in a sling. "Oh, begad!" murmured Lord Mauleverer, as he sank limply into a chair. (See Chapter 14.)

up, seized Bunter by the collar, and shook him till the fat junior roared.

"Oh! Ow! Yah! Leggo! Yaroooh! Have you gone dotty, Mauly? Leggo! Yoop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Mauly!" chorussed the juniors.

"Go it, slacker!"

"Yow-ow-ow! Help! Murder! Fire! Rescue! Whoop!"

"Go it, Mauly!"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Not Guilty!

LORD MAULEVERER did not need telling to "go it."

He was going it!

He had a grasp like iron on Billy Bunter's collar, and he was shaking him as if for a wager. The Removites gathered round in a delighted circle. It interested them greatly to see Mauleverer bucking up like this.

They cheered Mauly on with enthusiasm. Billy Bunter roared and wriggled wildly.

"Leggo! Oh, my hat! Yow! If you make my glasses

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE SCHOOLBOY LAWYER!"

fall off—yoop!—you'll have to pay for 'em! Yowp! Draggimoff."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fat cad!" panted Lord Mauleverer. "How dare you speak of a young lady like that, you fat rotter—a lady you don't even know!"

Shake, shake, shake!

"Yow-ow-ow-ow! Do leggo!" howled Bunter. "Look here, Mauly, lemme alone, or I'll tell the fellows about you going on the ran-dan! Yow!"

"Hallo!" said Skinner. "What's that?"

Shake, shake shake!

Where Lord Mauleverer was getting his energy from was a mystery; but he seemed to have plenty of it.

"Now, you fat cad, confess that you're telling lies!" said Mauly. "If you don't, I'll shove your head in the cinders, begad!"

"Whoop! Rescue!"

"Go it, Mauly!"

"You hear me, Bunter, you fat rascal—what?" Shake, shake, shake! "Now, then, do you know Miss Bunbury or don't you?"

"Yes—yes—I mean no—no—no!" shrieked Bunter. "Leggo!"

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Has she ever given you any looks, except looks of disgust perhaps?"

"Yow—no—yes—no—no—no! Oh, dear!"

"Confess that you're a fat cad, bedad!"

"Yow—I'm chook—chook—choking—yooop—grooogh!"

Shake, shake!

"Yow! I'm a fat cad, if you like, Mauly!" wailed Bunter. "Oh, dear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lord Mauleverer let go, and the Owl of the Remove sat down with a bump. He sat on the floor and snorted and gasped, while the juniors howled with laughter.

Lord Mauleverer walked out of the common-room.

"Bravo, Mauly!" chirruped Bob Cherry. "Fancy that old slacker bucking up like that. Do you want any more, Bunter?"

"Yow-ow-ow! I'll smash him!" howled Bunter. "I'll jolly well give him a hiding. I'm not going to stand this! Yoooop! I'm hurt!"

"Serve you jolly well right!"

"It—it's all true, too!" howled Bunter. "I'm going to call for Bella on a bike to-morrow afternoon, and ask her for a ride. I know she'd like to come. She gives me awfully goo-goo looks—yarooop! If you don't leave off kicking me, Bob Cherry, you beast, I'll—I'll—whoop!"

"I'll leave off kicking you when you leave off telling caddish whoppers," said Bob. "Say when!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter dived round the table and escaped. He picked himself up, and set his glasses straight on his fat little nose, and blinked with fury.

"I jolly well won't keep that rotter's beastly secrets any more!" he gasped. "I'll jolly well tell everybody about his going smoking and gambling——"

"Mauly!" yelled Skinner.

"Yes, Mauly!" howled Bunter. "That's where he goes. That's why he tells whoppers about staying in cinemas. He's been offering me loans of half-a-crown to say nothing about it."

"Which you refused?" chuckled Skinner.

"I'm going to settle them up out of my postal-order, and then I shall refuse to speak to him again. A regular blackguard!"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Wharton. "Haven't you had enough kicking?"

"He admitted it!" howled Bunter.

"Rats!"

"I tackled him about it, and he admitted it, and pressed loans on me——"

"I know Bunter's been screwing money out of Mauly," said Skinner, with a whistle. "My hat! If that's true it would account for a lot of things."

"It isn't true!" snapped Wharton.

"How do you know?" grinned Skinner. "What is Mauly so jolly mysterious about if he's got nothing to hide? Where does he go? What is he always mooching off by himself for—eh?"

"That's his business," said Squiff.

"Might be Quelchy's business, too, if he got on his track," said Snoop, with a chuckle. "Fancy Mauly breaking out like this!"

"I'm considering whether I ought to tell Quelchy," said Bunter virtuously. "The chap's simply going to the dogs!"

"You'd better consider it best not to tell Quelchy, you fat sneak!" said Bob Cherry. "Not that I believe there's a word of truth in it."

"I tell you he owned up when I told him I could see it all——"

"Oh, rats!"

"He's been giving Bunter half-crowns," said Skinner. "I've seen him!"

Harry Wharton & Co. quitted the common-room, leaving Bunter still making revelations. Skinner & Co. were listening with deep interest. The Famous Five sought Lord Mauleverer, and found him in his study. He was not doing his preparation. They found him sitting with an unaccustomed frown on his brow.

"Mauly, old man," said Wharton quietly. "We

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want to know the truth of this. Bunter says you've been playing the giddy ox."

"Yaas."

"He says you admitted it."

"Yaas."

"But it can't be true, Mauly!"

"Yaas."

"It's true!" exclaimed all the chums together.

"Yaas."

The Famous Five stared blankly at Lord Mauleverer. He had coloured, but he did not look repentant and ashamed, as might have been expected.

"And now, I suppose, I'm going to be chipped about it," said Mauleverer. "Well, I warn everybody that if there's any chippin' I shall hit out, by Jove!"

"We're not going to chip you," said Harry. "It isn't a matter for chipping."

"Oh, you can see that, can you?" said Lord Mauleverer, greatly relieved. "I rather thought you'd laugh, you know. Excuse me."

"Nothing to laugh at, that I can see," said Harry. "It isn't our business, I suppose, but dash it all, Mauly, you can't be such an ass!"

"Yaas."

"And aren't you jolly well ashamed of yourself?" demanded Johnny Bull.

Lord Mauleverer stared at him.

"Nothin' to be ashamed of, that I can see," he said. "I suppose you think I'm rather young—what? But—"

"Young or old, you ought to be ashamed, doing what Bunter describes," said Harry. "It's worse in a boy than a man, of course. When you're grown up there's no harm in your smoking——"

"Smokin'?" ejaculated Lord Mauleverer.

"But gambling is rotten at any time of life, and you know it."

"Gamblin'?" said Lord Mauleverer faintly.

"And it means the sack if you're found out," said Harry. "And you know how Bunter keeps secrets. If you loaded the fat duffer with half-crowns he would babble, all the same."

"I suppose you're pullin' my leg," said Lord Mauleverer, after a pause. "If not, you must be off your rocker, begad! Do I look like a smoky gambler?"

"But you just said it was true!" shouted Wharton.

"What was true?"

"What Bunter says."

"Oh, my hat! What does he say, then?"

"He says you've admitted that what you mooch off for is to play the giddy ox."

"Smokin' and gamblin'—what?" Lord Mauleverer chuckled. "A gay dog, like the old Bounder—what? Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at now?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Lord Mauleverer laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks. "Ha, ha, ha! Oh, begad!"

"Isn't it true?" shrieked Bob Cherry.

"Oh, dear! No. Ha, ha, ha!"

"But you said it was!" said Wharton wrathfully, but greatly relieved.

"It's a misunderstandin'," chuckled Lord Mauleverer. "That fat duffer don't know, after all. He came to me and said he knew all about it, you see, and knowin' what a spy he is, I took it as honest injun. I've been wastin' half-crowns on him, and he don't know anythin' at all! Ha, ha!"

Lord Mauleverer's merriment was evidently genuine, and the Famous Five felt relieved, and at the same time greatly perplexed. Billy Bunter had made a mistake, that was plain now; but, Bunter's explanation taken away, Mauleverer's mysterious conduct seemed more mysterious than ever.

"Then there's no truth in what Bunter says?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Not a word, begad!"

"That's good! You've some other silly secret, and you thought Bunter had guessed it?"

"Exactly."

"Well, it's all serene, then. You can keep your silly secret," said Wharton. "If you're not getting yourself into trouble it don't matter to us. You can be as

mysterious as the hero of a newspaper serial if you like."

"Thanks!"

Lord Mauleverer chuckled when his visitors left him. Apparently it was a great relief to him to discover that the Owl of the Remove was not in possession of his secret after all, whatever that secret was. About a quarter of an hour later there was a tap at the door, and it was opened cautiously and a pair of spectacles glimmered in.

Lord Mauleverer stretched out his hand to a cushion.

"I say, Mauly, old man," murmured Bunter. "Don't be waxy! I'm willing to overlook the whole matter."

"Begad!"

"I never bear malice," said Bunter, blinking at him doubtfully—"not against an old pal like you, Mauly. I say, Mauly, can you lend me half-a-crown? Oh!"

Whiz!

The cushion flew, and it caught Bunter fairly under his fat chin and bowled him over like a skittle. There was a loud bump in the passage and a roar. Lord Mauleverer rose lazily and shut the study door. It was not opened again.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Something for Squiff!

AFTER lessons on Saturday morning there was a rush of the Removites down to the porter's lodge. Almost the only fellow who did not join in it was Lord Mauleverer, who strolled off by himself in the way he had lately grown accustomed to. But nearly all the Form surrounded Gosling's lodge, as if they were going to make an attack in force.

Twenty voices, at least, shouted, as Gosling looked out in surprise.

"Anything for me, Gosling?"

"My heye!" said Gosling.

"Parcel for me?" demanded Skinner. "Hand it over, now, Gossy!"

"I say, you fellows, it's most likely for me."

"Sure, and I'm the boy, intirely!"

"Is there a parcel at all?" exclaimed Harry Wharton, laughing.

It was really an interesting question whether the unknown Good Samaritan was "keeping it up." If he were, there was no telling for whom the next parcel might come. All the fellows were quite keen.

"There's a parcel," said Gosling, with a grin.

"Hooray!"

"Who's the lucky man?"

"Who's the winner?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Master Field," said Gosling.

"Old Squiff!" said Bob Cherry. "Good egg! The Samaritan is keeping to the Co. Advance, Australia, and take your parcel!"

Sampson Quincy Ifley Field took the parcel Gosling handed out to him. It was a large parcel, wrapped in brown paper, like the others that had preceded it. The Australian junior tucked it under his arm.

"Same man brought this, Gossy?" asked Bob.

"Yes; William, from Bunbury's," said Gosling. "Which he said it was for Master Field, of the Remove, and there was no message."

"Good man!" said Squiff. "Give him a bob for me when you see him again, Gossy."

"Yes, Master Field. Where's the shilling?"

Squiff did not seem to hear that question. He walked away with his parcel, and the Removites followed him, grinning. Gosling was left to work out the problem whether Squiff meant him to hand William a shilling out of his own financial resources or whether the humorous Squiff was simply pulling his leg.

Quite a crowd of fellows accompanied Squiff to No. 14 to open the parcel. It was crammed with tuck. Fisher T. Fish, who shared No. 14 with Squiff and Johnny Bull, gazed on the pile of good things with great delight.

"I guess this is O. K.," he remarked. "Why, this will last the study for a couple of weeks, Field!"

"Easy come, easy go," said Squiff. "There's going to be a feed at tea-time, and everybody can come."

"Hear, hear!" said the Removites.

Squiff naturally wanted to follow the example of Wharton and Bob Cherry. The generous gift of the unknown Samaritan was to be whacked out. But Fisher

T. Fish almost held up his hands in horror at the thought. The Yankee junior was well up in the laws of economy.

"Now, look hyer, Squiff," he remonstrated. "Don't you be a jay! There's enough stuff there to last us three for at least a week, and it'll cost us nothing for tea all that time! Think of that!"

"Rats!"

"I guess you're a jay, Squiff. I guess we could save our pockets for a whole week, and needn't spend a Continental red cent," said Fish discontentedly.

"Well, I don't want to save your Yankee pocket," said Squiff. "What do I care about your blessed neutral pocket? Go and eat coke!"

"Now, I'm going to talk sense to you, Field," said Fisher T. Fish seriously. "Waste not, want not, you know. It's war time, and it's up to a galoot to be economical. All the newspapers are telling you not to be wasteful in war time."

"War time is a time for whacking out on equal terms," said Bob Cherry.

"I guess you're a jay! I calculate it's up to Squiff to be very careful with that grub," said Fish. "Do listen to me, Field. I guess I'm giving you good advice—the real goods, you know. We needn't spend a cent all the week if you're careful with that grub. Don't waste it—don't!"

"I won't!" said Squiff.

Fish brightened up.

"Oh, good! You won't?"

"No. I'll only stand a feed with it, but I won't have any rotten neutrals," said Squiff. "It's a waste of good grub feeding a neutral. So you can keep off the grass, Fishy."

"What?" yelled Fisher T. Fish.

That wasn't at all the kind of economy he wished Squiff to exercise.

"Deaf?" said Squiff. "You can keep away from the feed. It would be wrong to waste good grub in war time."

"I guess I'm coming, you jay!" howled Fish.

"I guess you'll get the boot if you do," said Squiff determinedly. "I'm acting on your own advice, and you can't grumble. All you fellows coming, I hope?"

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"Yes, rather—ratherfully, my esteemed Squiff."

Fisher T. Fish was left with a most extraordinary expression on his face. His excellent advice had led to his own exclusion from a plentiful feed; which was no more than he deserved, but which was not at all agreeable. He made up his mind that he would come all the same, but with secret inward misgivings on the subject of Sampson Quincy Ifley Field's boot.

"This blessed mystery is getting thicker and thicker," Bob Cherry remarked, when they left the study. "The giddy unknown seems to be sending a parcel every day. I wonder who'll be the next lucky bargee."

"Must be somebody who knows us," remarked Squiff; "knows us well, I mean. He's picked out really nice boys to have the parcels."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He has—he have!" agreed Bob. "First there was Mauly, then Wharton, then yours truly, and now you. But who'll be the next?"

"My turn next," said Nugent. "I wonder whether one will come on Sunday morning? Bunbury's don't usually deliver on Sunday. Still, if I'm the next, I don't mind if they stretch a point for once."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Mauly!"

Lord Mauleverer was seated on a bench under the elms, with a pencil in his hands and an open pocket-book on his knees. Bob Cherry woke him up, as it were, with a terrific slap on the shoulder, and his lordship gave a yell.

"Yow! Oh, begad! You silly ass!"

"Making up your accounts?" asked Bob. "I'll help you if you like, Mauly."

"Wow! I'm not making up accounts," said Lord Mauleverer, rubbing his shoulder ruefully. "Buzz off, and let a fellow be quiet."

"That giddy sonnet again!" exclaimed Bob, catching sight of the open leaf. "Her eyes resemble gleaming evening stars." Oh, my hat!"

"Her voice is like the chime of silver bells!" ejaculated Nugent. "Oh dear!"

Lord Mauleverer hastily closed the notebook.

"Get on with it, Mauly," said Harry Wharton encouragingly. "You've never had a contribution in the 'Greyfriars Herald' yet. I shall be glad to have a titled contributor on my staff. It's awfully high-class."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sonnet, by a Person of Condition!" grinned Nugent.

"Oh, begad!" said his lordship.

"But who's the subject of the sonnet?" asked Bob. "It's no good trying to draw a mental picture. You ought to have a subject. Is it the cook?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or Mrs. Mible?" asked Squiff.

"Begad!"

"All serene, Mauly. We won't tell Mr. Mible," said Bob Cherry. "Rely on us to keep it dark."

"You silly ass!" roared his lordship.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of the Remove sauntered away, leaving Lord Mauleverer to get on with his sonnet. The way the slacker of the Remove was bucking up of late was really astonishing. Not only walking and cycling, but a contribution for the school paper—it was really amazing.

"He'll be playing cricket next," averred Bob Cherry.

After dinner, Harry Wharton & Co. proceeded to the bike-shed for their machines. They had no match on that afternoon, and they intended to improve the shining hour by a spin. The Remove were playing the Third, and Squiff was captaining the Form team, the Famous Five generously standing out to give the second-rate players a chance. They found the stand upon which Lord Mauleverer's jigger usually reposed, unoccupied. His lordship had evidently taken his bike out for the afternoon.

The five juniors were wheeling out their machines when Bunter arrived. Bunter blinked at them morosely.

"I don't want your rotten jiggers!" he snapped. "But if you think I'm not going to take Bella out, you're jolly well mistaken. Brown's going to lend me his bike."

"Does he know?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Well, he's playing this afternoon," said Bunter. "He won't want his jigger on the cricket-ground, I suppose."

"Better leave it till he's playing before you borrow it," said Bob. "If he sees you, he might wring your neck. You never know."

The Famous Five wheeled their machines away, and Bunter blinked after them. But he did not enter the bike-shed. He considered it wise to act upon Bob's playful suggestion. When Bunter borrowed a bike, he generally brought it home damaged, or, at least, muddy and dusty, and he never dreamed of cleaning it or repairing the damage. Naturally, he did not find willing lenders. Indeed, Bunter had been known to leave a borrowed bike, after a spill, a mile from the school, leaving it to the owner to recover his property the best way he could. All things considered, it was safer for him to wait till Tom Brown was playing cricket before he "borrowed" the New Zealand junior's jigger.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Surprising Discovery!

"WHO says ginger-pop?"

Bob Cherry asked the question, and four voices answered at once:

"Ginger-pop!"

The Famous Five had had their spin, and they were pedalling home by way of Courtfield. Bob Cherry propounded his query as they came past Bunbury's Bunshop, the establishment where the charming Miss Bella charmed all customers, many of whom visited the bunshop, and damaged their digestions with cakes and tea, simply for the purpose of speaking to Miss Bella.

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Five bikes were stacked against a tree at once. The juniors were dry after a long spin, and ginger-pop was an excellent suggestion. There was already a bike standing against the tree, and Bob Cherry uttered an ejaculation as he recognised it.

"Mauly's jigger!" he said.

"By Jove! Mauly's here," said Wharton. "That's his jigger right enough."

"We've solved the giddy mystery," said Bob, with a chuckle. "Mauly's mysterious expeditions are simply for buns."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five entered the bunshop. They passed through into the garden—a very pleasant green garden, with big trees and little tables, looking towards the river. There was only one customer in the place just then, and they recognised him as the dandy of the Remove.

Lord Mauleverer was seated at a little table. He had his back to the new-comers, and did not see them.

Miss Bella, a very charming young lady of about seventeen, was standing by the table, apparently taking orders from Lord Mauleverer. His lordship had plainly been giving extensive orders already. His table was almost loaded. There were cakes, and biscuits, and ices, and fruits to be seen, hardly touched, if touched at all. Miss Bella was regarding him with an amiable and somewhat amused smile.

"Yes?" she was saying.

"Begad!" murmured Lord Mauleverer.

"You want something more?"

"Yaas, please."

"Well?"

"I—I—I'll have an ice," said Lord Mauleverer.

"But you have an ice already," said Miss Bella.

"Begad, so I have! I—I'll have a vanilla ice, then."

"But that is a vanilla ice."

"Begad, is it?"

"Certainly."

"Then I'll have—have——"

"Yes?"

"Toffee," said Lord Mauleverer.

"Very good."

Miss Bella came to the juniors' table, after taking Lord Mauleverer's order for toffee.

"Ginger-pop, please, for five, Miss Bella," said Bob, raising his cap.

"Yes, Master Cherry."

Miss Bella disappeared into the house. Lord Mauleverer looked round with a start at the sound of Bob Cherry's voice.

"Begad! You fellows!" he ejaculated.

"Here we are again!" said Bob. "Been here long, Mauly?"

"Yaas!"

"You're well supplied with grub?"

"Yaas!"

"Will you have a ginger-pop with us?"

"Yaas!"

"Will you come to this table, or shall we come to yours?" asked Bob, with a grin. "Are you going to devour that supply of grub you've got there?"

"Yaas—I mean, no!"

"Then what did you order it for?"

"Ripping afternoon, ain't it," said Lord Mauleverer.

The Famous Five crossed over to his table, and drew chairs round it. His lordship regarded them with a curious expression.

"You're not devouring this prog?" asked Bob.

"No, begad! How could I eat all that stuff?"

"Good! I'll save you the trouble. Pile in, you fellows. Mauly must have seen us coming, and got it ready for us."

"Yaas, help yourselves, do," said Lord Mauleverer. "Much obliged, begad! I was really wonderin' what to do with it."

ANSWERS

The juniors had good appetites after their long spin, and they cleared Lord Mauleverer's table for him at great speed. His lordship watched the disappearance of his supplies with evident satisfaction. Why Lord Mauleverer should spend a sunny afternoon sitting in the garden of the bunshop, ordering things that he did not intend to eat, was a puzzle. Miss Bella reappeared with the ginger-beer and the toffee on a tray, and demurely placed them on the table. Then she sat down at a distance under one of the trees and began knitting.

Lord Mauleverer looked at her.

It was not merely a glance that he directed towards Miss Bella, but a fixed look that never wavered. He seemed to have become oblivious of the presence, indeed of the existence, of the Famous Five.

"You're not eating your toffee, Mauly," said Bob.

His lordship started.

"Eh? Toffee! I never eat toffee, dear boy."

"Is it a custom of yours to order things you never eat?" demanded Bob, in wonder.

"Oh, yaas!" said Lord Mauleverer absently.

"Here's your ginger-pop."

"Thanks, I won't have any. I've drunk no end of tea and things already."

"Been having a feed all on your own?"

"Yaas!"

"Are you off your rocker?"

"Yaas!"

"Well, open confession is good for the soul," remarked Nugent. "I suppose there's lunacy in the family—what?"

"Yaas!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Harry Wharton & Co. stared at their noble friend. He was evidently answering quite absent-mindedly, without noticing what was said to him. He appeared to be thinking something out, and finally he remarked:

"Miss Bella!"

Miss Bella looked up from her knitting.

"Excuse me, you know, may I—may I have an—an ice?"

"Certainly," said Miss Bella.

The ice was brought, and Miss Bella returned to her knitting. Lord Mauleverer had a discouraged look.

"Well, here's your ice," said Bob Cherry.

"Yaas!"

"Why don't you eat it, fathead?"

"Yaas!"

"Coming back to Greyfriars with us?" asked Bob.

"Yaas—I mean, no!"

"Staying here?"

"Yaas!"

"What for?"

"Nothin'."

The Famous Five paid for their ginger-beer, and prepared to depart, leaving Lord Mauleverer still sitting with his ice before him.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Time we got off. Here's Bunter," said Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter grunted as the chums of the Remove walked away to their bicycles. He plumped down in one of the chairs they had vacated as they disappeared. Harry Wharton & Co. rode back slowly to Greyfriars.

"Mauly must be off his giddy rocker," said Bob. "Blessed if I can make him out!"

"Her eyes are like the shining evening stars!" murmured Nugent, with a chuckle.

"Eh, what?"

"Her voice is like the chime of silver bells. Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you driving at?"

"Can't you see?" chuckled Nugent.

"Blessed if I can," said Bob, puzzled. "What are you cackling at? What are you grinning like a hyena for, Inky?"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's dusky face was convulsed with mirth.

"The deepful mystery is mysteryful no longer," he replied. "The esteemed Mauly is a thumping ass! The bright eyefulness of the charming Miss Bella is the cause of the dufferfulness of the esteemed Mauly."

Bob Cherry jumped, and nearly ran into Inky's machine.

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"Oh, my hat! Mauly—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Nugent. "Mauly's mashed! Mauly's in love! That's the giddy mystery! That's where he goes—to the bunshop. That's why he didn't see the pictures at the cinema; bet you Miss Bella was with him there. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry, the truth dawning upon him at last.

And the Famous Five rode home to Greyfriars in a state of great hilarity. The mystery of Lord Mauleverer was a mystery no longer.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Has No Luck!

"JOLLY glad to meet you here, Mauly!"

Lord Mauleverer did not look glad. But Billy Bunter did not mind that.

"I've borrowed Brown's jigger," said Bunter, fanning himself with his straw hat. "Rotten machine; the pedal's twisted already. The rotten thing ran into a sign-post, you know. I suppose you wouldn't mind riding it home, Mauly, and letting me have your jigger for my spin."

"Yaas."

"And I say, Mauly, I've been disappointed about a postal-order," said Bunter. "It happens at the present moment that I'm rather short of money. They don't let you run accounts here."

"Yaas!"

"Can you lend me half-a-crown, old chap?"

Lord Mauleverer stirred restlessly.

"Will you go away if I lend you half-a-crown?" he asked.

"Oh, really, Mauly—"

"Otherwise I won't."

"I shall certainly go when I've had some refreshment," said Bunter, with dignity. "I didn't intend to stay, anyway."

"Oh, good!"

Lord Mauleverer handed over the half-crown, and the fat junior tapped on the table with it. Miss Bella laid down her knitting, and came to the table. She did not give Bunter the pleasant nod and smile she had bestowed upon the other juniors. But Bunter was perhaps too short-sighted to observe the extremely icy and polite expression upon Miss Bella's face. He gave her what he regarded as a "killing" look.

"Nice afternoon, Miss Bella," he remarked.

"Yes. What is it, please?"

"Jolly weather for a spin," said Bunter.

"Yes. You want me to bring you something?"

"Oh, there's no hurry!" said Bunter.

"I have work to do," said Miss Bella. "Will you give me your orders, please?"

"Oh, all right! Ginger-pop and cakes," said Bunter, "and some ices. Make it up to half-a-crown, Miss Bella."

"Yes, Master Bunter."

Master Bunter's supply was brought on a tray. Lord Mauleverer moved away to another table. Bunter blinked after him.

"Don't run away, Mauly. I don't mind you sitting at my table."

Lord Mauleverer seemed deaf.

"This is something like," remarked Bunter, as the tray was placed on the table. "You have topping cakes here, Miss Bella."

The girl nodded.

"Won't you sit down and have one?" said Bunter persuasively. "I'm standing treat, you know. The fact is, I want to talk to you."

"Thank you very much, but—"

"I really mean it," said Bunter, his manner conveying a full impression of the great honour he was bestowing upon Miss Bunbury. "Now, sit down, Bella."

"You must not call me Bella, Master Bunter," said Miss Bunbury coldly.

"Oh, come, an old pal like me," urged Bunter. "You can call me Billy, you know."

"Thank you! I have no desire whatever to call you Billy, Master Bunter," said Miss Bunbury, and she retired from the table.

Bunter grunted discontentedly. There was a faint sound like a chuckle from Lord Mauleverer at the next table. However, the check he had received from Miss Bella did not trouble the Owl of the Remove; he started operations on the cake and the ginger-pop with great keenness.

"Have a cake, Mauly," he said, with unwonted hospitality. "How have you been getting on with Miss Bella this afternoon—what?"

Lord Mauleverer stared at him without replying.

"Trying to cut me out—what?" said Bunter, with a fat chuckle.

Another stare.

"Not much good," said Bunter, with his mouth full. "I'm taking Miss Bella out for a spin this afternoon, just as I told you, Mauly. I suppose you think from—from her manner just now that we're not great pals. That's only because there's a stranger present, you—you know. We're awfully chummy—awfully!"

"Do you want me to take you by the scruff of the neck, Bunter—"

"Eh? Certainly not!"

"And pitch you head first out of the garden—"

"Oh, really, Mauly—"

"Because I shall do it, if you don't dry up!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"Well, my word!" said Bunter, with a whistle. "I never expected this!"

"Eh?"

"Bob Cherry's jealous of me about Marjorie," said Bunter. "Squiff's jealous, because Miss Clara thinks a lot of me. But I never expected an old slow-coach like you to be jealous, Mauly."

"Begad!"

"Blessed if I don't wish that girls wouldn't take to me so," said Bunter peevishly. "I get fed-up with all this jealousy and envy. Just as if it's my fault that I'm an attractive chap."

"An attractive chap!" murmured Lord Mauleverer.

"Oh, dear!"

Billy Bunter chuckled.

"I'll bet you've been sitting here, mum-chance as a blessed oyster, and not saying a word," he said disdainfully.

"You watch how I get on. I've got a way with 'em, you know—and some fellows haven't. I'm one of the fellows who have."

"What do you mean by 'em'?" asked Lord Mauleverer. Bunter might have been referring to some strange and uncertain-tempered race of animals, by the way he spoke.

"Girls, you know," said Bunter. "What do you think?"

"I think you're a fat toad!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"Oh, really, you know—"

"And if you speak to me again, I'll punch your head!"

Bunter grunted and went on with his cakes. The

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slacker of the Remove looked quite dangerous for a moment, and Bunter decided not to speak to him again. He travelled through his refreshments, and then proceeded to display to Lord Mauleverer the "way" he had with "em."

Lord Mauleverer watched him curiously. Bunter approached Miss Bella, as she sat knitting, with a peculiar smirk on his fat face. If Bunter had been asked, he would have called it an agreeable and winning smile; but any uninformed observer would have taken it for a smirk.

"Awfully slack business this afternoon, Miss Bella?"

"Yes."

"Not much doing," remarked Bunter, with a glance at the empty tables.

"No."

"I dare say you could get away for an hour or so if you liked, Miss Bella?"

"Yes."

"I've brought my jigger with me," said Bunter.

To that remark Miss Bella made no reply at all. Apparently she wasn't interested in the fact that Bunter had brought his jigger with him. As a matter of fact, it was Tom Brown's jigger.

"Lovely afternoon for a spin," said Bunter.

"Yes."

"I'm going for a spin."

"Yes?"

"Now, I'll tell you what, Miss Bella," said Bunter, seeing that the young lady was coy and needed encouragement, "you chuck up that knitting and come for a spin. It will do you good, you know."

"Thank you!"

"You'll come?"

"No!"

"I'd really like you to," said Bunter. "I can spare a whole hour. Now, come along, Bella—"

"I have asked you not to call me Bella, Master Bunter!"

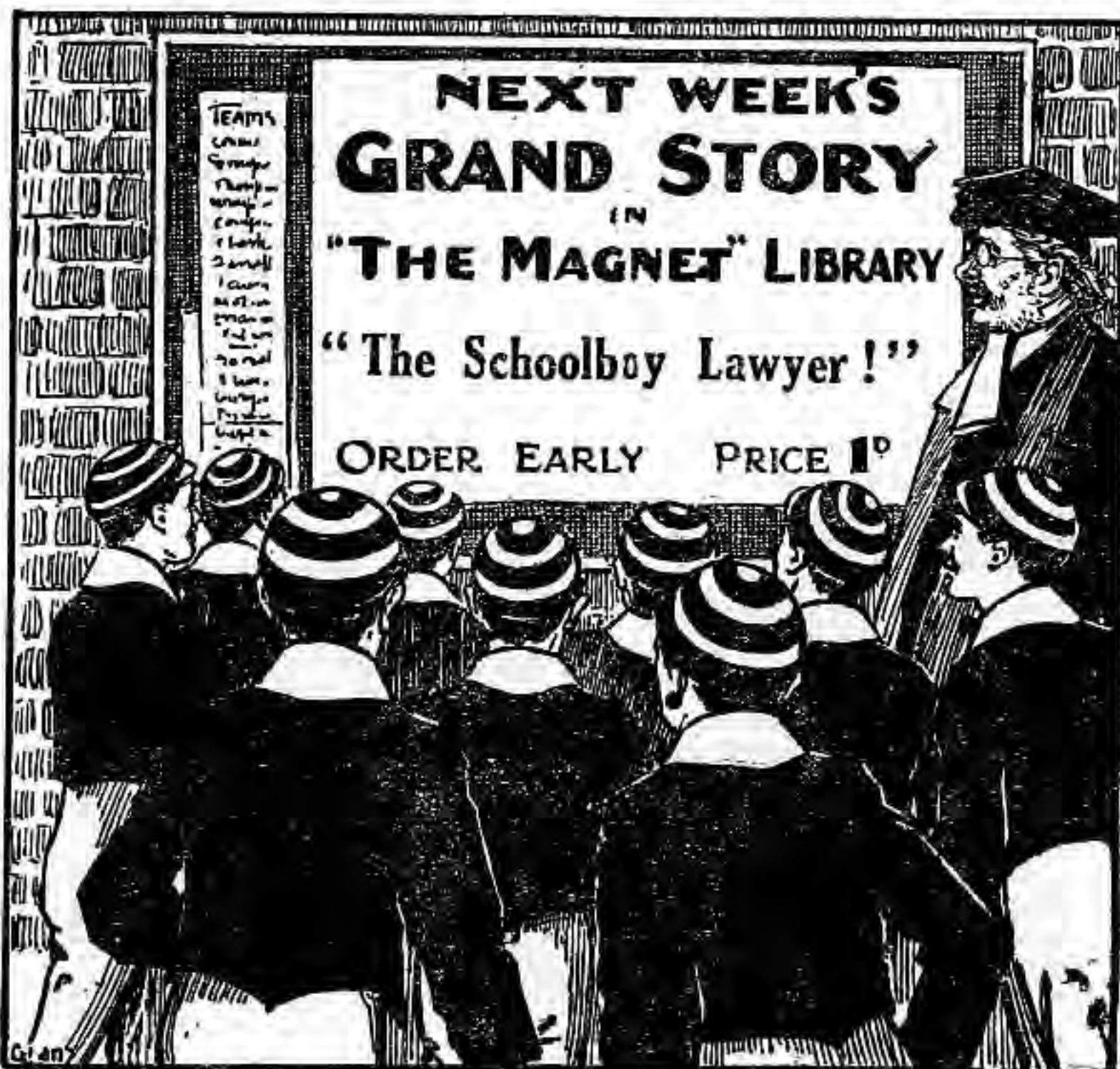
"Oh, what's the good of being stand-offish?" urged Bunter, smirking again. This, apparently, was his "way with 'em." "Just put that rubbish away and come for a spin. I'll look after you. The fact is, I've put off several engagements on purpose to take you out this afternoon, Bella."

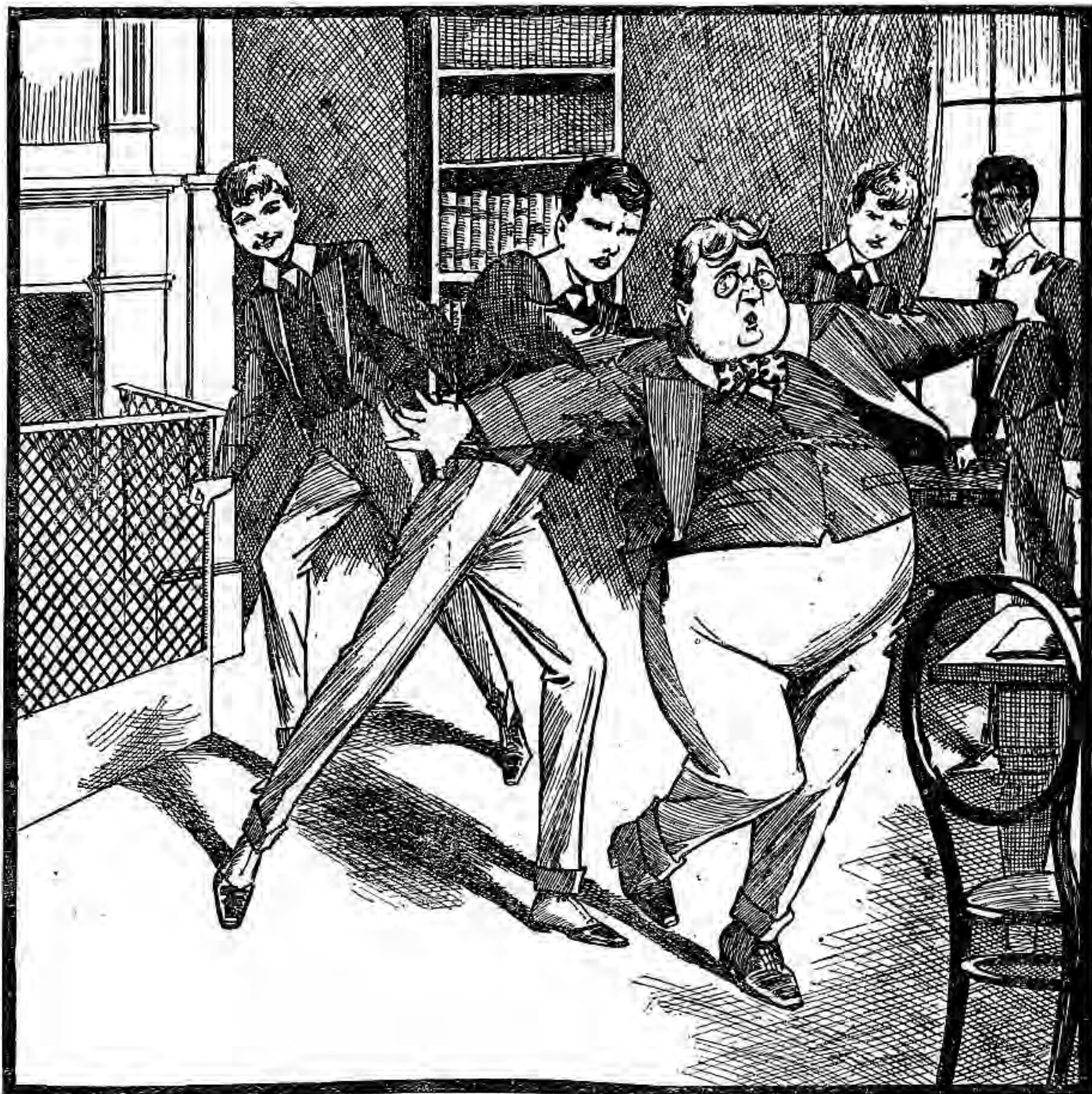
Miss Bunbury rose, and walked into the house. Bunter

seemed taken a back for a moment. Then he winked at Lord Mauleverer, who was glaring at him as if he would eat him.

"Shy, you know," he murmured. "You might really clear off and give a fellow a chance, Mauly! Naturally, Bella is rather shy with you stuck there glaring on all the time. Here, wharrer you at, Mauly?"

Lord Mauleverer grasped him by the collar and shook him. He did not explain what he was at. He simply shook Bunter till his arm ached. Then he plumped him down on a chair, and Bunter blinked at him breathlessly over his spectacles.





Mauleverer sprang up, seized Bunter by the collar, and shook him till the fat junior roared. "Oh! Yow! Yah! Leggo! Yaroooh! Have you gone dotty, Mauly? Leggo! Yooop!" "Ha, ha, ha!" "Go it, Mauly!" chorussed the juniors. (See Chapter 5.)

"Groo—hooh—hooh! If that's a joke, Mauly——"

"That isn't a joke," said Mauly; "and if you ever call Miss Bunbury Bella again, I'll thrash you within an inch of your life. Understand?"

"Why, you silly ass, she likes it!" howled Bunter.

"She didn't look like it, begad!"

"Oh, that's only coyness, because you were there, you ass! She's awfully fond of me, really—here, keep off, you beast!" howled Bunter, and he dodged round the table.

Lord Mauleverer gave him a withering glare, as he dodged out of reach, and then turned and went into the building. Billy Bunter gasped for breath. Dodging Mauly after a hearty feed winded him.

"Beast!" he murmured. "Jealous—just like Bob Cherry is about Marjorie. Fellows are always down on

a good-looking chap. I'm jolly well not going to clear off to please him—the silly owl! Beast!"

And Bunter followed Lord Mauleverer into the shop—but very cautiously, ready to dodge again if necessary.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Poor Old Mauly!

MISS BELLA was behind the counter, presiding over mountains of cakes and tarts and preserves and confections of all sorts. Two or three customers were having tea in the shop. Lord Mauleverer leaned on the counter, and talked to Miss Bella. Lord Mauleverer's manner was so respectful, and indeed timid, that Miss Bella was all kindness to him. His lordship's way was quite different from Billy Bunter's "way with 'em."

Old Mr. Bunbury came into the shop sometimes, and when he came in, Lord Mauleverer seemed to be busy giving orders. He seemed to feel that he ought to have some ostensible reason for being there at all. When Bunter came in, Lord Mauleverer had already purchased a large cake, two dozen jam-tarts, several pounds of preserved fruits, and other delicacies. Billy Bunter noted that when Mr. Bunbury looked into the shop, there was a grin on his face. Probably the old gentleman guessed why Lord Mauleverer was giving those extensive orders, and piling up goods on the counter, and did not object to such a rush of custom.

"Is there anything else I can get for you, sir?" asked Miss Bella demurely, almost bursting into a laugh as she glanced at the pile at Lord Mauleverer's elbow.

"Yaas. A currant cake," said Lord Mauleverer.

The currant cake was added to the pile.

"I'm sure that is enough," said Miss Bella.

"Yaas, I suppose so," said Lord Mauleverer absently. "Still, I think I'll have a few more things."

"That will come to a great deal of money," said Miss Bella.

"Yaas, will it?"

"More than a pound!"

"Yaas? Put in a—a—a jar of jam," said Lord Mauleverer, as Mr. Bunbury came into the shop again.

The jar of jam was put in.

"And—and one of those things with cream on top."

The thing with cream on top was handed out.

"Shall I send these things for your lordship?" asked Mr. Bunbury.

"Yaas, please."

"That is all?"

"Yaas—no!" said Lord Mauleverer quickly. "I—I'll have some—some— What are those things?"

"Preserved pears," said Miss Bella.

"Yaas, put in some of them."

"Certainly."

Lord Mauleverer stirred restlessly. Mr. Bunbury showed no sign of going back into his little parlour. Perhaps he thought Lord Mauleverer's purchases had been extensive enough for one afternoon.

Miss Bella, with a nod to his lordship, disappeared into the parlour. Lord Mauleverer's face became quite sombre.

"Anything else, my lord?" asked Mr. Bunbury grimly.

"No, thanks," said his lordship. Lord Mauleverer had no desire to stand there ordering things for the pleasure of conversation with Mr. Bunbury. "That's all, thanks."

"Then I'll let William bring these things to the school to-morrow morning."

"Yaas. Not to me!" exclaimed Lord Mauleverer hastily.

"A little present for one of your friends, the same as before?"

"Yaas."

"What name, please?"

"Oh, anybody. I—I mean Nugent! Nugent will do."

"Master Nugent—very good," said Mr. Bunbury. "Good-afternoon, my lord."

"Good-afternoon!" groaned Lord Mauleverer, and, with a last despairing glance at the parlour door, he ambled away.

Billy Bunter followed him, grinning, from the bunshop.

The Owl of the Remove had surprised the secret at last. Lord Mauleverer had not even noticed him in the shop.

"The blessed idiot!" murmured Bunter. "The silly owl! Ordering all those blessed things just for the sake of talking to Bella. Oh, my hat! And what an awfully deep rotter, too," Bunter chuckled. "If he had a parcel every day from the bunshop, the fellows would soon guess what it meant; so he has the stuff sent to the other chaps, one after another. Why couldn't he have 'em sent to me? I'd have been glad of 'em. Rotter!"

Lord Mauleverer had mounted his bicycle, and was slowly pedalling away, with a preoccupied look on his face. Bunter clambered upon Tom Brown's jigger and followed him. Even Bunter had to admit that there was no chance that afternoon of getting Miss Bella to share his spin.

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The fat junior grinned as he pedalled after Mauleverer. His first guess at the secret had been wide of the mark; but he was in possession of the facts now.

Mauly was in love!

The mere idea of it made Bunter chuckle. It was a simply ripping yarn for the junior common-room at Greyfriars.

Lord Mauleverer went to his study when he arrived at the school. Bunter shoved Tom Brown's bike into the shed, without bothering to put it on the stand. Bunter did not believe in taking much trouble about other people's bikes. Then he rolled into the School House with the news.

In Squiff's study the feed was going on. Billy Bunter found a good many juniors going in that direction, and he followed the crowd. He found Fisher T. Fish outside the study door, angry and indignant.

"I guess I'm coming into my own study to tea!" Fish was saying wrathfully. "I guess you are a rotten mug-wump, Field!"

"I guess I'm taking your advice," said Squiff, with a chuckle. "You clear off. No beastly neutrals admitted."

Fisher T. Fish shook a bony fist into the crowded study and wandered disconsolately away. Squiff was acting on his advice, so he really had no cause to grumble; but he did grumble all the same.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Bunter!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as a pair of large glasses gleamed into the study. "Haven't you gone on that spin, Bunter?"

"Wasn't Miss Bella taking any?" chuckled Skinner.

"That ass Mauly was there, and that mucked it up," said Bunter. "Here, make room for a fellow. I suppose you don't expect a fellow to stand when you invite him to a feed, Squiff?"

"But I haven't invited you," said Squiff.

"Ahem! I don't mind standing, if you're short of chairs; I'm an accommodating chap," said Bunter. "I say, pass that cake this way, Nugent. You're going to have a parcel to-morrow morning, Nugent."

"Eh! How do you know?" exclaimed Frank, in astonishment.

"He, he, he! I've found it all out."

"Trust you to find it all out!" growled Peter Todd. "What keyhole were you at?"

"Oh, really, Toddy! I was in the shop, you know, and heard it all. I know who sends those whacking parcels, and I know why," chuckled Bunter.

"Name!" said Skinner.

"It's a chap who's spoons on Bella," chuckled Bunter. "He, he, he! He sticks in the shop for hours, and orders things—he, he, he!—keeps on ordering 'em you know—he, he!—just for an excuse to stay there! He, he, he!"

"What rot!" said Bob Cherry.

"It's true," howled Bunter. "I tell you I watched him, and heard him, too. He's given Nugent's name for the next parcel, and it's coming to-morrow morning. You see, if he had parcels sent to him every day the fellows would get on to it."

"Do you mean to say it's a Greyfriars chap?" exclaimed Wharton.

"He, he, he! Rather!"

"My hat! A Greyfriars chap spending quids like that," said Johnny Bull. "Must be off his rocker!"

"Oh, he's got lots of quids, and he's spoons on Miss Bella!" grinned Bunter. "The first parcel came for him, and he's forgotten all about it, you know—forgotten he'd ordered the things. After that, he gave another chap's name every time for the things to be sent to. He, he, he!"

"What? Then it's—"

"Mauly! He, he, he!"

"Phew!"

"Mauly!" shrieked Skinner. "Mauly in love! Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of laughter in the crowded study. The Famous Five were silent. They understood it now. They had spotted the fact that afternoon that poor old Mauly was a victim of the tender god; and for once they believed Bunter's statements without requiring corroborating evidence.

"Oh, dear!" said the Bounder, wiping his eyes. "Mauly

mashed! Mauly in love! Look here, is it true, or one of Bunter's yarns?"

"A Bunter yarn, most likely," said Tom Brown. "But we'll see whether the parcel comes for Nugent in the morning."

"Yes, that'll be proof!"

"Poor old Mauly! Ha, ha, ha!"

After tea some of the fellows went to look for Mauly, but his study door was locked. He was not seen again till bed-time, and he did not understand the cause of the ripple of laughter that greeted him in the dormitory.

On the following morning, after early service, there was a rush to Gosling's lodge. The parcel had arrived. It was a large parcel, left by the man from Bunbury's, for Master Nugent.

Bunter's story was evidently true. The whole Remove now were in possession of the tender secret of Lord Mauleverer.

"Poor old Mauly!" said Bob Cherry. "Poor old duffer! He'll be chipped to death over this! Perhaps it'll cure him. Poor old Mauly. That blessed sonnet—that wasn't for the 'Herald' after all. It was for——"

"Miss Bella!" grinned Johnny Bull. "Oh, the ass! Poor old Mauly!"

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER: Skinner the Poet!

THE next day Lord Mauleverer, in spite of his pre-occupation and his general want of observation, could not help remarking that he was an object of general interest in the Remove. Harry Wharton & Co. had mercy upon him; but most of the fellows greeted the discovery of Mauly's unhappy condition as a good joke, and meant to make the most of it. There was no parcel on Monday morning, doubtless owing to the fact that the bunshop was closed on Sundays. Skinner & Co. were already arranging all sorts of little schemes for the benefit of the love-lorn Mauly.

After lessons on Monday Lord Mauleverer was leaving the School House as usual. As his destination and his object were now known, nearly all the Remove gathered round to see him off, grinning hugely.

"Hold on a minute, Mauly," said Skinner amicably. "In a hurry, old chap?"

"Yaas."

"I've got something I want to show you," said Skinner. "You can give me just a minute?"

"Yaas, dear boy," said the obliging Mauly. "What is it?"

"I've been writing a sonnet," said Skinner.

"Have you, begad!"

"Yes; you didn't know I was a poet," said Skinner blandly. "The fact is, Mauly—— I say, you'll keep it dark?" Skinner lowered his voice mysteriously.

"Yaas."

"I'm in love, Mauly."

"Oh, begad!"

About twenty fellows had heard Skinner's thrilling whisper, and they all chuckled. Lord Mauleverer began to grow pink.

"When I'm in love," pursued Skinner, "I break out into poetry. It's the usual thing, you know. I know you are a dab at sonnets, Mauly, and I want your opinion on this. Keep it dark, of course."

Lord Mauleverer stood rooted to the ground. Skinner unfolded a sheet of impot paper, and read out, in the midst of a grinning circle, his effusion:

"Her eyes would melt the hearts of Huns,
Her touch is light as hot-cross buns;
Her hair is just a little sandy,
And, oh, she is as sweet as candy!
The cakes she makes so nice and neat,
Are not so nice and not so sweet.
Her voice is like a Grecian lyre,
And just as sweet for every buyer.
The sweets of which she is the seller,
Are not so really sweet as Bella!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the circle of listeners, interrupting Skinner's recital. Lord Mauleverer's face was a study.

"Do you think that's all right, Mauly?" asked Skinner anxiously. "I want your opinion before I send it to Miss Bunbury, you know."

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ONE
PENNY.

"Begad!" stammered his lordship.

"It goes on like this; rather touching, I think, but I want your opinion, Mauly. I know you're a dab at these things."

"When lessons finish, off I hop
To hang about her father's shop.
It is a blessing and a boon,
To buy things all the afternoon;
And everything I buy from Bella,
I send off to another feller;
So that the chaps will never know
That Cupid's darts have laid me low."

Lord Mauleverer was crimson by this time. The spectators of the peculiar scene were nearly suffocating with mirth.

"Then I go on with a bit about the future," said Skinner, "about my hopes and dreams and plans for a bicycle made for two, and all that."

"Oh, if I were but twenty-one,
To Bella's pa I'd quickly run.
Before him would I proudly stand,
And ask him for my Bella's hand.
But, oh, alas! and hence these tears,
My age is only fifteen years!
Instead of Bella's hand—Great Scott!
Her father's foot would be my lot!"

Skinner's voice almost broke over these lines, and he wiped away a tear. Lord Mauleverer stared at him as if mesmerised. The circle of juniors were almost doubled up by this time. Skinner recovered from his emotion, and went on:

"Alas! alas! oh, cruel Fate,
My love is strong; I cannot wait!
Oh, would I were a bird, to fly
With Bella through the darksome sky!
Oh, would I were a hedgehog sweet,
To curl up at my darling's feet!
Oh, would I had an appetite
Like Billy Bunter's, that I might
Sit all day long and eat the cakes
That Bella, beauteous Bella, makes!
Oh, would I—— Yaroooooooooh!"

Skinner's touching recital was suddenly interrupted. Lord Mauleverer, seeming to realise at last that his noble leg was being pulled, hit out suddenly, and Skinner caught his lordship's knuckles with his nose. He sat down at Lord Mauleverer's feet, blinking.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The spectators seemed to think this funnier than ever, and they roared. Skinner roared, too, but it was with pain. He put his hand to his nose, and his fingers were red.

"Gerroooh!" spluttered Skinner.

"You rotter!" ejaculated Lord Mauleverer. "Pullin' my leg—what? I'm going to give you a jolly good licking! Put up your hands, begad!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner jumped up. His nose was streaming red, and he was hurt, and he was angry. He rushed at Lord Mauleverer, and they clasped one another, pommelling away furiously.

"Go it, Mauly!"

"Go it, Skinny!"

"Oh, what a pity Miss Bella isn't here to see 'em!" chuckled Snoop. "She would be pleased! Go it, Skinny!"

Tramp, tramp, tramp! Thump, thump, thump!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Chuck it, you duffers!" shouted Bob Cherry. "Here comes Wingate!"

As the two combatants were just outside the doorway of the School House their combat was not likely to be without interruption. Wingate of the Sixth came striding out, with an angry frown. He grasped Skinner with

one hand, and Lord Mauleverer with the other, and yanked them apart.

"You young rascals!" he exclaimed. "Fighting—almost under the Head's window! You sweeps! Get in, both of you! Go into your Form-room, and stay there till tea-time, and if there's any more row I'll come in to you!"

"Oh, begad! I can't, Wingate!" gasped Lord Mauleverer.

The captain of Greyfriars glared at him.

"Can't!" he ejaculated. For a junior in the Lower Fourth to reply that he couldn't when he received a command from the Head of the Sixth was something quite unheard-of. It took Wingate's breath away.

"No, really! I've got an—an appointment."

"You've got an appointment, and so you can't do as I tell you!" gasped Wingate, scarcely believing his ears.

"Yaas!"

"We'll see about that!" said Wingate. And he took his lordship by the collar, and marched him away to the Remove Form-room, and pitched him in. "Now stay there till six o'clock, Mauleverer, or I'll give you the licking of your life!"

"Oh, begad!"

Lord Mauleverer stayed there.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Black but Not Comely!

THERE was no parcel for anybody in the Remove on Tuesday morning. Lord Mauleverer's usual visit to the bunshop had not been paid on Monday.

Indeed, some of the fellows who had cherished a happy hope of getting the next parcel were inclined to kick Billy Bunter for having revealed the identity of the unknown Good Samaritan. Now that the secret was out Lord Mauleverer was not likely to avail himself of that device again. There would be no more parcels for the Remove, left mysteriously by the man from Bunbury's, though it was a question what the love-lorn junior would do with his extensive purchases in the future.

Some of the juniors made suggestions to Mauleverer on the subject. All of them were taking Lord Mauleverer's unhappy state humorously, and it had become a standing joke in the Form. Snoop offered to come with him on Tuesday, and eat all that he ordered, while he talked to Bella. Snoop declared that he wouldn't say a word himself; he would leave all the talking to Mauly, so long as Mauly left all the tuck to him. It was a businesslike offer, but the only reply to it was a drive on Snoop's nose, which almost doubled him up.

Lord Mauleverer had never been known as a fighting-man, but latterly he was growing, as Bob Cherry said, quite ferocious. It was quite unsafe to make the least allusion to Miss Bella, by way of chipping his lordship. The schoolboy earl had no fewer than three fights on his hands on Tuesday—Snoop and Stott and Bolsover major. Bolsover would probably have rendered his lordship a fit subject for the hospital, if the Famous Five had not intervened. They swooped down on Bolsover when he had Mauleverer's head in chancery, and yanked him off, and held his head under a tap till he promised better behaviour. But when Lord Mauleverer was ready to start on his little walk to Courtfield he had a dark circle growing round his eye, which caused him much unhappiness as he surveyed it in the glass.

How could he possibly call upon Miss Bella with a black eye? Yet how could he possibly remain away from Miss Bella, when an invisible but irresistible force drew him in her direction? Lord Mauleverer debated the matter with himself in his study. He started for Courtfield, but at the school gates he turned back; he simply hadn't the courage to show that eye to Miss Bunbury.

He came back dispiritedly towards the house, with many grinning glances turned upon him. His looks were greatly depressed. It would be some days, at least, before his eye was fit to be seen in public. And all that

time he would not be able to behold the charming goddess of the bunshop.

"Sure, and ye're not going entirely!" said Micky Desmond sympathetically as he came in. "Can I take a message for you, Mauly?"

"Eh, what?"

"Sure, I'm going down on me bike, and I'll give Miss Bella a message, and a description of ye're eye," said Micky. "If ye've got any sonnets to be delivered I'll take 'em along, and save a stamp!"

Biff!

"Tare an ouns!" yelled Micky, as Lord Mauleverer punched his nose hard. "My hat! Sure, I'll make shavings of ye, ye omadhaun!"

It was Lord Mauleverer's fourth fight for the day. His lordship was feeling somewhat used-up already, but he piled in valiantly. Bob Cherry and Squiff seized Micky and dragged him off. The Irish junior was very nearly making "shavings" of his unfortunate lordship.

"Peace, pretty creature—peace!" said Bob Cherry.

"Let go, ye spalpeen!"

"Cheese it, my infant! Mauly, go away and bathe your other eye!" grinned Bob Cherry. "If you're not jolly careful you'll have a pair of them."

"Sure, the baste punched my nose!" said Micky, calming down. "It was only being obliging I was, intirely."

"Young fellows in love are kittle cattle," said Bob oracularly. "You have to be very careful with them."

Lord Mauleverer retired to a bath-room and bathed his other eye. The bathing did not serve; a few hours later it was purple. The dandy of the Remove with two black eyes was an interesting sight. He was greeted with a chuckle wherever he appeared, and he shut himself up in his study and remained there.

The next morning, in class, Mr. Quelch fixed a look like a basilisk upon his lordship. Signs of combat were not infrequent among the merry Removites, but a pair of black eyes was "the limit."

"Mauleverer!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"Yaas, sir!"

"What is the matter with your eyes?"

"I think they're rather bruised, sir."

"You have been fighting?"

"Yaas, sir!"

"You will take a hundred lines, Mauleverer. Your appearance is most disgraceful. I am ashamed of you."

"Yaas!"

"You bring discredit on your Form, Mauleverer."

"Yaas!"

"Plaze, sir," said Micky Desmond, getting up, "I gave Mauly one of them, sir."

"Then you will take a hundred lines also, Desmond."

"I gave him the other, sir," said Bolsover major, owning up in his turn.

"Very well; take a hundred lines. You should be ashamed of fighting with a boy much smaller than yourself, Bolsover."

Bolsover major turned crimson.

"But he punched my nose, sir."

"Is it possible, Mauleverer, that you deliberately picked a quarrel with Bolsover?" said Mr. Quelch.

"Yaas!"

"You struck the first blow?"

"Yaas!"

"This is very odd," said the Form-master, puzzled. "I have always believed you to be a very peaceable boy, Mauleverer, and indeed, somewhat too slack and lazy, rather than the reverse. Kindly explain to me why you made an attack upon Bolsover."

The Remove waited breathlessly. They hardly dared to surmise what Mr. Quelch would say if he learned of Mauly's tender regard for the young lady at the bunshop. The Remove-master was certainly not likely to have any sympathy for the love-affairs of a youth of fifteen. They hung on Mauleverer's lips, so to speak, for his reply.

"I punched his nose, sir," said Mauleverer, after a pause.

"I am already aware of that, Mauleverer. But why did you punch, as you call it, Bolsover's nose?"

"He's got such a big nose, sir," said Mauleverer.

"What?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! What did you say, Mauleverer?"

"Bolsover's got such a big nose, sir," said his lordship calmly.

Bolsover major turned red with rage. His nose was certainly rather large, and it was larger still since Mauly had punched it.

Mr. Quelch looked fixedly at his lordship. Lord Mauleverer met his glance calmly. There was a pause.

"I have never thought you a quarrelsome boy before, Mauleverer," said Mr. Quelch, at last. "I have been deceived, apparently. You will be detained for this afternoon, and you will write out five hundred lines instead of one hundred. Now we will go on."

Mr. Quelch was very puzzled, but he received no explanation. That afternoon, when the Greyfriars fellows were enjoying their half-holiday, Lord Mauleverer was in the Form-room, alone in his glory. He would probably have broken detention, but the state of his eyes prevented him from visiting the bunshop. He simply could not present himself before Miss Bella with two black eyes.

Bob Cherry looked in during the afternoon to see him, and found his lordship grinding out lines.

"Like me to lend a hand?" asked the good-natured Bob.

"Yaas!"

"I say, Mauly, old chap, you don't mind if I give you a tip—"

"Yaas!"

"I'm going to talk to you like a Dutch uncle," said Bob. "Don't you think you'd better chuck up playing the giddy ox? It really ain't serious, at your age, you know. You're really a blithering ass, if you only knew it!"

"Begad!"

"No reason why a chap shouldn't be chummy with a girl pal," said Bob, with an air of great wisdom. "But falling in love, you know, should be left till you're grown up, like smoking a pipe."

"She is an awfully nice gal," said Lord Mauleverer. He could speak confidentially to Bob.

"Well, all girls are awfully nice, really," said Bob, "if you come to that. But—" Bob loyally tried not to laugh. "It's all rot, you know; and the fellows will chip you to death. Why not call it off for about six years, and then begin again? You'll be twenty-one then, and Miss Bella will be twenty-four—"

"Twenty-three and a half," said Mauleverer.

"I see you know all about it," grinned Bob. "But there's another reason, too, Mauly. Skinner says—"

"Hang Skinner!"

"Yes, he ought to be hung," agreed Bob pacifically. "I dare say he will be hung some day, old chap. But he says that Miss Bella is sort of engaged to a man in khaki—chap who's gone to the war—"

Lord Mauleverer jumped.

"Oh, begad!"

"I don't know how Skinner knows, but you know he always finds things out," said Bob. "'Tain't an engagement, Skinner says, but it's going to be when the chap comes home from the war. Now, Mauly, old man, it's up to you to keep off the grass."

"'Tain't true!"

"How do you know?"

"Because Skinner says it."

"Well, that's a good reason," admitted Bob. "Still—now, Mauly—at fifteen, you know."

"Some chaps are older than others," said Lord Mauleverer. "I'm speakin' to you because you're a decent chap, Cherry. I've thought it out—'pon my honour! I've turned it over in my study in the evenin' till I fell asleep thinkin' so much; I have, really. I'm goin' to ask Miss Bella to wait—"

"But she waits now," said Bob, rather unfortunately, carried away by a misdirected sense of humour. "In the shop, you know."

Lord Mauleverer glared at him for a moment, and then picked up a ruler. The next moment Bob was fleeing for his life, with his lordship behind him making wild lunges with the ruler. That was the end of Lord Mauleverer's confidences to Bob Cherry.

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THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

[Alonzo Takes a Message!]

HARRY WHARTON & CO. bestowed a good deal of attention upon Lord Mauleverer during the following days. So long as his black eyes kept him confined within the school bounds, visits to the bunshop were not possible; and they wondered whether absence would have its natural effect in such cases, and whether Lord Mauleverer would realise precisely the kind of ass he was. If he did, he said nothing about it. He was more seclusive than ever. His pair of lovely, black eyes made him more anxious to avoid "scraps" and so he kept out of the way of the cheery youths who had turned him into a standing joke, and found a harmless and necessary pastime in chipping him.

Black changed to purple, purple to a greenish blue, and blue to an art shade in grey, as the days passed on, and every day Lord Mauleverer watched the progress of his bruised optics anxiously, in the glass. But day after day passed without the cure coming to an end, and his lordship was restless and perturbed.

It is very probable that those black eyes were really of service to him, as they gave him an opportunity to reflect upon the absurdity of his conduct, safely out of the influence of the bright eyes of Miss Bella. But that the cure was not yet effected was soon evident. When Wednesday afternoon came round again, he cornered Alonzo Todd in the Close. The kind and obliging Alonzo was almost the only fellow in the Remove who had not chipped Lord Mauleverer, but had indeed shown him sympathy. Alonzo sympathised with everybody for everything; he had a tender heart. His chief concern was for the inhabitants of certain cannibal islands, for whom he subscribed a good deal of his pocket-money; but he had a lot of sympathy left for his Form-fellows, and he always had a bottle of his Marvellous Mixture at their service if they were seedy.

"Lonzy, old man, I want you to do me a favour, begad!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"Anything, my dear Mauleverer," said Alonzo. "You look a little seedy. I have recently received a new supply of the Marvellous Mixture from my Uncle Benjamin. Shall I get you a bottle?"

"Begad, no!" said Lord Mauleverer hastily. "The fact is, I want to send a message to somebody, and you're the only fellow I can trust, Lonzy."

"You are very flattering," said Alonzo. "Perhaps you would like me to advise you? The fellows have been chipping you. I really regard it as unfeeling. You are labouring under a mistake, Mauleverer, in supposing

that you are in love. I attribute it to your being probably run down. I am sure that a bottle of the mixture would set you right. A dose of the mixture before meals and before going to bed, Mauleverer, will—"

"Look here—"

"The bottle should be well shaken before taken, and—"

"Will you take a message for me, you ass?" said the exasperated Mauly. "I can't write a letter, really. I'm not on writing terms, you know. Only—only somebody—ahem!—will be wondering why I don't drop in, all this time. It's nearly a week—seems like a year to me."

"That is a morbid fancy, Mauleverer, which shows more than ever that you are in need of the mixture," said Alonzo anxiously. "I could make you up a small dose if you like."

"Will you take my message and say nothing about it?" said Lord Mauleverer savagely.

"Oh, certainly."

"It—it's to the bunshop, you know. Just—just call in and—and mention to Miss Bunbury— You know Miss Bella—"

"Yes; that is the young lady with sandy hair," said Alonzo Todd innocently.

"Golden hair, you silly idiot!"

"Dear me, how excited you look, my dear fellow! I am perfectly convinced that what you need is a course of the mixture. My Uncle Benjamin recommends it—"

"Just mention to her that I'm sorry I haven't called lately, owing to being kept indoors by a—a—a complaint of the eyes."

"Certainly, my dear Mauly. I will go at once, and when I come back I shall try to persuade you to take a dose of—"

Lord Mauleverer walked away. Alonzo Todd sighed, and trotted away towards the gates. Then Harold Skinner emerged from behind a tree, where he had heard the whole of the conversation, and hurried after Alonzo.

He overtook Peter's cousin outside the gates. Alonzo stopped as he called.

"Yes, my dear Skinner?"

"Mauly's sent me," said Skinner calmly. "There's part of the message he forgot to give you, and he asked me to tell you."

"Yes?" said Alonzo unsuspiciously. As he he did not know that Skinner had played the eavesdropper, he was naturally unsuspicious.

"You are to remember to tell Miss Bella that he can't come out because he has two black eyes," said Skinner, "and you're to give an order. He wants a cake, and three dozen jam-tarts, and a pineapple. You won't forget?"

"I will make a special note in my notebook, Skinner."

"They're to be sent to Snoop," said Skinner carelessly. "Immediately, you know."

"Very well."

If Skinner had said that the tuck was to be sent to himself, even the innocent Alonzo might have been suspicious. The Duffer of Greyfriars walked away towards Courtfield, and Harold Skinner strolled in again, chuckling. He was soon in talk with Sidney James Snoop, and Sidney James chuckled, too.

Lord Mauleverer awaited Alonzo's return in his study. It was a considerable time before the cheerful Alonzo came in.

"Well?" said Mauleverer. "Message delivered all right—what?"

"Yes; I am sorry I could not get back sooner," said Alonzo. "Skinner delayed me as I came in. He really kept me talking, but as he was seeking information about missionary work in the Gooby-Booby Islands, I could not very well leave him. He kept me talking in the gateway till the man from Bunbury's came with the parcel for Snoop. Then he left me quite suddenly. I do not know why. I have brought you the bill, Mauleverer."

"The—the bill?"

Yes; here it is. Sixteen shillings. I gave your message to Miss Bella, too. She was very amused."

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"Amused!" howled Lord Mauleverer.

"Yes; she seemed, somehow, to think it comical that you should be kept indoors by two black eyes."

Lord Mauleverer gasped.

"You—you—you shriekin' ass! You told her I've got black eyes?"

"Certainly. You requested me to do so, my dear Mauleverer."

"I told you a complaint in the eyes!" yelled his lordship. "Oh, you ass! You duffer!"

"Yes; but the message you sent me by Skinner—"

"Skinner!" stuttered Mauleverer.

"Yes. Surely you have not forgotten sending Skinner after me with your message?" said Alonzo, in wonder. "He told me to mention particularly that you had two black eyes, and to give the order for the cake and tarts and pineapple for Snoop. My dear Mauleverer, how excited you look! You must really have a dose of—"

"Oh, you fathead!" howled Mauleverer. "I didn't tell Skinner anything, you ass!"

"My dear Mauly, this forgetfulness is growing upon you, but if you would only take regular doses of the—" Alonzo broke off. "Mauly, where are you going?"

Lord Mauleverer did not reply. He rushed from the study in search of Harold Skinner. But the humorist of the Remove was not to be found. It was a long time before Mauleverer discovered that he was in Snoop's study, and when he ran him down there he found the door locked. He hammered on the door.

"Skinner, you cad—"

"Hallo!" said Skinner.

"I'm goin' to lick you, you cad!" yelled Lord Mauleverer.

"You want some more black eyes?" chuckled Skinner. "Where will you have the next, Mauly? You've got two already. Besides, I'm busy now. Snoop's standing me a feed with your little present to him."

"You dashed swindler, I won't pay the bill!" howled Lord Mauleverer.

"Please yourself, dear boy. If you don't, Alonzo will have to, as he ordered the goods," said Skinner calmly.

"Oh, begad!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Skinner and Snoop together. "Thanks for the cake, Mauly! Thanks for the tarts! they're ripping! Ha, ha, ha!"

Lord Mauleverer bestowed a thundering kick on the door, and retired. He returned to his own study, where he discovered Alonzo measuring out a tablespoonful of a thick and sticky liquid from a bottle into a glass. Alonzo gave him a sweet and benevolent smile.

"This is the mixture, Mauleverer. I am getting a dose ready for you. I am sure it will do you good— Oh! Ah! Yah! Wharrer you at! Yoop! Oh, dear!"

Lord Mauleverer's next actions convinced Alonzo that he was more in need than ever of the Marvellous Mixture, for he seized the unhappy Alonzo with one hand, and the bottle with the other, and poured the mixture over Alonzo's astonished head. Then he pitched the good Alonzo out of the study, pitched the bottle after him, then the glass, and then slammed the door.

Alonzo Todd sat streaming with mixture, and gasping for breath. Never had he been so taken by surprise.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as the Co. came in to tea and discovered Alonzo rubbing mixture out of his hair and gasping for breath. "Wherefore this thushness?"

"It's Mauleverer!" stuttered Alonzo. "I fear he is insane. I was about to give him a dose—grooh!—of medicine—yow!—when he suddenly took leave of his senses—yoop!—and treated me like this—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothing to laugh at," gasped Alonzo. "This is not comical at all! It is very, very disagreeable! I shall never, never interest myself again in Mauleverer's health! I regard him as utterly ungrateful and unfeeling."

And Alonzo ambled away to wash his unfortunate head.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Gentleman in Khaki!

"BEGAD! All right at last!"

Lord Mauleverer surveyed his eyes in the glass in his study a few days later. There was a faint, bluish tinge yet to be seen, but Lord Mauleverer flattered himself that Miss Bella would not notice that. It was a half-holiday, and at last he was able to pay the long-deferred visit to the bunshop.

In great spirits Lord Mauleverer wheeled out his bike. Five juniors were mounting their machines outside the school gates, and they greeted his lordship with a cordial hail.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Going our way, Mauly?"

"We're going to the bunshop," said Harry Wharton.

"There used to be a Good Samaritan about there, sending us parcels," said Nugent seriously. "But he seems to have knocked off for some reason; so we're going ourselves."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come along, Mauly, and we'll see you through," said Johnny Bull.

Lord Mauleverer mounted in silence. Probably he would have dispensed with the company of the Famous Five quite cheerfully; but as they were going to the bunshop there was no help for it. The six juniors pedalled down the road to Courtfield together.

They left their machines in a stack under the tree outside Mr. Bunbury's establishment, and walked in. Lord Mauleverer glanced towards the counter. Old Mr. Bunbury was presiding there, and Lord Mauleverer hastily saluted the old gentleman, and passed through into the garden with the Co.

Miss Bella was in the garden. She was not alone. A good-looking young fellow in khaki was there also, talking to her under the trees. He had a sergeant's stripes, and one arm in a sling. There was an indescribable something in the manner of the young man in khaki towards Miss Bella, and in the manner of Miss Bella towards the young man in khaki, which revealed a good deal. It made the Famous Five smile, and brought a very peculiar expression to Lord Mauleverer's face.

The juniors saluted Miss Bella cheerfully, and the girl turned to them, blushing and smiling. The young sergeant saluted them politely. There was a gleam on the third finger of Miss Bella's left hand, which seemed to fascinate the eyes of Lord Mauleverer.

"Oh, begad!" murmured Lord Mauleverer, as he sank limply into a chair.

"Poor old Mauly!" whispered Bob.

Miss Bella hurried away for the ginger-pop that was required, and to hide her pretty blushes perhaps. The gentleman in khaki whistled and admired the landscape. Lord Mauleverer sat with his long legs stretched out, his hands driven deep into his pockets, his whole elegant figure very limp.

There was some sort of a struggle going on inside Lord Mauleverer, evidently. Harry Wharton & Co. did not speak. They waited for the result. It was Mauleverer who broke the silence.

"My dear fellows—" he said hesitatingly.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"It occurs to me—"

"Yes?" said Wharton encouragingly.

"I'm a thumpin' ass!"

"You are, old chap!" agreed the Famous Five cordially. There was not a dissentient voice.

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ONE
PENNY.

"I mean, I was a thumpin' ass!"

"You were!" agreed the Co. again.

"But it's jolly lucky——"

"What's lucky?"

"That I hadn't said anythin' to Miss Bella."

"The luckfulness was terrific!" murmured Hurree Singh.

"Not even at the cinema?" asked Bob Cherry. "The time you didn't see the pictures, you know?"

Lord Mauleverer blushed.

"No; I've said nothin'. I hadn't the cheek."

"Then you're not such a thumping ass after all," said Harry Wharton. "All you've got to do it not to play the giddy goat any more. Put your sonnets in the fire, and take up cricket."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I will!" said Lord Mauleverer determinedly.

"Hooray!"

Miss Bella arrived with the ginger-pop, and Lord Mauleverer rose gracefully to his feet. Whatever emotions there might have been in his manly breast he nobly suppressed them, and when he spoke it was with his usual calm.

"Excuse me, Miss Bella. I'm sure you'll allow me to speak as an old friend——"

"You are very kind," faltered Miss Bella.

"It appears to me that our friend in khaki yonder is to be congratulated—what?" said Lord Mauleverer, with the gravity of a gentleman of fifty at least.

"We are engaged now," said Miss Bella shyly, her eyes resting for a moment upon the ring that adorned her finger, the sight of which had given Mauly such a painful shock at first.

"Yaas! We should be honoured to make the acquaintance of the lucky dog," said Lord Mauleverer.

Miss Bella laughed, and presented Sergeant Brown, and Sergeant Brown, though it is barely possible that ginger-pop was not much in his line, joined the little party at the table cheerfully, and shared their mild refreshment. He told them stories, too, of Mons, and Ypres, and Neuve Chapelle, to which they listened almost spellbound; and to which Miss Bella listened with all her pretty ears.

Harry Wharton & Co. parted on the best of terms with Sergeant Brown. Lord Mauleverer seemed very thoughtful as they rode home to Greyfriars. The result of his reflections was imparted to the chums when they reached the school.

"That's a decent chap, that chap Green," he said.

"Brown, you fathead!"

"Yaas, I mean Brown. Very decent; and he's been through it all, while we've been idlin' at home, and he's got his fin winged," said Lord Mauleverer. "He deserves a really rippin' gal like Bella—what?"

"Hear, hear!"

"And I've been an ass, and I'm goin' to chuck it, and take up cricket!"

"Bravo!"

And the next day Lord Mauleverer appeared on the cricket-ground, evidently determined to keep his word. For several days he put in a regular appearance there—for a shorter and shorter period each time—till at the end of a week he failed to turn up. The slacker of the Remove was himself again!

THE END.

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"THE SCHOOLBOY LAWYER!"

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OPENING CHAPTERS. START TO-DAY!



Driven to Sea!

The Opening Chapters of a Magnificent New
Serial Adventure Story.

By T. C. BRIDGES.

THE FIRST INSTALMENT.

Dick Damer, in consequence of an offer received from his uncle, goes out to Australia to live with him. On arriving he hears of his uncle's death from a man named Wesley Crane, his uncle's former partner.

Wesley Crane, in furtherance of a scheme best known to himself, has Dick drugged and smuggled aboard the Rainbow, a small schooner commanded by Captain Cripps, and bound for an unknown destination.

On the fourth day out a derelict is sighted. Captain Cripps and Dick go aboard, and discover a boy, who has been left behind, overpowered by gas-fumes.

Dick and the castaway, Barry Freeland, reach the Rainbow in safety, but Captain Cripps, who stayed longer on the derelict, is drowned owing to a storm rising, which causes the vessel to founder.

Barry Freeland takes charge of the Rainbow, and among the late captain's papers finds a letter from Wesley Crane, hinting at a shady transaction, and also a chart showing a mysterious island.

Dick and Barry determine to trace this island and obtain the pearls which are supposed to have been hidden there, as it is discovered that Dick, as his uncle's next-of-kin, is entitled to them.

On reaching the island they are surprised by shots coming from the shore, and they determine to go inland to investigate. They discover a madman on the island, who fired the shots. After an accident the man recovers his reason, and informs the comrades that his name is Captain Kempster. He also says he is the sole survivor of the Stella, a vessel that was commissioned by Dick's uncle to recover the pearls. The Stella was attacked by the Brant, captained by a notorious scoundrel named Burke, and they were robbed of the pearls.

The comrades decide to track down Burke and force him to give up the stolen pearls.

On the way to the Solomon Islands, the haunt of Burke and his colleagues, they pick up three castaways in a small boat. As the shipwrecked men step aboard the Rainbow, Captain Kempster, in a fierce voice, exclaims:

"Redstall!" and makes a wild dash at one of them.

(Now go on with the story.)

Barstow's Condition.

Redstall was twice the size of Kempster. He was a huge, burly brute, with a fist like a ham—a fist, one blow from which would have stretched Kempster dead on the deck.

Yet he never raised a hand. He seemed to be suddenly

struck with paralysis, and on his thick, beefy face was an expression of abject terror such as Dick had never conceived of. His pale blue eyes almost started from their sockets.

Before the others could so much as move a finger, Kempster had him by the throat, and over they went together with a crash, the back of Redstall's head meeting the snowy planks with a force that fairly jarred the deck.

In an instant the nearest of Redstall's companions, a wild-looking individual with a bushy red beard, whipped out a knife.

It was Barry who saved Kempster. Quick as a flash, he leaped in, and caught the red-bearded man's right wrist with his left hand, at the same moment driving in his right fist. His knuckles jarred on the fellow's jaw, and red beard staggered back and came down in a sitting position, but dragging Barry with him.

So far, Dick had had no part in the struggle. It had all come about so suddenly that he had not even moved from where he was standing.

But now the third of the strangers took a hand. He was a tall, lean, leathery person, and Dick saw his hand move quickly to the pistol in his belt. At the same time he spun round and made a grab at Barry's collar.

"Let up, dern ye!" he growled. "Let up, or I'll blow yer head off!"

Dick woke up suddenly, and as if a spring had suddenly been released inside him, made a jump at Barry's aggressor. He had not the least idea of using his fists, and this perhaps was just as well, for if he had stopped to hit the man, the chances are that the latter would have seen what was coming and had time to shoot. What Dick actually did was to fling both arms round the other's waist, and swing him sideways.

There was a sharp crack as the pistol exploded harmlessly in mid-air; then, with an oath, the man turned on Dick, at the same time trying to bring his pistol hand down, with the evident intention of shooting him.

But Dick saw what was coming, and was able to forestall the manœuvre. During his month aboard the Rainbow he had grown uncommonly hard and tough, and in mere muscular power was quite fit to hold his own against most grown men. Also, he had the under grip.

Putting out all his strength, he swung his opponent round with all his might. He actually lifted him clean off his feet, and brought him down with such force that the man's arms flew out straight over his head and the pistol, flying from his open hand, went skating away across the deck.

For a second or two the fellow lay quite still. Dick thought he was knocked out, and relaxed his grip. It was a foolish move on his part, for next instant two long, lean arms were locked around his body, and he was dragged down on top of his adversary.

He struggled furiously, but his arms were pinned to his sides, and he could not free himself. For some moments the fight went on, then Dick, in spite of his efforts, found himself being slowly rolled over until presently it was he who was on his back, while the other was on top.

With a quick movement his enemy rose to his knees, at the same moment shifting his right hand and gripping Dick by the throat.

"I'll teach ye!" he growled. "I guess I'll give ye something to think about."

His long, lean fingers tightened on Dick's windpipe, and all Dick's struggles could not loosen the strangling grip. A mist rose before his eyes, his head felt as though it were bursting, and his body jerked convulsively. His sight and senses were leaving him, when something whizzed through

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the air, and he heard the thud of a blow. At the same moment the choking pressure on his throat relaxed, and his opponent fell limply on top of him.

"Just about time, too!" came Barry's voice. "Gosh, the kid's blue in the face!"

As he spoke, Barry seized the insensible form of Dick's antagonist, and flung him sideways on the deck. Then he gave Dick a hand, and helped him to his feet.

"Thanks!" gasped Dick, feeling his throat doubtfully.

Barry laughed grimly.

"Guess we're square," he said. "That blighter would have drilled me all right if you hadn't have collared him when you did. Well, we've made a clean job of it, anyways!"

Dick looked round.

Redstall lay, with his hands and feet tied, helpless but glaring up at Kempster. Barry's man was quite insensible, and bleeding like a pig. By the look of his face, it was Barry's fist that had done the job. The third man was also out of the running. The butt-end of a pistol applied by Barry's powerful arm to the back of his head had settled his hash—for the moment, at any rate.

Barry surveyed them with a grim smile.

"A sweet lot! Well, we'd best get them under hatches before they can make any more trouble. Chang, you come and give a hand!"

Kempster broke in.

"Throw the swine overboard!" he said, with a fierceness which was in curious contrast to his quiet demeanour during the last ten days.

"I've small doubt they deserve it," returned Barry; "but we'd better keep 'em. They may come in useful as hostages or something."

"We'll shove 'em down in the lazarette, Chang," he said to the Chinaman. "They'll be safe enough there."

"You'd best iron them," said Kempster sourly.

Barry nodded.

"You bet I will, captain. I'm not going to take any chances."

"Sharp, now!" he said to Chang. "There's weather coming!"

There was, and half an hour later the Rainbow, with three reefs in the mainsail, was plunging through a very ugly sea. Fortunately, the wind was from the right quarter, and before dinner-time the loom of land was seen against the dark horizon to the westward.

"There's Cristobal," said Barry to Dick, as the two stood side by side on the after-deck, holding tight to the rigging, while the spray beat over them like rain. "That's San Cristobal."

Dick stared eagerly at the ragged outline which rose indistinctly out of the stormy sea.

"Big mountains," he said. "Do you know I've never seen any mountains before?"

"Guess you'll see a deal else you haven't seen before," grinned Barry. "I once heard a parson in Sydney talk about 'the dark places of the earth,' and I'd a sort o' notion I'd like to show him the Solomons."

"I tell you, kid," he went on, with unusual seriousness, "this ain't no pleasure picnic ahead of us. We'll be mighty lucky if we all get out of it with whole skins!"

"I never thought it would be easy," Dick answered seriously. "B-but, do you know, I'm beginning not to mind fighting."

Barry burst into his great roar of laughter.

Dick stared at him in pained surprise.

"Kid, you'll be the death of me some of these days," said Barry at last. "Well, don't worry. You'll get your bellyful of fighting before we're through with this business. Now come below. I must have a squint at the chart. This ain't no coast to go running into blind with a gale like this behind us."

All that day and far into the night it blew hard, and Barry wisely refused to approach the land. Towards dawn the wind dropped, and the glass began to rise again.

Dick came up at four to relieve Barry, but Barry refused to go below.

"I guess I'll wait for dawn," he said, "and see where we are. There are two bays where we can anchor, but I don't want to go banging in on top of the Brant. I'd sooner Burke didn't know there was another ship about."

"But I thought that fellow Redstall said that the Brant was wrecked," answered Dick.

"She may be," said Barry cautiously. "On the other hand, she may be all right. It's no good trusting to anything a chap like that says."

"But if she's not wrecked, what were those men doing all that way out from land, and in that cranky canoe?" objected Dick.

"I'll allow that's a bit of a puzzle. But all sorts of things

might have happened. They may have run short of grub, and been cruising to see what they could pick up. They might have had a row with Burke, and been cut adrift. Or it's on the cards that the rest of the outfit might have been wiped out by the niggers, and these chaps got away."

Dick nodded.

"I wish we knew," he said thoughtfully. "It would make things a whole lot more simple."

"We've learnt something, anyway," Barry answered. "We know the Brant did come to the Solomons. Old Man Kempster was dead right about that."

"Dawn's breaking," he continued, cocking an eye at the eastern sky, where a pale yellow was dimming the stars. "I'll just wait till sun up, and get my bearings. Then I'll take a nap, and be up again to run her in."

"Oh, and see here, Dick!" he added. "I want you to take grub to those beggars in the lazarette. Fact is, I daren't trust the Chinks with them. They'd be trying to bribe 'em, and if the sweeps got loose again I wouldn't give a shark's tooth for the lives of the whole bunch of us. It was pure luck we got 'em under the first go off. If Redstall hadn't taken Kempster for his own ghost, we'd never have done it."

"All right, said Dick amiably. "I'll take them breakfast. I wonder if they'll try to bribe me?"

While they talked it grew rapidly lighter, and in a very few minutes the upper edge of the sun hove up above the sky-line, and, with tropical suddenness, it was broad day.

Barry stood with his glasses to his eyes, scanning the coast, which was about fifteen miles away.

"Keep her bows on that peak, Dick," he said briefly, "and don't hurry her. I want to get an hour's sleep before breakfast."

He went down, leaving Dick at the wheel. The breeze had fallen dead light, and the schooner crawled before it over the slow swells of last night's storm.

After a while Captain Kempster came up, and Dick, bethinking him of his promise to take breakfast to the prisoners, left him in charge and went below.

Chang loaded a tray with coffee, hard tack, and cold pork, and Dick carried it to the lazarette.

Redstall took his food in sullen silence. The red-haired man glared at Dick, and cursed him foully. This annoyed Dick.

"You'd better not talk like that!" he said sharply. "If you do you may find yourself without any food at all!"

The fellow subsided with a snarl, and Dick took his portion to the third man—the long, lean, leathery-faced person who had so nearly strangled him on the previous morning.

The latter looked hard at Dick, and something in his expression showed that he was anxious to speak, but apparently afraid to do so for fear of his companions overhearing.

Dick, interested to learn what the fellow was after, paused a moment on pretence of rearranging the things on the tray.

"Get me out of this," whispered the man. "I've got some news for your skipper."

Dick made no sign that he had even heard, but when he met Barry at breakfast in the cabin he told him what the prisoner had said.

Barry stopped, with his cup half-way to his mouth.

"For your skipper," he said, did he? Wonder if there's anything in it?"

"There couldn't be any harm in hearing what he's got to say," Dick answered.

"All right, lad. We'll have him out," said Barry, with sudden decision. "I'll fetch him myself. Then his pals won't smell a rat."

He went off, and came back in a few minutes with the man. In the bright light of the airy cabin the fellow looked dirty, yellow, and unkempt. He did not seem to have washed or shaved for a week. The leg-irons clanked as he shuffled into the room.

"Say, you've got a mighty nice cabin here," he remarked casually, as he glanced round. His voice was regular Down-East American.

Barry looked him straight in the face.

"You can stow that, or you won't decorate it much longer," he answered. "Mr. Damer here says you've got something to tell me. The sooner you get it off your chest the better for you."

"That's as may be, mister," returned the other. "It's a fact I've got something worth telling. But you ain't fool enough to reckon I'm going to give it away without something in return."

Barry's eyes gleamed. Dick saw the danger-signal, and hastened to interfere.

"Let's hear what he wants, Barry," he put in quickly.

Barry hesitated.

"Out with it, then!" he said harshly. "First, what's your name?"

"Barstow's my name—Benjamin Barstow," drawled the other. Scoundrel as he undoubtedly was, he had pluck, for

though he must have known that he was completely in Barry's power; he showed no sign of it. "And now, as I've introduced myself, I'll give ye some proof as I knows what I'm talking about. I'll tell ye this, mister—that you and your outfit are arter them pearls as Cap'n Burke took out o' Nameless Island."

"Any fool would know that!" snapped back Barry. "Your pal Redstall nearly had a fit when he saw Captain Kempster was still alive."

"I guess he did get a right smart shock," answered Barstow, unmoved. "The last time that he seed him no one would have took Kempster fer anything but a corpse."

"A corpse that you had had a hand in making!" growled Barry.

"No, sir; I didn't touch the man. But, say, we're a-getting right off of the subject. See here, you wants them pearls. I'm the man as can put ye in the way o' handling them, but before I does it I wants to know if you'll agree to my terms."

"I'll hear them," said Barry shortly.

Dick saw that the young skipper of the Rainbow was in a very ugly temper.

"Waal, in the first place, I don't want to go back in that there lazarette along with Redstall an' Dent. Second—he ticked his conditions off on his grimy fingers—"I wants your word as there won't be nothing said 'bout my being along with Burke in that there business at the island. Third, I wants a passage to Australia. Fourth, and last, I got to have my share of the pearls."

"Don't want much, do you?" retorted Barry. "A bullet through your head and a shark's belly for your coffin—that's more like what you're likely to get!"

Barstow shrugged his lean shoulders.

"You can shoot me if you've a mind to," he answered, "but you can't get them pearls without I help you. That's straight."

Barry glared at him.

"Why not?"

"Because Burke's hidden them on shore, and I'm the only man as knows where they are. That's why!"

The Gas-Plt.

Captain Kempster took his pipe from between his teeth, and stared gloomily at Barry and Dick.

"Mark my words, you'll be sorry you ever trusted that swine!"

"I don't see why," returned Barry impatiently. "It's all to his interest to play the game. The fellow's a knave, but he's not a fool; and, put it any way you like, he gets more out of us than he does out o' Burke. If he plays the fool—"

Barry's shrug said more than words.

"You can say what you like!" answered Kempster sourly. "Barstow's been in with Burke all these months past. If you knew Burke like I do, that would be enough for you."

He turned and stumped away without another word. Barry watched him.

"The old boy's a bit loony on the subject of Burke," he observed.

"You can't wonder," said Dick—"not after what he went through on the island."

"P'raps not. Anyway, I don't see what harm Barstow can do us, even if he wants to. And I don't see that he'll want to, either, for he'll get a good deal more out of us than he would from Burke."

"Anyways," he added doggedly, "I've fixed the thing up, and I'm going through with it."

"When are we going ashore?" asked Dick.

"To-night, I reckon. The sooner the better, for there's less chance of Burke's crowd being ready for us."

"But don't you think they must have seen us running in?"

"Barstow says no. This cove where the Brant's hung up is a long way up the bay, and they don't get no view of the sea."

"But Burke might have a look-out on top of one of the hills," suggested Dick.

"Ay, he might. But, anyhow, he don't know the Rainbow, and he wouldn't have any notion we were on his track."

"I suppose we've got to take Barstow with us?" said Dick.

Barry stared.

"What maggot have you got in your head? How d'ye think we're going to find the pearls unless he's along?"

"I—I thought he might have made a map or a plan for us," faltered Dick.

"Map!" jeered Barry. "I'd like to see you or anyone find their way through that bush with a map! See here, Dick, if you don't want to go, say so."

Dick flushed.

"I'm not afraid," he said quickly.

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EVERY
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ONE
PENNY.

"Maybe not. But this isn't no game for any chap that can't keep his head in a tight place."

"I'll do my best," said Dick humbly.

"Believe I'd better have asked the skipper to come along," growled Barry, and went off, leaving Dick to ponder uncomfortably over what was before him.

He had spoken truly enough when he said he was not afraid; but he pictured to himself the long crawl through the bush by night, and hoped and prayed that his nerves would be equal to it.

The Rainbow lay in a deep bay, with high cliffs on either hand. Inland, there was nothing to be seen but walls of impenetrable forest reaching away to the ranges inland. There was not a breath of wind, and the air was steamy and sodden with a damp, sickly heat. Worst of all, there was nothing to do during all the long hours before they started. For Barstow had advised, and Barry decided, that they were not to leave until after dark.

Dick was precious thankful when supper-time came. But it was not a particularly cheery meal, for Captain Kempster was grimly silent. He and Barry had very nearly quarrelled over the matter of bringing Barstow into the business.

Immediately afterwards, Barry took Dick into his own cabin.

"See here, kid," he said. "We're off right now. Chang and I are going to pull, for the job's got to be done quiet. You got to sit next Barstow in the stern. It's up to you to watch him. If the beggar plays the goat, hit him first, and talk afterwards. See?"

Dick nodded, and Barry handed him a heavy-butted revolver.

"Stick this in your pocket," he said, "and carry your rifle across your knees. But, mind this—don't shoot unless you've got to. One shot might bring the whole bunch about our ears."

Dick had never heard Barry speak so gravely, and it impressed him a good deal. In spite of his pluck, he was feeling horribly nervous when he took his seat in the boat. But his nervousness had nothing to do with Burke and his crew of pirates. It was sheer fright that he might make a fool of himself in Barry's eyes.

Barstow seemed the least concerned person in the boat as they pulled steadily up the long inlet.

"You can keep right along up the middle," he said to Barry. "There ain't no risk of Burke's folk hearing the oars for a good while yet."

"Where's the Brant?" asked Barry briefly.

"'Bout two miles further in. She lies in under the north shore. But there ain't no one aboard her."

"No one aboard her!" repeated Barry. "Why not?"

"Because she's hard an' fast on a reef. I told ye that."

"Yes, but you said she wasn't holed. What's the matter that they don't stay aboard her?"

"She's careened right over. That's what's the matter. Her decks is like the roof of a house."

"Then where's Burke?"

"Ashore. They've built brush huts up on the cliff. They only goes aboard the Brant to fetch off grub and such-like."

"Is the cache anywhere near the camp?"

"Not a great ways off. But I reckon we can fetch it without them a-seeing us."

"If we don't, so much the worse for them, and for you, too," answered Barry drily. And for some minutes the silence was broken only by the soft plash of the oars in the quiet surface of the inlet and the weird cry of some night-bird in the unseen forest on the cliff-tops. "How many has Burke got with him?" asked Barry presently.

"Six, I reckon. There's Pyke and Wigram and four niggers. The niggers are from the New Hebrides, and as ugly as they make 'em. Guess that's why Burke cached the pearls. Thought the blacks would cut his throat for 'em if he kept 'em in the camp."

"And how do you come to know where the cache is?" asked Barry sharply.

Barstow chuckled drily.

"I reckon Burke or anyone else 'ud have to rise mighty early in the morning to get ahead o' yours truly! I was a-laying out in the brush and watching him when he hid 'em."

"The wonder is that they're still there," retorted Barry.

Barstow did not seem to take offence; he only chuckled again.

"I could ha' took 'em all right," he said; "but what good was they to me when I couldn't get away with them? No, siree. Ben Barstow knows which side his bread is buttered, and don't you forget it! A fifth share o' them pearls and a safe passage to Sydney is worth more'n a million in gold coin, and nothin' but a savage Solomon forest to spend it in. Port—port your helm!" he broke off, speaking to

Dick, who was steering. "The Brant's around that next bend. My notion is to run up on a bit of a beach there is right near here, and then slip up through the woods to the cache."

A few minutes later the bow of the boat ran softly up on a sandy beach, and they all got out as quickly and quietly as possible.

Barry nipped Dick's arm.

"Remember what I told you," he muttered.

"All right," Dick whispered back, and set himself to follow Barstow.

Barry went first, Barstow second, then Dick close at his heels, and the big, silent Chinaman came last. All were armed, except, of course, Barstow.

Barstow seemed to know his way. He made along the beach a little way until they came to a stream, which rolled noisily down through a steep ravine which cut deep into the cliff. Here he turned to the right, keeping along the edge of the brook.

It was not dark. The stars were brilliant, and a pale silver light in the eastern sky showed that the moon was rising. After the intense heat of the day, the coolness of the gorge, moist with the spray of many little waterfalls, was most refreshing.

But Dick did not give a thought to his surroundings; all his energies were concentrated on Barstow. Although it was he himself who had been the first to suggest using Barstow's knowledge of the pearls, yet now he had an unpleasant suspicion that he had acted foolishly. He did not trust the man in the least, and his heart was beating unpleasantly fast as he marched along close at his heels, his rifle grasped very tightly in both hands.

There was no path, and the bush was so thick that they had to keep close along the edge of the brook, at times actually wading in the edges of shallow pools. Once some heavy animal crashed through the bushes on the right, and the sudden sound sent Dick's heart into his mouth. But no one spoke until at last they reached level ground and stood on the top of the cliff.

"We're right near the camp," said Barstow, in a low voice. "It's on a piece of open ground the other side o' the creek. Guess you folk had better walk mighty quiet if you don't want 'em to hear you."

"All right," said Barry briefly. "Go ahead!"

They kept on for a couple of hundred yards, then Barry pulled up.

"Why don't we see their fire?" he demanded.

"Guess the bush is too thick. Or mebbe it's out. Folk keep right early hours in this here island."

Barstow guided them along up the brook for another two or three hundred yards, then turned to the left.

"We kin cross here," he whispered.

They waded knee-deep through the top of a broad, shallow pool. On the far side the ground rose steeply. They had to snake their way through a mass of tangled vegetation which bordered the ravine.

Beyond were big trees, and the undergrowth was not so thick. Progress was less difficult, but it was up hill all the way.

The trees broke away, and the light grew stronger. The moon was now well up, and Dick saw that they were climbing the side of a rounded hill of curiously regular shape. It was exactly like a giant sugar-loaf.

The ground was all loose stone, with dense but low scrub growing among the boulders. They had to move very cautiously for fear of setting the stones rolling.

Barstow stopped.

"Guess we're there," he said, in a low voice. "Go careful, Mr. Freeland, or you'll be mighty apt to get a fall."

To Dick's astonishment, he found himself on the edge of a pit or rather bowl in the hillside. It was circular in shape, about a couple of hundred feet across and, in the middle, some thirty feet deep. The sides sloped down pretty steeply and were all of bare, blackish rock. So far as Dick could see, not so much as a blade of grass grew anywhere inside the pit.

"Rum-looking place!" muttered Barry. "Is this where Burke's stowed his loot?"

"This here's the place, mister," answered Barstow, "and I were lying behind that there rock"—pointing to a big boulder near by—"while I watched him hide 'em."

Barry grunted.

"Don't look much of a cache to me," he said. "Burke might have known someone was likely to be tracking him."

"He ain't such a fool as you thinks," returned Barstow. "He come up here by night, and afore he left camp he reckoned all of us white men was right sound asleep. As for the niggers, he wasn't afraid o' them. You couldn't pay a native to go near this place. It's what they call 'tabu,' and I reckon you might stow a case o' gin here and they wouldn't

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dare go after it. And you know as a nigger'll go through fire an' water for one bottle o' square face."

"Ay, that's true," answered Barry. "But we've no time to stand here yarning. Where's the cache?"

"The pearls are in a hole the far side," answered Barstow readily. "I guess I can take you plumb straight to the right spot."

Barry turned to Dick.

"You and Chang stay up here on the edge of the pit and keep watch. If you see anyone coming, chuck a pebble down. But don't call out or shoot. I'm going along with Barstow to fetch the pearls."

Dick nodded, and crouched down behind a boulder on the edge of the pit. Chang dropped behind another rock.

Barry whispered a moment to Barstow, and the latter at once climbed down over the rim of the pit. Barry followed close behind him.

In spite of the danger of their position, Dick felt a good deal relieved, for now it seemed clear that Barstow was not playing them false. He lay very still, watching Barry and Barstow climbing carefully down the steep, rocky side of the pit, and thrilling with excitement at the thought that in a few minutes he and his companions would be in possession of a treasure which would make them all rich men for life.

The two reached the bottom in safety. So far as Dick could see, the bottom of the pit was of smooth, dark-coloured rock, cut here and there with black lines which looked like deep cracks. It was not level, but sloped down to the centre. There was no sign of water in the pit.

Barstow walked first. Barry followed a yard or two behind. Barstow had gone perhaps six steps across the smooth rock when he stopped short and flung up his hands exactly as a man does when he is drowning.

He turned half round, and the moonlight fell upon his face, showing it strangely drawn and white. He staggered, a choking groan burst from his lips, then he toppled over, fell all in a heap, and lay very still.

For an instant Barry stood as if struck into stone. Then he stooped swiftly, and, seizing the other in his strong arms, began to lift him.

Began—but never finished. Next moment he, too, collapsed and fell across Barstow.

It had all happened so quickly that for the moment Dick could not believe his eyes. He thought he must be dreaming. But only for a moment. Then he was on his feet and had seized Chang by the arm.

"Come on! We must get them out!" he said sharply.

"Me no likum. Me tinkum debbil pit," answered Chang, and there was terror in his beady eyes.

But Dick, if he had not much practical experience of life, had learnt something from his reading. He had already realised what was the matter.

"Nonsense! It's not devils; it's only bad air. Tie something round your face, and come on. It's no worse than diving in the lagoon."

He gave Chang no time to think, but fairly dragged him over the side, and, to do Chang justice, once he had got over his first fright he did his duty well.

The loose stones rattled under their feet, but Dick could not help that. Speed was everything. If they did not get Barry out within two minutes at most it would be too late.

At the edge of the lower basin he stopped one instant and quickly tied his handkerchief over his mouth and nose. Chang followed his example.

"Cally Mistel Fleeland first," muttered Chang through his bandage, and together they made a rush and seized Barry.

Barry weighed a good twelve stone. It took them all their time to lift him. The fact that they had to hold their breath made it all the worse. But somehow they managed to drag him out of the pool of carbonic acid, which lay like water in the centre of the pit, and get him on to a ledge well above it.

Then they filled their lungs afresh, and went back for Barstow.

Barstow's face was the colour of lead. Dick thought he was dead. But they got him out and laid him alongside Barry.

"We no can cally lem up topside," said Chang.

"No; that's out of the question," answered Dick. "Chang, you take my hat, and go back to the brook and get it full of water. I'll work on them while you go. And keep an eye open for Burke's crowd."

Chang nodded and went off. He moved as silently as a cat.

Dick set to work on Barry. He knew that carbonic acid, which is the same as after-damp in a coal-mine, does not poison, but suffocates. He took it that the best thing to do was to use the same treatment as for the apparently drowned, so began to work Barry's arms as he had seen him do after he had pulled Captain Kemister out of the lagoon. As he



It was Barry who saved Kempster. Quick as a flash, Barry leaped in and caught the man's right wrist with his left hand, at the same moment driving in his right. (See page 23.)

worked he wondered how long it would be before Burke or some of his scoundrelly crew would arrive on the scene? And if they did, whether he had better start shooting, or hide, or what?

"Wal, I swow! So ye got us out!"

The voice gave Dick a most awful start. He fairly leaped round, to see Barstow sitting up and staring at him.

"Why—why, I thought you were dead!" he gasped out.

"Not this journey, I reckon," answered Barstow drily. "But I would have been right soon if ye'd left me down there. And to think I never guessed it was a gas-pit! That's sure one on me. How's Freeland?" he continued.

"I can't get him round," said Dick despairingly.

"Ain't ye got some water? That's what he needs."

"I've sent Chang for some."

The words were hardly out of his mouth before the Chinaman came into sight over the rim of the pit. He was carefully carrying Dick's broad-brimmed felt, from which water was dripping.

"Me tink dem pilates come," he announced calmly. "Me see lights in among dem tlees."

Dick gave a horrified exclamation.

"Sit tight, young feller," remarked Barstow. "Even if the Chink's right, they ain't seen us yet. And mebbe it was only one of 'em going down to the brook for water."

He took the hat from Chang, wetted a handkerchief, and began flipping Barry's face with it.

"Some gets gassed easier than others," he observed coolly. "But Freeland ain't dead by a long shot, and I guess he'll come round. You carry on slapping water in his face. I'll go along and lift them pearls. No reason why we shouldn't have 'em after taking all this trouble."

Next minute Barry gave a deep gasp. Then his eyes opened, and he stared round vaguely.

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"What's up? What's happened?" he muttered.

"You were gassed. The pit's volcanic—full of carbonic acid," explained Dick briefly. "Drink this."

He gave him the rest of the water in the hat, and Barry drained it.

Dick gave him a hand, and he scrambled to his feet.

All of a sudden he seemed to remember.

"Where's Barstow?" he rasped out.

"He went to get the pearls."

"You young idiot! You let him?"

"How could I help it?" retorted Dick. "I was looking after you. And there's no need to get excited. There he is."

He pointed as he spoke, and, sure enough, there was Barstow plainly visible at the opposite side of the pit.

As they watched he pulled out something which looked about the size of a pound bag of sugar, and quickly stowed it away in a pocket. Then he dragged out a second parcel, put it in another pocket, and began to climb straight up the steep side of the pit.

"He's got 'em! He's going off with them!" said Barry savagely. "I told you so!"

He started forward, plunging right down into the gas again.

Dick seized him by the collar and dragged him back.

Barry turned on him furiously.

"Let go, you fool, or I'll break your face in!"

Dick did not flinch; but Barry, what between the gas and the excitement, was beside himself.

He lifted his fist, and next moment Dick was flat on his back on the rocky ledge.

(Another magnificent instalment of this thrilling yarn next Monday. Make quite sure of getting your "MAGNET" by placing a regular weekly order to-day.)

NEXT
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"THE SCHOOLBOY LAWYER!"

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry
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The Editor is always pleased to hear from his chums, at home or abroad, and is only too willing to give his best advice to them if they are in difficulty or in trouble. . . . Whom to write to: Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

FOR NEXT MONDAY:

"THE SCHOOLBOY LAWYER!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.

OUR "MINIATURE NUMBER" COMPETITION.

The full list of prize-winners in the above competition, in which readers had to cut out and bind together certain midget pages of "The Boys' Friend,"

will be published in this Wednesday's issue of the "Gem" Library. All who competed should order a copy of our companion paper to-day.



Next Monday's grand story of Greyfriars sees Peter Todd, the champion of No. 7 Study, considerably in the limelight. Peter, having inherited a good deal of his father's knowledge of the law, comes up to the scratch in a most amazing manner. He succeeds in terrorising the unfortunate Bunter, who, "on the make" as usual, tries to raise money for an imaginary fund; and afterwards takes a rise out of a firm of rascally brokers, for endeavouring to turn a poor soldier's wife out of house and home. The victims of Peter Todd's shrewdness are baffled at every turn; and, distasteful though the admission is, they are compelled to agree that

"THE SCHOOLBOY LAWYER"

has come out "top dog"!

A CLEVER CANADIAN CHUM.

Inspired by the splendid Plan of Greyfriars School, which appeared in the Easter Double Number of the "Magnet," a reader, signing himself "British Columbian," set to work on a similar plan, greatly elaborated, and has been good enough to send me the result of his labours.

So well-drawn was the map my Canadian chum sent in that I feel it is "up to" me to acknowledge his splendid work on my Chat page. I marvelled first of all at the perfected state of "British Columbian's" plan; but he explains matters in his letter by saying, "I have for years been making maps of Greyfriars and district, improving each after reading the new 'Magnets,' and getting them to work into each other."

This is a glowing example of perseverance, and "British Columbian" may have the satisfaction of knowing that I have sent on his Plan of Greyfriars to Mr. Frank Richards, who has hung it up on the wall of the little study wherein the plots of countless "Magnet" stories have been ingeniously woven.

WHERE "THE PENNY POPULAR" SCORES.

There is no doubt that the principal reason for the astonishing success of our great companion paper, "The Penny Popular," is the fact that it possesses an equal fascination for readers of all tastes. Tastes vary so much that very few story-papers can hope to appeal to more than a certain section of readers, but this is where "The Penny Pop" scores. For lovers of school tales, it provides every week a grand complete story of Tom Merry & Co., who vie with Harry Wharton & Co. as being the most popular school-boy characters of the present day; for those to whom adventure stories make the strongest appeal, the great doings, at once exciting and amusing, of Jack, Sam, and Pete need no recommendation; while followers of the world-renowned detective, Sexton Blake, will find every Friday in the pages of "The Penny Pop" a magnificent, long, complete story, dealing with some of the famous crime-detector's most thrilling cases. These three stories go to make up a really fine feast of fiction, which no British boy should be without.

The wonderful way in which our companion paper has bounded ahead is sufficient evidence that my chums are quick to recognise that "The Penny Popular" contains the cream of the best stories every Friday. In the words of an enthusiastic reader: "To recommend 'The Penny Popular' to your friends is to show evidence of your good taste, and incidentally to do your friends a good turn."

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

"Two Girl Readers" (Mill Hill).—Very many thanks for your ripping letter.

"A Loyal Reader" (Newbury).—So you gave a boy a black eye who hinted that certain other boys' papers were superior to "The Magnet" Library? Well, "Loyal Reader," I admire your spirit, but you must curb your warlike impetuosity.

W. Wilcox (Rainford).—Sorry I have no space on this page in which to state a cure for the ailments you mention.

"A Well-wisher" (Westminster).—I will see what can be done in the matter you mention.

Jean McKinnon (Elgin).—Very many thanks for your fine letter of appreciation.

"Permanent Reader" (Shepherd's Bush).—There are plenty of cricket and football matches coming along.

"Mac" (Perthshire).—Glad your father is so taken up with the "Magnet." I am sorry I do not know of any club in your district.

"A Magnetite" (Kentish Town).—Many thanks for suggestion, which I will keep by me.

R. Jones (Liverpool).—Very pleased to hear from you, and to know that "The Magnet" Library ranks so high in your estimation.

D. M. (Glasgow).—Your excellent suggestions shall be borne in mind.

H. M. (Liverpool).—Your wish shall be realised shortly.

Jack Edwards (Hull).—Many thanks for pointing out error.

"Two Loyal Readers" (Tottenham).—It is difficult to say which is the best cricket eleven in the Greyfriars Remove. An almost unbeatable side would be: Wharton, Nugent, Cherry, Vernon-Smith, Field, Linley, Hurrec Singh, Bull, Peter Todd, Brown, and Bulstrode.

"Nick" (Glasgow).—Your suggestion, though good, is by no means a new one. It would be practically impossible to put it into effect during war-time.

"A Manchester Admirer."—Forty new readers in two weeks is indeed a record to be proud of. I congratulate you and your chum most heartily. The reformation of the character you mention is merely a "flash in the pan."

"Rowe" (Malvern, South Australia).—Very many thanks for your splendid letter. I don't think Frank Cleveland will ever be heard of again.

"A Regular Reader" (Southport).—Certainly the best way to learn shorthand is to attend a class. It is infinitely better than being self-taught.

William Samuel (Fife).—Thank you for your letter. The way in which you look after your invalid mother does you credit. If you are still bent on forming a "Magnet" League in your town, please write to me again, when I will insert an announcement to that effect.

Conny Little (Natal).—Very pleased to hear from you. I am sorry the boy you refer to is not in need of a correspondent.

The Editor



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