

PONSONBY'S PLOT!

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



BUNTER IN LUCK WITH BOUNDLESS TUCK

(An amusing incident in the grand tale of school life contained in this issue.)

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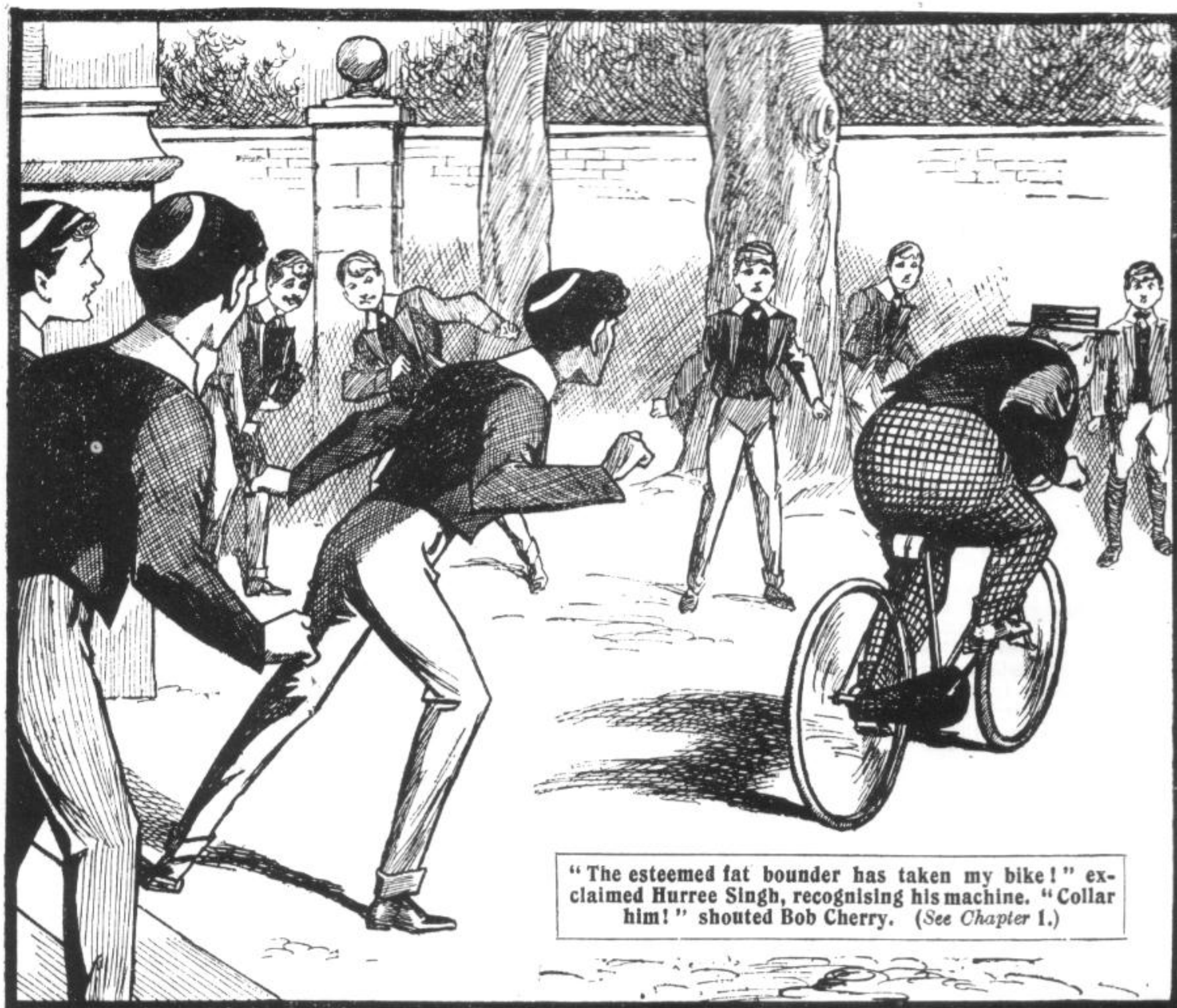


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PONSONBY'S PLOT!

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

By FRANK RICHARDS.



"The esteemed fat bounder has taken my bike!" exclaimed Hurree Singh, recognising his machine. "Collar him!" shouted Bob Cherry. (See Chapter 1.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Bunter Starts!

"QUELCHY wants you, Wharton!" Billy Bunter grinned cheerfully as he made that announcement. The fact that Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, wanted Wharton seemed to afford Billy Bunter considerable pleasure. But Harry Wharton did not look pleased. Harry Wharton & Co. were about to quit the School House. They were going over to Highcliffe to tea with their chums there. The Famous Five were all ready to

start, when Billy Bunter rolled up with the information that Mr. Quelch wanted Wharton. "Oh, blow!" said Bob Cherry crossly. "What is it now?" "Wharton's in for it!" said Bunter, with a grin. "Quelchy was looking rather waxy. You're to go to his study at once, Wharton!" Wharton frowned. The Co. had only left cricket practice in time to change and start for Highcliffe. At Highcliffe, Courtenay and De Courcy would be expecting them. And it was a very important visit they were about to make,

more important than a "common or garden" study tea-party. It concerned a cricket-match which was being arranged between the Greyfriars Remove and the Highcliffe juniors. For a long time the fixture had been dropped, owing to the extremely unsportsmanlike manners and customs of Ponsonby & Co. of Highcliffe. It was Frank Courtenay's idea to revive it, and the Greyfriars fellows had been willing to meet him half-way. The match was now as good as arranged, much to the exasperation of Ponsonby & Co., who would have done much to break off the friendly relations existing between Courtenay of Highcliffe and the chums of Greyfriars.

Wharton fixed his eyes on Billy Bunter angrily. Bunter chuckled.

"Serve you jolly well right!" he remarked, with undiminished cheerfulness. "Quelchy had his cane ready on the table, by the way. You're in for it! I dare say you'll be detained, too. He, he, he!"

"What the deuce is the matter?" said Johnny Bull. "What is Quelchy down on you for this time, Wharton?"

"Blessed if I know!" growled Wharton. "Unless there's been a complaint about my punching Ponsonby's head yesterday."

"Well, he asked for that!" said Nugent.

"Buzz off, and we'll wait for you!" said Bob Cherry. "Speak nicely to Quelchy, and stroke him down the right way. We've simply got to go over to Highcliffe this afternoon."

Wharton nodded and walked away:

"I say, you fellows," said Billy Bunter confidentially, "Wharton's in for it, you know. I'll tell you what. It's no good waiting for him. I'll come over to Highcliffe instead of him."

"Oh, cheese it!"

"I dare say Courtenay would rather see me, you know. I'm rather pally with him," said Bunter. "I think he must have mentioned me in the invitation, only Wharton's keeping it dark."

"Go and eat coke!"

"Let's get off before he comes back," urged Billy Bunter. "The beast won't let me come! I asked the beast, and the beast said no! He actually said that those chaps couldn't stand me, you know! I know De Courcy will expect to see me. I can take Wharton's bike——"

"You'll take my boot if you don't shut up!" growled Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Bob——"

"What the dickens does Quelchy want?" grunted Johnny Bull. "Why couldn't he leave it till we got back? These Form-masters are a bother!"

"They are, they is!" said Bob Cherry. "The worst of it is, that if that cad Ponsonby makes trouble, we mayn't be able to fix up the match with Courtenay. Pon would stop it if he could!"

The chums of the Remove waited anxiously for Wharton's return. They knew the unscrupulous Ponsonby only too well, and they knew he would leave no stone unturned to "muck-up" the renewed fixture. Since Courtenay had come to Highcliffe Ponsonby's star had been on the wane; and the fact that Courtenay had taken the lead in junior cricket there was another blow to Ponsonby's prestige. The fixture with Greyfriars was to be renewed, but Ponsonby & Co. were to be left out of it, and they were not likely to take that "lying down," if they could help it. Only the day before there had been a "scrap" with the nuts of Highcliffe, in which the nuts had been considerably worsted.

This sudden call of the captain of the Remove into Mr. Quelch's study looked as if trouble was brewing, and the Co. were uneasy. More than once they had had to confess that Ponsonby was too deep for them. They could not use the same weapons as the unscrupulous cad of Highcliffe. It would be bitterly exasperating if the match should be "mucked up" after all.

"I say, you fellows," urged Billy Bunter, "it's no good waiting, you know. Tea'll be spoiled. You know what ripping feeds that chap De Courcy stands! Let's get off; and if Wharton isn't detained, he can borrow a bike and come after us!"

"Dry up, you oyster!" roared Bob Cherry.

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE FELLOW WHO WON!"

"Oh, really, you know! Think of that ripping spread all ready, and—— Yaroo!"

Bob Cherry was not thinking of the feed in Courtenay's study at Highcliffe, but of more important things. And he was not in a mood to be bothered by the Owl of the Remove. He brought one of his large boots into play, and Billy Bunter scuttled down the passage and roared.

"Yah! Beast! I jolly well hope you'll all be detained! Beasts!"

And Bunter shook a fat fist at the Co. and disappeared.

He rolled out into the Close with a discontented frown upon his fat face. Billy Bunter was in a state not unusual to him—stony. And the thought of the handsome spread, which certainly awaited the Famous Five at Highcliffe, haunted his mind. Bunter could see no reason whatever why he shouldn't be one of the tea-party. It was true that he hadn't been asked, but, as he had explained to Wharton several times that day, Wharton could easily take him along as a friend. Wharton did not seem to see it somehow.

"Beasts!" murmured Billy Bunter morosely. "There'll be ham and eggs, and pie, and cake, and jam, and jellies! And those beasts want to leave me out of it! Actually want to leave me out of it, the ungrateful rotters, after all I've done for 'em! Well, I know I'm jolly well not going to be left out!"

Billy Bunter thought it out, and a fat grin overspread his face.

He started for the bike-shed.

A few minutes later he reappeared, wheeling Hurree Singh's machine along towards the gates. The four juniors, waiting in the doorway of the School House, spotted him, and there was a shout.

"Whose bike have you got there, you fat bounder?"

Bunter blinked at them.

"It's all right, Bob. I'm going to tell Courtenay that Wharton's been detained, and he'll come over later."

"What?"

"It's only the civil thing, you know. They'll be waiting for you, and you're late already."

"Why you—you——"

"It's all right. You wait for Wharton, and I'll explain to Courtenay," said Billy Bunter. "I don't mind taking the trouble. That's all right!"

"The esteemed fat bounder has taken my bike!" exclaimed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, recognising his machine.

"Collar him!" shouted Bob Cherry.

The four juniors rushed down the steps.

But Billy Bunter did not wait to be collared.

He clambered on the bike and pedalled down to the gates, and whirled out into the road before the sprinting juniors could get near him.

"Stop, you fat villain!" roared Bob Cherry, dashing out panting into the road.

Bunter did not stop. He was pedalling away for Highcliffe as if for his life. He had an excuse now for presenting himself there, and that was enough for him. The four Removites stared after him wrathfully as he vanished in a cloud of dust.

"The cheeky beast!" ejaculated Johnny Bull. "Why, we'll—we'll—we'll——" Words failed Johnny Bull. He could think of nothing quite severe enough to be inflicted upon Billy Bunter.

"You'll have to borrow a bike now, Inky," said Bob Cherry.

"The borrowfulness will be necessary, but the slaughterfulness of the disgusting Bunter will be terrific!" growled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

And the four juniors returned to the School House to wait for Harry Wharton, who had not yet come out of the Form-master's study.

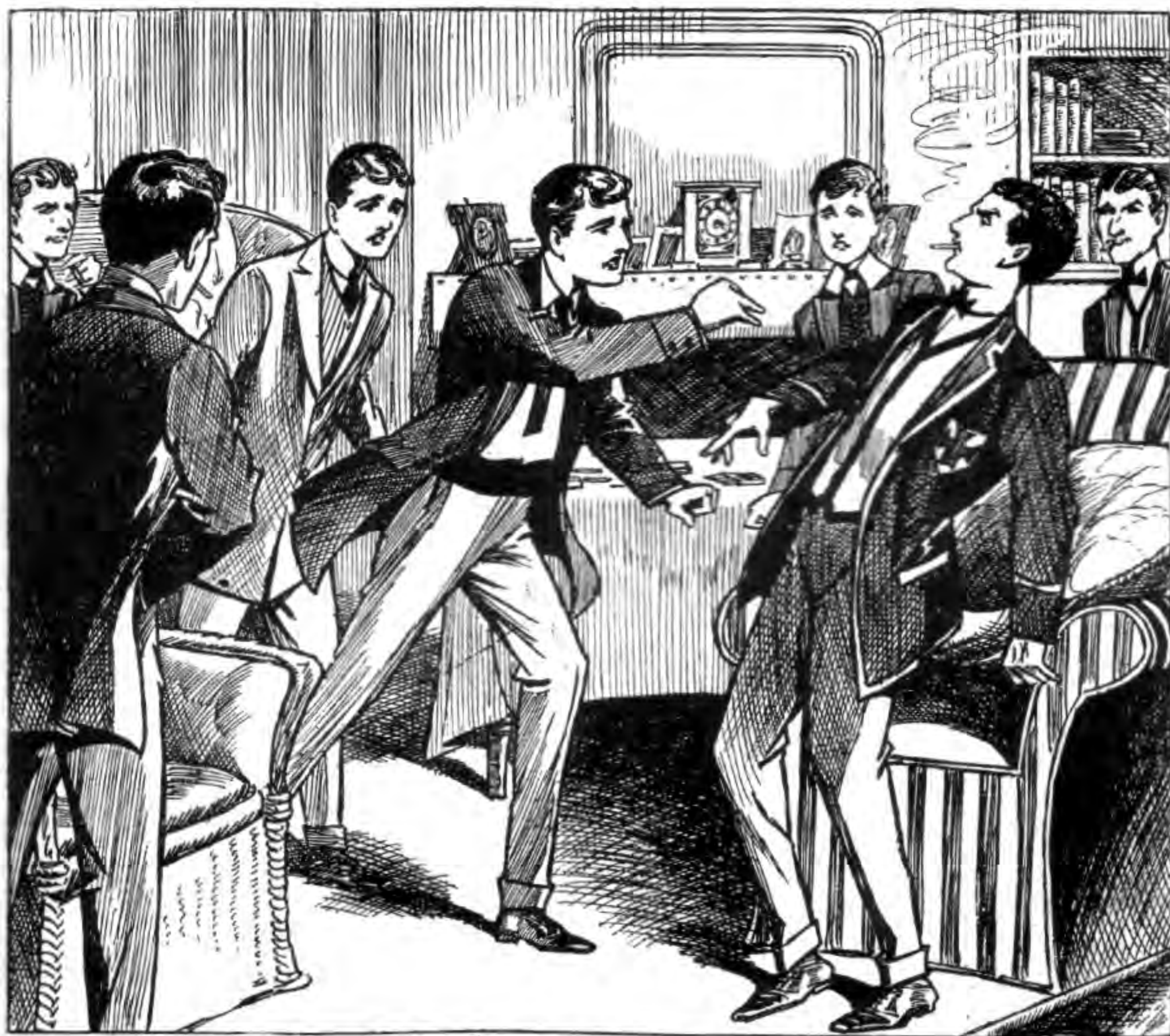
THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Told on the Telephone!

HARRY WHARTON entered Mr. Quelch's study with an uneasy brow.

It generally meant trouble of some sort when a junior was called into the Form-master's study, and Bunter's statement that Quelchy looked "waxy," and had his cane on the table, added to the junior's uneasiness.

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



Smack! Courtenay's open hand came across Ponsonby's face with a crack like a whip. The dandy of the Fourth staggered back and plumped into his chair. "Now will you put up your hands?" demanded Courtenay. (See Chapter 7.)

He had little doubt that Ponsonby of Highcliffe had been at work again, and that Mr. Quelch had received some complaint concerning the "scrap" of the previous day. In that scrap the Highcliffians had been the aggressors, but the Removites had certainly not been slow to take up the gauntlet. But it was quite probable that Ponsonby had induced his Form-master, Mr. Mobbs, to make a complaint; it had happened before.

Mr. Quelch was standing by the telephone in the study, and he looked round as Wharton came in.

"Ah, I sent for you, Wharton——"

"Yes, sir!"

"I have just received a telephone call from Highcliffe School."

Wharton compressed his lips.

"I expected that, sir. We don't consider that we were to blame. If Ponsonby were decent, he wouldn't drag his Form-master into a little row like that."

Mr. Quelch looked surprised.

"I do not understand you, Wharton."

"I suppose it's about the scrap yesterday, sir. You see, we're arranging to start the cricket fixture again with Highcliffe, and Ponsonby has cut up rusty. Courtenay is junior cricket captain over there now, and

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Ponsonby doesn't like it. We had a row yesterday—only a little scrap——"

"I was not aware of that, Wharton."

"Oh!"

"But I have told you, more than once, that I disapprove of these incessant troubles with the Highcliffe boys," said the Remove master, frowning.

"We're on good terms with most of them, sir, and we're arranging to start the cricket fixture again."

"I am glad to hear that. I am glad to say that I have received no complaint."

"Oh! I—I thought——"

Mr. Quelch concealed a smile.

"I have received a telephone call from Highcliffe," he said. "But it is not from Mr. Mobbs. It is from a boy named Courtenay."

"Oh!" said Wharton again. He realised that he had put his foot in it.

"Courtenay has asked permission to speak to you over the telephone," explained Mr. Quelch. "As he says that it is important, I shall allow him to do so. The telephone is at your service for a few minutes."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" said Harry. "We were just going over there. I suppose it's about the cricket match. Thank you very much, sir!"



Mr. Quelch nodded and quitted the study, and Wharton, greatly relieved in his mind, took up the receiver.

"Hallo! Is that you, Courtenay?"

"Yes," came the reply faintly on the wire. "Is that Wharton?"

"Yes."

"I don't quite recognise your voice."

"I don't recognise yours," said Harry. "We were just coming over."

"Yes, I thought I'd catch you before you started," came the reply. "Lucky I did, as it happens."

"Anything gone wrong?" asked Harry.

"Not exactly. You were coming over to talk about the cricket match?"

"Yes."

"Well, don't!"

"Eh?"

Harry Wharton almost dropped the receiver in his astonishment.

"Don't you understand me?"

"I understand what you said, of course, but——"

"The cricket match is off. We don't want the fixture."

"Oh!"

"You know that Ponsonby is my cousin, though we haven't been on good terms. Well, Pon's made it up with me, and the long and the short of it is, that I'm standing by him."

"Oh!"

"You pitched into him yesterday——"

"We had a scrap," said Wharton. "I don't think I need tell you that I didn't ask for it. I've tried to keep clear of Ponsonby because he's your cousin, Courtenay."

"You don't seem to have succeeded. Pon's got a swollen nose. The fact is, blood is thicker than water, and I can't pal with a chap who goes for my cousin. If you can't be friendly with Ponsonby, you can't be friendly with me."

Wharton's cheeks flushed with anger.

"I certainly cannot be friendly with Ponsonby," he said icily.

"Then you can leave me alone."

"I will, with pleasure," said Wharton angrily. "This is rather a new line for you to take, Courtenay, but I don't need telling twice."

"I'm sorry if I've hurt your feelings——"

"You needn't trouble."

"But I can't see that you had any right to pitch into Pon. He's my cousin, and my father wants me to be on good terms with him. I'm going to try it, anyway, and you Greyfriars fellows won't be allowed to make trouble. I'm putting it plainly; it's the best way."

"Quite the best," said Wharton, biting his lip.

"In fact, the less we see of each other the better."

"We shall certainly see nothing of each other after this. I think you are a cad!"

"What!"

"A cad, and a rotten outsider, to speak to me like this!" exclaimed Wharton, his eyes blazing over the receiver. "And I warn you that the next time I meet you I'll make you put up your hands!"

"Oh, I could lick you easy enough, if it came to that!"

"I'll give you the chance."

"If you mean that, Wharton, I've a good mind to come over to Greyfriars, and give you a hiding, just to teach you manners."

"You'll be welcome."

"Still, there's no need to row. I'm chummy with Ponsonby now, and I don't want to have anything more to do with you. That's final!"

"Why, you cad—are you there, Courtenay?"

There was no reply. The telephone was rung off. Wharton hung up the receiver, and quitted the study with his brows contracted, his face pale with anger.

His chums looked at him curiously as he joined them in the doorway.

"Not detained?" asked Bob.

"No."

"Licked?"

"No, no."

"What did Quelch want?"

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"Let's get off," said Frank Nugent. "You can tell us what Quelch wanted on the way."

"Hold on," said Harry. "We're not going!"

"Not going!" exclaimed all the juniors together.

"No!"

"But what—why——"

Wharton, his voice trembling with anger, explained. The Co. listened to him in utter amazement.

"Well," said Bob Cherry, with a deep breath, "that takes the cake, and no mistake! Who'd have thought Courtenay would turn out like that? That cad Ponsonby must have influenced him somehow."

"Influence or not, he had no right to act like that!" said Wharton savagely. "I'm done with him! The next time I meet him——" Wharton did not finish, but his look told volumes.

And his chums fully shared his feelings. They had felt very friendly towards Frank Courtenay; but friendship could hardly stand that strain. There was deep anger in their breasts.

Their feelings would have been very different if, at that moment, they could have seen Cecil Ponsonby, of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe. For Cecil Ponsonby had just stepped from a telephone-box in Courtfield, and joined his chums, Gadsby and Vavasour. And the three young rascals were chuckling gleefully over what they evidently considered an excellent joke.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Only Bunter!

"SISTER ANNE—Sister Anne!" yawned the Caterpillar.

De Courcy of the Fourth, otherwise known as the Caterpillar, was reclining in a very easy easy-chair, in No. 3 Study at Highcliffe. He had exerted himself for a whole week, to take part in the school sports, and now the reaction had set in, and the Caterpillar was as big a slacker as ever.

Frank Courtenay was standing at the study window, looking out over the quad.

The study table was white and shining with a spotless cloth and spotless crocks. The feed, on an unusual scale, was ready. Courtenay and the Caterpillar were ready. But the guests had not arrived, and they were late.

"Our energetic friends at Greyfriars are not quite so energetic as usual," the Caterpillar remarked, as Courtenay turned from the window. "They're keepin' us waitin', Franky."

"Oh, they'll come along soon!" said Courtenay.

"Here come some of the giddy guests, anyway," smiled the Caterpillar, as the study door opened.

It was Smithson of the Fourth who came in. Smithson was a member of the new junior eleven Frank Courtenay had formed at Highcliffe.

Smithson was in flannels, and his face was ruddy. Evidently he had just come in from the cricket field. The Caterpillar nodded to him with a lazy smile.

"Slacking, as usual!" said Smithson.

"Yaas," said the Caterpillar. "Have you been exertin' yourself, dear boy?"

"I've been at practice," said Smithson, "and it's a pity you haven't. It'd do you good!"

"I agree."

"What sort of a show are you going to make in the match if you don't do any practice, Caterpillar?" demanded Smithson, a little warmly.

"A pretty rotten show," he replied calmly. "You'd better speak to Franky. I've advised him, as a friend, to leave me out of the eleven. He won't listen to me. You try him, Smithy. With your well-known eloquence and power of expression you may succeed where I have failed."

"Oh, rats!" said Smithson.

"You're playing, Caterpillar," said Courtenay decidedly. "It's not easy to make up an eleven with Ponsonby and all his set standing out. The Shell fellows won't play for my team unless they have a Shell skipper, and they're such a set of duffers that that would be no good. You'll have to play, for want of a better man, anyway."

"Thanks!"
"Besides, you can play, if you choose to buck up!" said Courtenay. "I hope you won't let us down in the match."

"You always were a hopeful sort of chap, Franky," Pon and his lot are awfully down on the match," said Smithson. "Monson's been saying that they'll stop the game somehow."

Courtenay's eyes gleamed for a moment.

"Let them try!" he said.

"Yaas, let them try!" yawned the Caterpillar. "We'll strew the hungry churchyard with their bones, as somebody says. Was it Shakespeare or Milton, Franky?"

"Shakespeare, fathead!"

"Good! You'd hardly imagine how much solid knowledge I'm imbibing from Franky," said the Caterpillar in a confidential tone to Smithson. "He reeks with knowledge, and I pick up the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table, you know. Hallo! Here's another of our enterprisin' warriors."

Yates of the Fourth came in.

"Tea ready?" he inquired.

"Yes, but the visitors haven't arrived," said Courtenay.

"How are you gettin' on with the cricket, Yates?" asked the Caterpillar.

"Topping! I shouldn't wonder if we beat Greyfriars," said Yates. "Of course, it will be a pretty tough scrap, but we may do it. We shall have to go all out to win."

"My hat! What a pleasant prospect!" murmured the Caterpillar. "I can foresee myself bein' carried home on a stretcher."

Benson of the Fourth, another member of the new eleven, arrived. He had a ruddy flush in his cheeks. Courtenay's new recruits were keeping hard at practice, and Frank had communicated his own enthusiasm to all of the eleven, excepting his own special chum, the Caterpillar. It seemed impossible for the Caterpillar to enthuse over anything. The plentiful lack of enthusiasm on the part of De Courcy was a disappointment, but Courtenay had already learned to take his chum as he found him. The champion slacker of Highcliffe was not to be changed all at once.

"Goin' strong, Benson?" asked De Courcy sweetly.

"Yes, rather!" said Benson. "Why didn't you come down to practice, Caterpillar?"

"Too lazy."

"You jolly well wouldn't be in my team, if I were skipper!"

"How I wish you were skipper!" sighed the Caterpillar. "Franky, I suppose you don't feel inclined to resign in favour of our young friend here?"

"Rats!" said Courtenay.

He crossed to the window again, and looked out. Harry Wharton & Co. were very late, and as a rule they were quite punctual. A fat figure appeared at the gates of Highcliffe, wheeling a bicycle. Courtenay recognised William George Bunter, of the Greyfriars Remove.

"Bunter!" he exclaimed.

"They can't be comin'," said the Caterpillar. "In the wild delights of urgin' the flyin' ball they've forgotten all about poor little us."

"Perhaps the fat chap's got a message," said Courtenay.

Billy Bunter left his bike at the porter's lodge and came rolling across the quadrangle. Some Highcliffians in the quad called out to him impertinent queries about the price of lard and about the last time he had seen his knees. But Billy Bunter ambled on unheeding.

He was not there to exchange handinags with the nuts of Highcliffe. He was there for the feed in No. 3 study, and he headed directly for that apartment. He increased his speed as Gadsby and Drury came sprinting across the quad towards him with the evident intention of indulging in a little horseplay at his expense. He arrived at the door of No. 3 study in a breathless state, and banged on it and rolled in.

There he puffed for breath, and blinked at the Highcliffe juniors through his big glasses.

"Good afternoon," drawled the Caterpillar.

"Good afternoon, dear boys," said Bunter. "Here I am."

"Yaas, I see you are."

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ONE
PENNY.

"I've come with a message."

"Oh, good!"

"Wharton's been detained for a bit, and he'll be coming along later," said Bunter affably. "I thought I'd come on first and tell you, in case you were waiting tea for him."

"Awf'ly good of you!"

"Well, I'm a good-natured chap," said Bunter. "I'd do more than that for a pal. I know how a good feed spoils by waiting, you know. It's a sin and a shame to spoil a good feed."

"We'll wait," said Courtenay.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Wharton said specially you were not to wait," he said at once. "Quelchy has got his back up about something, and he's keeping him, you see. He mayn't be able to come over till quite late. He asked me specially to tell you not to wait."

"Oh!"

"Beastly hard cheese on Wharton," said the Caterpillar. "Get on with the washin', Franky. It's long past tea-time."

Courtenay nodded.

"I'm going back with Harry," said Bunter. "By the way, I haven't had my tea."

"You'd better have tea with us."

"Well, as you make such a point of it, Courtenay, I will."

Billy Bunter sat down. The Highcliffe cricketers were all hungry, and not disposed to wait any longer, so the feed started—minus the Famous Five of Greyfriars.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Tea in No. 3 Study!

BILLY BUNTER'S fat face beamed over the tea-table.

The spread was a very handsome one, and Billy Bunter was prepared to enjoy himself. And he did.

Courtenay and the rest of the party had keen appetites, from the exercise on the cricket field, but Billy Bunter's efforts very nearly equalled those of all the rest of the party put together.

Courtenay was a little worried. He wanted to see Wharton to fix up the final arrangements for the renewed cricket fixture. But there was no sign of the arrival of the Famous Five.

He glanced out of the window several times during tea, and observed Ponsonby and Gadsby and Vavasour come in, laughing among themselves. They caught sight of him at the study window, and laughed still more as they went into the house.

"Queer those fellows don't come!" remarked Smithson, at last.

"Yes; pass the cake," said Bunter. "I say, Clare—I mean Courtenay!—this is a jolly good cake. Do you mind if I finish it?"

"Not at all."

"I dare say Wharton won't come," said Bunter, with his mouth full. "You see, Quelchy was waxy. Very likely they're all detained, you know."

"Don't you know for certain whether he's detained?" asked Courtenay.

"How should I know?" said Bunter. "I expect he is, but I really didn't wait to see. I know Quelchy called him into his study. The telephone bell had just been ringing, I heard it in the passage. Has Mobby been ringing him up? I shouldn't wonder."

"Our Form-master, do you mean?"

"Yes; he's always complaining about something, you know. And I know Wharton was fighting with Ponsonby yesterday. Your cousin is a beast, Courtenay!"

"Oh!"

"The rotter was in Courtfield as I came through," said Bunter. "He threw a cabbage at me, and caught me in the back of the neck."

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from the Caterpillar.

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! I thought it was a dirty trick. I'd have got down and mopped up

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the ground with him, only I let him off, as—as he was Courtenay's cousin."

"Kind and forgivin' chap you are, Bunter!" said the Caterpillar.

"Well, I was always good-natured. Is there another cake?"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Smithson.

"Here you are, Bunter!"

"Thanks! If I had a cousin like that, Courtenay, I'd boil him! Jolly glad I'm not at Highcliffe! I couldn't stand the awful cads you've got here!"

"Oh, we can stand a cad, and keep polite all the time!" said the Caterpillar urbanely.

And Bunter wondered why the rest of the tea-party grinned.

"I'll tell you what," went on Bunter. "You fellows must come over and have a feed in my study, you know. If you're in want of an extra man for your eleven I don't mind playing for you. You'll find me first-rate either at batting or bowling, and there's few fellows like me in the field."

"None, I should say!" remarked the Caterpillar.

"I'm kept out of the Remove eleven by personal jealousy," explained Bunter. "You know how it is in cricket—no end of envy and jealousy. Fellows who want to cut a dash are afraid of being put in the shade by a really good player, and they combine to keep a really first-class cricketer out, you know."

"Hard lines!" murmured the Caterpillar.

"Oh, I'm used to it! But I'll tell you what—I'll play for you chaps, if you like, and help you lick the Remove. That'll give 'em a lesson. I play for the Form on special occasions when they can't do without me. Such as the Rookwood match. Any more tea in that pot, Frank? You don't mind if I call you Frank?"

"Lots!" said Courtenay.

Bunter guzzled a sixth cup of tea. He was looking very fat and shiny now. The rest of the party had finished, but there were still eatables on the table, so Bunter kept on. Bunter was very seldom finished so long as there was anything left to eat.

But even Billy Bunter was finished at last. He cast a regretful glance over the table, where cakes and jellies and candied fruits still remained. But Bunter had reached the end of his resources, and he could not hold any more.

He rose, with a sigh.

"Well, those fellows don't seem to be coming," he remarked. "Not much good my waiting here for them, is it?"

"Not at all," said the Caterpillar.

"Tell them we're sorry they couldn't come," said Courtenay, "and mention to Wharton that I'll bike over after lessons to-morrow and see him."

"Certainly! I hope you'll stay to tea in my study," said Bunter. "You can depend on us looking after you; we're famous for hospitality in No. 7. I say, you fellows, you may as well trot down to the gates with me. That beast Gadsby is waiting in the quad for me, I believe."

Courtenay and the Caterpillar walked down to the gates with their guest. Ponsonby & Co. were hanging about the gates in great force; all the nuts of the Fourth were there. They were evidently waiting for Billy Bunter to depart, intending to have a little fun with the Owl of the Remove.

"Hallo! Here's the prize porpoise!" said Ponsonby.

"I say, you fellows——"

Courtenay and the Caterpillar had Bunter between them, and, on second thoughts, the nuts decided not to have that little fun. Courtenay was too hard a hitter for their taste, and the Caterpillar, in spite of his slack ways, was a dangerous customer in a tussle. Ponsonby & Co. strolled away, grinning, and Bunter wheeled out the bicycle.

"Good-bye, you chaps!" he said. "I'll come and see you again soon."

"Will you, by gad?" ejaculated the Caterpillar.

"Yes, certainly! You can rely on me. Ta-ta!"

Billy Bunter pedalled away.

He did not feel much inclined for pedalling after the tremendous feed he had disposed of in Courtenay's study, but he was very glad that he hadn't to walk. But before he had covered much ground he discovered that the

tyres were flat, and he jumped off the bumping machine in dismay.

"Flat as blessed pancakes!" he growled. "Rotten tyres, I suppose! That silly ass Inky ought to have more sense! Oh, my hat, those beasts have punctured the tyres on purpose!"

Billy Bunter shook a fat fist in the direction of Highcliffe. He could see now that pin-holes had been made in the tyres; it was just one of Ponsonby's little jokes. The tyres were flat, and Bunter had about half a dozen punctures to mend before he could inflate them again. Billy Bunter had no intention of mending punctures. He grunted wrathfully, and started walking and wheeling the bike.

He had more than a mile still to go, and it was billy. Wheeling a bike with flat tyres was hard work—at least, Bunter found it so. Fortunately, it was not his own bike, so he had a free hand in dealing with it. After wheeling it about a hundred yards he paused to gasp for breath, and leaned the machine against a signpost at a corner in the lane.

"They can't expect me to wheel that dashed thing all the way home," grunted the Owl of the Remove. "That would be rather thick. After all, Inky didn't want to lend me the rotten thing, so I don't see why I should look after it. One of those beasts can come out on a bike and fetch it in. Blow it!"

And, leaving the bike leaning against the post, the Owl of the Remove tramped on for Greyfriars, puffing and blowing all the way.

He reached the school gates just as Gosling was coming out to lock the gates. He found five juniors in the gateway, apparently waiting for him.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he is!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Collar the rotter!"

"Where is my esteemed bike, you ludicrous owl?"

"Here, I say, you fellows——" roared Bunter. "Leggo! I've got a message—— Yaroooh! Leggo my ears, Bob Cherry! You beast! Yah! Oh!"

Bump!

Billy Bunter descended on the ground with a heavy concussion, and the roar that proceeded from Billy Bunter could have been heard over the length and breadth of the Close.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter is Useful for Once!

"BUMP him!"

"Yaroooh!"

"Where's the bike, you fat bounder?"

"Yow-ow!"

"Give him another!"

"Yoooooop!"

Billy Bunter made a desperate bound, and escaped from the grasp of the justly-incensed Removites, and bolted for the School House.

"After him!" yelled Bob Cherry.

The Famous Five rushed in pursuit.

Billy Bunter was not good at sprinting, as a rule; but circumstances alter cases. On this occasion he created a record. With five avengers hot on his track, he put up a speed that was really surprising. He bolted into the School House, and bumped Lord Mauleverer, and sent him staggering, and streaked for the stairs. On the stairs he charged into Fisher T. Fish without seeing him, and the Yankee junior sprawled on the stairs, roaring. Bunter did not stop to see whether Fishy was hurt. Perhaps he knew he was. He rushed on for the Remove passage, and bolted into No. 7 Study, his own quarters.

Peter and Alonzo Todd and Tom Dutton, Bunter's study-mates, were there. They stared at Bunter as he slammed the door shut and fumbled for the key.

"What are you up to?" demanded Peter Todd.

"Gooooooh!"

"You appear in quite a breathless state, my dear Bunter," said Alonzo, in his gentle voice.

"Wow!"

"What are you locking the door for?" demanded Tom Dutton, the deaf junior.

"Those rotters are after me, you ass!" gasped Bunter. "I've got to keep them out!"

"Eh?"

"I'm locking those beasts out!"

"Who's a lout?" exclaimed Dutton, jumping up. "You cheeky worm!"

"Oh, you deaf image!" gasped Bunter, dodging behind Peter Todd. "Keep the silly idiot off, Peter, old chap. Yell at him and explain!"

"I'm not a megaphone," said Peter Todd. "Do your own yelling!"

There was a tramp of feet in the passage.

"Don't unlock that door, Peter!" yelled Bunter, as Todd put his hand on the key. "Keep 'em out, you fathead!"

Peter calmly unlocked the door and threw it open. Harry Wharton & Co. came in, breathless.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Run to his giddy lair!" said Bob Cherry.

"I say, Toddy——"

"Where is Inky's bike?" demanded Wharton.

"That's all right," said Bunter, dodging round the table. "I've left it where you can easily find it. Those Highcliffe cads punctured it, and I couldn't ride it home, so I left it in the lane."

"You left my esteemed jigger in the lane!" yelled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Yes. You can easily go and fetch it in, you know. It's in Highcliffe Lane, just the other side of Courtfield."

The Famous Five stared at Bunter almost speechlessly. The Owl of the Remove was famous for his cheek, but leaving a borrowed bike in the road more than a mile from home seemed to them the limit.

"Inky shouldn't have lent him the bike," said Peter Todd. "You ought to have had more sense, Inky."

"But there was no lendfulness!" shrieked the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The esteemed and ridiculous Bunter takefully collared the bike without my august permission!"

"Oh, really, Inky——"

"Hands off!" said Peter Todd. "You're not going to wallop my prize idiot in my study. Hand me a cricket-stump."

"Oh, really, Toddy——"

"Yank him across the table," said Peter.

"Yaroo! Leggo! Look here, I've got a message from those chaps at Highcliffe, and I jolly well won't give it to you!" howled Bunter.

"You can keep it!" said Wharton. "We don't want their messages. Do you mean to say that you've visited them?"

"Of course I have. Didn't I go over to take your message?" demanded Bunter, in an injured tone.

"My message!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Yes, I explained how you were detained——"

"You fat duffer, I wasn't detained!"

"Then why didn't you come?" demanded Bunter. "My pal Franky was expecting you, and he was disappointed. Put that stump away, Toddy, you beast. I don't mind going and fetching the bike."

"Hold on, Todd," said Wharton. "Let's hear what the fat beast has to say. Did they feed you at Highcliffe, Bunter?"

"Yes, rather; made no end of a fuss of me," said Bunter. "You should have seen how pleased they looked when I came in. They didn't really miss you fellows, as I was there."

"They were civil to you?"

"Of course they were; they were jolly glad to see me. I can tell you. I'm awfully chummy with the Caterpillar. You see, we've both got a lot of titled relations, and that——"

"Cheese it! Now, tell me the truth if you can; you said just now that Courtenay was expecting us?"

"He couldn't have been," said Bob Cherry.

"Well, he was," said Bunter. "Of course he was."

"What message did he give you?"

"I'm not going to tell you unless you make it pax. If you're going to make a fuss over Inky's rotten bike you can jolly well find out."

"Oh, squash him!" said Johnny Bull.

Wharton wrinkled his brows in troubled thought. Since receiving that strange message on the telephone he had had no doubts. But Bunter's statement had raised strange and troubling doubts in his mind.

How could Courtenay have been expecting him to tea after what he had said on the telephone?

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For the first time a suspicion came into Wharton's mind that there might have been trickery in the matter.

"Order, you chaps!" he said. "We want to get to the bottom of this. That fat-headed duffer may have been useful for once, without intending it. It's all right, Bunter; it's pax."

"But my esteemed jigger——"

"Never mind the jigger now, Inky. We can get a pass out from Wingate, and fetch it in. Look here, Bunter, you say that Courtenay was expecting us to tea?"

"Yes."

"Did he say so?"

"Yes."

"And what was his message?"

"It's pax?" said Bunter suspiciously.

"Yes, you owl!"

"And you don't want me to fetch in that rotten bike?"

"No, no! Give me Courtenay's message."

"Well, he said he was sorry you hadn't been able to come——"

"My hat!" ejaculated Nugent.

"And he said he would bike over after lessons to-morrow to see you," said Bunter. "I've asked him to tea in this study."

"He's coming over to-morrow to see us!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Yes; and I've asked him to tea, and if my postal-order doesn't come in time I hope some of you will have the decency to make me a small loan."

"Well, my only chapeau!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "This beats the band! I—I suppose you're quite sure it was Courtenay who 'phoned you, Wharton?"

"I—I suppose it was. But—but he couldn't have expected us to tea after what he 'phoned to me," said Wharton, with a perplexed look. "Did Courtenay mention having sent me a telephone message, Bunter?"

"No."

The Famous Five were puzzled, and Peter Todd equally so. There was evidently a mystery in the matter.

"Better see about the bike," said Wharton shortly. And the chums of the Remove quitted the study.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Well?"

"Those two chaps are coming over to-morrow, you know, and I've asked them to tea. I'm expecting a postal-order to-morrow!"

"Oh, scat!"

"Look here, if my postal-order doesn't come, I shall expect you——"

Slam!

The abrupt closing of the study door cut short Billy Bunter's statement of his expectations. Harry Wharton & Co. held a perplexed consultation in No. 1 Study. Courtenay was coming over to see them on the morrow, just as if nothing had happened.

"Blessed if I can make it out!" said Wharton at last. "I had made up my mind next time I saw Courtenay to——"

"Better unmake it!" grinned Bob Cherry. "There must be a trick somewhere. Better give Courtenay a chance to explain, anyway."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"It was pretty thick—that message on the telephone," said Frank Nugent. "But—but if it wasn't Courtenay after all——"

"Phew!"

"You're not sure you knew his voice?" said Johnny Bull.

"Well, no. But you often don't recognise voices on the telephone," said Wharton. "It was something like his voice, that's all."

"Ponsonby's his cousin, and their voices are a bit alike," said Bob Cherry.

Wharton set his teeth.

"Would even Ponsonby play such a rotten, dirty trick as that?"

"Bet you he would," said Johnny Bull. "It's just in his line. Anyway, the verdict at present is 'not proven,' and we'll wait till we hear what Courtenay has to say."

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And—and if it turns out that it's a frick, it's a jolly lucky thing Bunter went over there, the fat beast! Otherwise poor old Courtenay would have got a surprising reception when he got here to-morrow.

"I—I should have thought he came over to look for trouble after what he said on the telephone," said Wharton, "and—and I should have——"

"No good thinking about it," said Bob. "Let's get a pass out, and look after Inky's bike."

Wingate of the Sixth gave a pass for two, and Wharton and Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh fetched in the derelict bicycle. It was with a strange mingling of feelings that the chums of the Remove looked forward to Courtenay's visit on the morrow. Was he coming for peace or war? That was the question to which at present they could not find an answer.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Peace or War?

FRANK COURTENAY jumped off his machine at the gates of Greyfriars, and wheeled it in. He left his machine with Gosling, and walked across the Close to the School House.

Afternoon lessons were over at Greyfriars, and there were a good many fellows in the Close, and many of them nodded cordially to the Highcliffe junior.

Since Courtenay had come to Highcliffe, and had become the leader of the Fourth Form there, relations had been much more amicable between the two schools. Ponsonby & Co. were as much "up against" Greyfriars as ever, but they counted for very much less since the advent of Courtenay. Courtenay had not forgotten how, when he first came to Highcliffe, a scholarship boy, poor and without even a name, he had found friends at Greyfriars, while at his own school hardly a fellow had cared to speak to him. Prosperity had come into his life since then, but he had not forgotten the earlier hard days.

Courtenay glanced round as he crossed the Close, but he did not see any of the Famous Five there. He noted that Tom Brown, and Vernon-Smith, and Bulstrode, and Squiff, and several other fellows looked at him rather curiously as they nodded to him. They knew about the telephone message, but they also knew of the message brought by Billy Bunter, and, like the Famous Five, they did not know what to make of it.

The Highcliffe junior paused to speak to Vernon-Smith. The Bounder of Greyfriars gave him a very queer look.

"The fellows in the study?" asked Courtenay.

"I believe so, waiting for you," said Vernon-Smith.

"You've come over to see Wharton?"

"Yes, about the cricket."

"About the cricket!" repeated the Bounder, in so curious a tone that Courtenay looked at him in surprise.

"Yes; he was coming to see me yesterday, and was detained or something," said Courtenay. "So I've come over."

"Oh!"

"I suppose Bunter gave you my message?"

"Yes."

"Then he's expecting me," said Courtenay, still more surprised at the Bounder's dry manner.

"Oh, he's expecting you right enough," said Vernon-Smith. "So you're still thinking about the cricket-match?"

"Of course. Why not?"

"Well, you'll find 'em in the study," said the Bounder, without replying to Courtenay's question; and the Highcliffe junior, much astonished, went into the house.

"Oh, here you are!" exclaimed Billy Bunter, meeting him in the passage. "How do you do, old chap? Where's the Caterpillar?"

"He hasn't come over."

"Never mind. You'll come to tea in my study," said Bunter. "I say, Courtenay, don't hurry away while I'm talking to you! Blessed if he hasn't gone! Rotter!"

Courtenay hurried up the stairs to the Remove passage. He was very much puzzled, and he wanted to get to the bottom of it. Bolsover major met him at the head of the stairs, and stared at him rudely.

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"So you've got the cheek to come here!" he exclaimed. Courtenay coloured.

"I've come here, certainly," he said. "What do you mean?"

"Well, of all the nerve! Is it to be with or without gloves?"

"Eh?"

"I think Wharton could lick you," said Bolsover major, eyeing him critically. "But if Wharton couldn't, I could, and jolly easy! Still, if you've come for Wharton, I won't chip in."

"I don't quite understand you."

"Bow-wow!"

"If you have any idea that I've come to quarrel with Wharton, you're quite on the wrong tack," said Courtenay. "I've come to talk about the cricket-match."

"That's off."

"I'll take that from Wharton, not from you!" said Courtenay drily.

"Look here——" began Bolsover.

Courtenay strode on to No. 1 Study, and knocked at the door.

"Come in!"

The Highcliffe junior entered. There were a good many fellows in the study—the Famous Five, and Peter Todd, were all there, and Squiff and the Bounder followed Courtenay in. The Greyfriars fellows were all looking extremely grave. Courtenay gave them a pleasant nod, astonished by the frigidity of their manner.

"Anything wrong?" he asked at once.

"Ahem!"

"Bunter give you my mesage, Wharton?"

"Yes."

Courtenay paused. It was not difficult for him to see that something was wrong, though he could not guess what it was. He was surprised, and he was getting a little angry. The last time he had seen the Greyfriars chums they had parted on the best of terms, and this kind of reception was far from pleasing.

"Excuse me, if I speak out quite plainly," said Courtenay bluntly. "I can see there's something up. If I'm not welcome here I'm ready to clear off. You've only got to say the word."

"Better have it out, Harry," said Bob Cherry.

Wharton nodded.

"I want to ask you a question first, Courtenay," he said.

"Go ahead!"

"You telephoned to me yesterday?"

"I did?"

"I'm asking you if you did."

"Well, I did not."

Every fellow in the study drew a deep breath of relief. The wonder in Courtenay's face was convincing. From whosoever the telephone message had come, it had not come from Frank Courtenay.

"You didn't?" exclaimed Wharton.

"No."

"Good!"

"But I don't understand," said Courtenay. "If somebody telephoned to you, you'd know whether it was I or not."

"He gave your name."

"My name?"

"Yes."

"You mean that somebody telephoned to you, and gave my name?" ejaculated Courtenay. "Somebody used my name, and you thought it was I?"

"That's it."

"And I'm jolly glad to find that it wasn't you, kid," said Bob Cherry, in great relief. "It was a caddish trick of somebody."

Courtenay's eyes glinted.

"You mean that somebody telephoned in a way to cause trouble?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Well, I did not telephone. I did not even know you fellows could be telephoned to from Highcliffe."

"It's Quelchy's telephone," explained Wharton. "Somebody rang him up, saying that he had something important to say to me, so Quelchy called me into his



"Yow-ow-ow!" roared Bunter, as the whip curled round his fat legs. "Yarooop! Oh! Ah! Beast! Stoppit! Help!" "Ha, ha, ha! Go it! Give him the whip-round!" shrieked Squiff. (See Chapter 8.)

study just before we were starting out. He gave your name on the 'phone, and gave me a talking-to—jolly insulting, as a matter of fact."

Courtenay crimsoned.

"Then you might have guessed that I was not speaking," he said.

"Well, I might, only—only he put it to me so cunningly, the rotter!" said Wharton. "I'm sorry; but I didn't guess. That's why we didn't come over. You—I mean the fellow who was speaking—told us not to."

"Then it must have been Ponsonby, or one of his set," said Courtenay. "It was a trick to muck up the cricket fixture."

"I suppose it was, now!"

"You didn't recognise the voice?"

"No. But it was something like yours. I thought the telephone accounted for the difference."

"The cad!" said Courtenay. "Now I know what he was chuckling for when he came in yesterday. It was Ponsonby, of course."

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"I suppose it was. But—but he put it very cleverly."

"Tell me what he said!"

Wharton explained almost word for word what he had said on the telephone.

Courtenay listened with his eyes gleaming and his hands clenched.

"I don't think I need tell you again that this is the first I've heard of it," he said, when the captain of the Remove had finished. "So—so if Bunter hadn't happened to come over, and bring you my message back, you'd have thought I was here to-day to pick a quarrel!"

"I—I suppose so."

"That was the rotter's game," said Squiff. "If you'd started with a row, there'd have been no chance of an explanation."

"Jolly lucky it's been cleared up," said Wharton. "I'm sorry I thought it was you, Courtenay, but—but I never suspected anything. I couldn't, you see."

Courtenay nodded.

"That's all right. You couldn't help being taken in."

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But I'll settle with that cad. He won't telephone in my name again in a hurry."

"You're staying to tea!" exclaimed Bob, as the Highcliffe junior turned to the door.

"No, thanks! I'm in rather a hurry."

"Hold on!" exclaimed Bob. "I don't think you ought to blame us for being taken in by a trick like that, Courtenay. But, if you like, we'll apologise. We really ought to have known you better. No need to get your back up."

"It isn't that," said Courtenay. "It's all right; I don't blame you. I'll come over to-morrow to talk about cricket, if you like. But I'm really in a hurry now. I want to see Ponsonby."

"Oh, I savvy! Right-ho!"

Courtenay hurried from the study. From the window the juniors saw him crossing the Close with rapid strides. He rushed his bicycle out of the gates.

Bob Cherry whistled softly.

"I don't think I should like to be in Ponsonby's shoes when Courtenay gets back to Highcliffe," he murmured.

And the Co. agreed with Bob. Judging by the expression on Courtenay's face when he left, and the glint in his eyes, the cad of Highcliffe was booked for a high old time.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Called to Account!

"CATERPILLAR!"

De Courcy uncrossed his legs and rose as Courtenay came into No. 3 Study at Highcliffe. He looked curiously at his chum. Frank Courtenay's face was flushed, and he was breathing hard.

"You're soon back," said De Courcy. "I wasn't expectin' you yet."

"Come with me, Caterpillar."

"Certainly. Where?"

"I'm going to see Ponsonby."

The Caterpillar whistled softly.

"A nice, friendly visit to your dear cousin?" he asked.

"Wait a minute while I put some bear's-grease on my hair, Franky."

"Don't be an ass, Caterpillar! Come along!"

"Anythin' happened?"

"Yes."

Courtenay made no further explanation, and the Caterpillar did not ask any more questions. He smiled, and followed his chum from the study. They arrived at the door of Ponsonby's study, where merry voices could be heard. Ponsonby & Co. seemed to be in great spirits.

Courtenay threw the door open.

There was a cloud of cigarette smoke in the room. Ponsonby and Gadsby and Monson and Vavasour were there, smoking cigarettes. Ponsonby looked round without rising, and took the cigarette lazily from his lips.

"Don't trouble to knock before you come in," he said sarcastically. "Did they ever tap at the door in the slum you were brought up in, Clare?"

The nuts grinned.

Courtenay strode into the study, and the Caterpillar lounged in after him. The Caterpillar was smiling quietly. He could see that his chum was furious, though he did not know the cause, and it amused the lazy Caterpillar. He never had sufficient energy to get into a fury himself. But, without knowing in the least what was the matter, he was prepared to back up his study-mate through thick and thin. That was his way.

"I want a word with you, Ponsonby," said Courtenay, between his teeth.

Ponsonby blew out a little cloud of smoke.

"Go ahead!" he said. "Any number of words you like, Clare—I mean Courtenay—so long as they are suited for my young ears. I object, of course, to the kind of language you learned in your slum."

"He, he, he!" cackled Vavasour.

"You telephoned to Harry Wharton yesterday, Ponsonby?"

"Did I?" said Ponsonby reflectively.

"Yes, and in my name."

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The nuts exchanged startled glances. The little plot had evidently come to light. They did not know how. They understood now why Courtenay was there. But Ponsonby was quite cool. His scheme of causing trouble between Courtenay and his friends at Greyfriars seemed to have failed, and now he was to be called upon to answer for it; but his cool insolence was not diminished in the least. It would have been difficult to bring the blush of shame to the cheek of Cecil Ponsonby.

"You hear me?" rapped out Courtenay, as Ponsonby appeared to be devoting all his attention to his cigarette.

"Yaas," said Ponsonby drawlingly. "I cannot help hearing you, my dear fellow, when you shout. They did not teach you to subdue your voice in your slum, I suppose?"

"You used my name."

"Your name?" said Ponsonby thoughtfully. "Let me see? Which name do you mean?"

Courtenay clenched his hands hard, and the nuts broke out into an irresistible chuckle. They had not forgotten that Courtenay had once been a boy without a name, till he had found his father in Major Courtenay, Ponsonby's uncle. It pleased the superb Ponsonby to affect a doubt on that subject. He was determined still to regard Frank Courtenay as Arthur Clare, the scholarship boy who had not known who his father was.

"Which name?" repeated Ponsonby. "I'm really rather in the dark as to what name you are entitled to, y'know. Your name may be Smith or Jones or Robinson, for all I know."

"You telephoned to Wharton, using the name of Frank Courtenay."

"Courtenay is one of our family names," said Ponsonby. "I've got an uncle of that name."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the nuts. Ponsonby's uncle of that name was Courtenay's father, the major.

"By gad!" remarked the Caterpillar. "You are in great form this afternoon, Pon. I never knew you were such a funny merchant."

"I don't want to bandy words with you, Ponsonby," said Courtenay. "I want you to admit that you telephoned to Wharton in the name of Courtenay, and made him believe that I was telephoning."

Ponsonby shrugged his shoulders.

"You gave him an insulting message, supposed to come from me. Do you deny it?"

"My dear chap, it ain't worth the trouble."

"You admit it, then?"

"I decline to enter into an argument at all," said Ponsonby. "I can't stand raised voices. They get on my nerves. You know we're a bit different here from what you were used to in your slum."

"Go it, Pon!" murmured the admiring Gadsby.

"I know that you did it," said Courtenay. "But if you deny it, I shall look for proof before I punish you."

"Punish me, by gad!" said Ponsonby. "How are you goin' to do that?"

"I'm going to thrash you!"

"Dear me!"

"Shut the door, Caterpillar," said Courtenay, pushing back his cuffs. "Ponsonby, you played a cowardly, dirty trick! You are a rotten rascal!"

"Thanks."

"Now put up your hands!"

Ponsonby put his hands into his pockets.

"Excuse me," he drawled. "I'm not gone on your slummy boodiganism. Why can't you remember that you're among gentlemen now, you nameless bounder?"

Smack!

Courtenay's open hand came across Ponsonby's face with a crack like a whip.

The dandy of the Fourth staggered back and plumped into his chair.

"Now will you put up your hands?" demanded Courtenay.

Ponsonby spat out the cigarette and leaped to his feet, his eyes blazing. He sprang at Courtenay like a tiger.

"You nameless hound! I'll smash you for that!" panted Ponsonby.

"Pile in!" yelled Gadsby.

The three nuts rushed to the aid of their leader. The Caterpillar promptly turned the key in the lock, lest reinforcements should arrive, and rushed to back up his chum.

Then there was a wild and whirling "scrap" in Ponsonby's study.

The nuts were two to one, but the two were two of the very best, hard as nails and full of pluck. And the four were far from being in the best condition. Excepting in point of numbers, the fight was not so very unequal.

Courtenay devoted his attention to Ponsonby.

Ponsonby was the best fighting-man in the honourable society of the nuts of Highcliffe, and he was the most dangerous of the four. He put up a good fight, but he was no match for the angry and indignant Courtenay. He was driven to the wall, where he could retreat no farther, and there, fighting hard, he had to take his punishment.

The Caterpillar dealt with Gadsby and Monson and Vavasour.

De Courcy did not look much like a slacker at that moment.

He laid Gadsby on the carpet with a tremendous upper-cut, which jarred every tooth in Gaddy's head, and left him lying and groaning, without any desire to take any further part in the proceedings.

Then he engaged Vavasour and Monson at close quarters, and easily held them at bay.

"Rescue, you idiots!" panted Ponsonby.

"They can't come, dear boy," chuckled the Caterpillar. "They've got another engagement. There's little me in the way."

"Ow, ow, ow!" came from Gadsby, nursing his chin on the floor.

"Back up, Gaddy!" shrieked Vavasour, dodging round the table to get away from the Caterpillar's powerful drives.

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"Where will you have it, Monson, dear boy?" smiled the Caterpillar. "Shall I alter the shape of your nose, or—"

"Yaroooh!" yelled Monson, as a drive on the chest knocked him across Gadsby on the carpet. "Oh, my hat! Chuck it, you beast! I give in!"

"Your turn, Vav—"

"Keep off!" howled Vavasour. "I ain't interferin'. Let 'em fight it out! You rotten beast, Caterpillar!"

"All the gentlemen satisfied?" asked the Caterpillar urbanely. "Not boilin' for vengeance and thirstin' for gore? Good! Let us take seats and look on, dear boys, and watch the thrilling combat."

The Caterpillar seated himself upon a corner of the table, keeping a wary eye on the nuts, however.

But Gadsby and Vavasour and Monson did not want any more. The Caterpillar was too tough at close quarters.

"Help me, you rotters!" yelled Ponsonby.

"Rot!" mumbled Vavasour. "It's a fair fight, ain't it? One to one! Give him a jolly good lickin', Pon!"

"Yaas, go it, Pon, and give him a lickin'!" encouraged the Caterpillar. "We're all lookin' on to see fair play. You don't look much like givin' anybody a lickin', but cricket's an uncertain game. Keep it up!"

Ponsonby set his teeth and fought hard.

But he was getting severe punishment. Courtenay, for once, was in a rage, and he was a hard hitter. His fists came home again and again on Ponsonby's handsome face, which was not looking so handsome now.

The dandy of the Fourth went down at last, fairly knocked out by the whirlwind attack.

He rolled, gasping, on the thick carpet, his nose swollen and streaming red, his eyes half closed, his wind completely gone.

Courtenay stood over him, his eyes gleaming.

"Have you had enough?" he demanded.

Ponsonby only groaned.

"By gad, he looks as if he's had enough!" chuckled the Caterpillar. "You shouldn't be so reckless in usin' other fellow's names, Pon; you shouldn't really. It has caused serious damage to your Greek nose. It looks more like a Roman nose now, by gad! A Romo-Græco boko, by gad, you know! Courtenay, chuck it! Pon has had enough. I'm sure Pon is satisfied."

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE FELLOW WHO WON!"

EVERY
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ONE
PENNY.

Courtenay gave the fallen dandy of the Fourth a glance of contempt, and unlocked the study door.

"Come away!" he said.

The Caterpillar was in no hurry.

"You gentlemen quite satisfied?" he asked, glancing at the nuts. "You quite satisfied, Vav?"

"Ow! Yaas!"

"What about you, Gaddy? If you're still thirstin' for blood, here's Courtenay with several rounds left in him."

"Yow! Get out!" moaned Gadsby.

"Monson, old man—"

"Get out, you rotter!" mumbled Monson.

The Caterpillar sighed.

"I only want to be obligin'," he said. "Ten minutes ago you were thirstin' for slaughter. Franky, old man—"

"Well?" said Courtenay.

"Isn't it pleasant to see everybody happy and satisfied?" The Caterpillar slid lazily off the table. "Havin' satisfied every gentleman present, we may as well take our departure. Good-bye, dear boys! If you find that thirst for gore comin' on again, come along to No. 3."

And the Caterpillar lounged out of the study after Courtenay.

Gadsby picked himself up and slammed the door after them. Then he flung himself into a chair and groaned.

"Ow! Oh, my chin! Yow! My jaw! Oh!"

"That horrid beast hits like the kick of a mule!" mumbled Vavasour. "The beastly slacker! Who'd have thought it? Ow! Ow! Oh!"

"Feel bad, Pon?" asked Monson.

Ponsonby held on to the table, dizzily. His face was badly bruised, and inflamed with rage. He was cursing savagely—a stream of furious words that startled even his bosom pals a little, well as they knew him. The elegant, lounging dandy of Highcliffe was revealed, at that moment, as the utter blackguard he really was.

"Here, chuck that, Pon!" said Gadsby uneasily. "Somebody might come along and hear you."

Somebody had come along and heard him. The voice of Smithson was heard in the passage.

"Come along, you fellows! Come and listen to Pon swearing!"

"Chuck it, Pon, you ass! What's the good?"

Ponsonby checked himself.

There was silence in the study for some time, broken only by the moans of the unhappy nuts as they nursed their injuries.

"What a ghastly frost!" said Gadsby at last. "We're fairly up against it, you fellows. How did the brute get on to that telephone dodge? We reckoned that he would have a row with Wharton next time they met."

"It's all up," said Vavasour; "absolutely! We'd better let the brutes alone, and steer clear of them. That cricket match will come off."

Ponsonby ground his teeth.

"We're not finished yet," he said.

Vavasour looked alarmed.

"Look here, I'm jolly well finished!" he exclaimed shrilly. "Look at my nose! I shall be a picture for a week. I'm fed up, Pon; I tell you, I'm fed up!"

Ponsonby gave him a look of bitter scorn.

"We've got to pay them out for this as well as all the rest," he said. "That cricket match won't come off, if I have to—"

He paused.

"I'm goin' to bathe my eye," mumbled Monson.

"Ow!"

"Look at my nose!" said Vavasour. "I shall be a picture. You can leave me out of it next time, Pon. Oh, dear!"

The dispirited nuts dispersed, to bathe their eyes and noses. They felt completely "fed up." The trick on the telephone had been followed by such prompt and dire punishment, that they felt that they had had enough. Only Ponsonby was still inclined to "keep it up."

ANSWERS

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER. A Whip-Round for Bunter!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"So it's fixed for Saturday," said Bob Cherry. "I'm afraid Courtenay's team won't have much of a chance."

"I say——"

"They've got a good skipper in Courtenay," remarked Harry Wharton. "About the rest of the team, I don't know much. That chap De Courcy is rather an unknown quantity. He may turn out well."

"Look here, you chaps——"

"Too much of a blessed slacker," said Johnny Bull.

"The slackfulness is terrific," said Hurrec Jamset Ram Singh. "The esteemed Caterpillar will go to sleep on the field."

"He's slacker than our giddy champion slacker, old Mauleverer," said Nugent. "I never saw such a lazy boulder. Courtenay must be rather a duffer to put him in the team."

"Well, as Ponsonby and his set are keeping out, he hasn't much to choose from in the Higheliffe Fourth."

"I say, you fellows!" roared Billy Bunter.

Bob Cherry looked round.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Were you speaking, Bunter?"

"You know I was!" howled Bunter. "I've been speaking about ten minutes, you rotters, and you knew it all the time."

"Stumps will be pitched at two," said Wharton. "We shall have to get over there pretty early."

"I'm jolly glad it's fixed up, anyway. Ponsonby came jolly near to making a muck of it."

"I say, you fellows——"

"My hat! Bunter's still talking!" exclaimed Bob. "Didn't you say you'd been speaking for ten minutes, Bunter?"

"Yes, you beast!"

"Then don't you think it's time you left off?"

"Look here, it's about the Higheliffe match on Saturday," said Bunter. "I want to know whether you've really decided, Wharton, to leave me out?"

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"Well, it's your own look-out; it means a licking, very likely. But I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll come over and umpire."

Wharton shook his head.

"You wouldn't be any good, Billy."

"I'm a jolly good umpire," said Bunter. "You could depend on me to give the Higheliffe chaps out if there was half a chance, and to stretch a point or two in your favour every now and then."

"Well, you fat toad!" said Squiff, in disgust.

"That isn't the kind of umpire we want, fathead," said Bob Cherry. "Take him away and boil him, somebody."

"Well, I'm coming over, anyway," said Bunter. "I hear that Courtenay has arranged tea under the trees for Saturday afternoon. You know that that chap De Courcy whacks out money. It will be a topping spread."

"Bow-wow!"

"In fact, they pressed me to come over, when I was there the other day," said Bunter. "They were astonished to hear that I wasn't in the team."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So I'm going over with you on Saturday. By the way, I'm dropping in there to-day, so if you've got any message——"

"What are you dropping in there for?" said Wharton, frowning.

"I'm very pally with De Courcy," explained Bunter. "Some of my people are connected with his, in titled circles, you know. He's expecting me to tea to-day."

"Rats!"

"If you'd care to lend me your bike, Wharton——"

"After the way you handled Inky's?"

"Well, I couldn't wheel a punctured bike home. Still, I'll pay for mending it, when my postal-order comes. I don't intend Inky to be put to any loss, of course. But the fact is, I'm in a rather serious position," said Bunter, blinking solemnly at the chums of the Remove.

"You don't mean to say that your postal-order is delayed?" asked Nugent, with heavy sarcasm.

"It isn't only that. You know my pater has been sending me whacking remittances. He has been making heaps of money, you know, on the Stock Exchange, and he sells things to the War Office. I've heard that there's a lot of money in that. Well, the pater has stopped sending me remittances. I believe there's something wrong. When I was home the other day, I heard him say he'd been a bear when he ought to have been a bull. I don't know what it means, but it's serious. I don't believe I shall be getting any more of those whacking remittances."

"Hard lines!" said Bob Cherry. "Mrs. Mumble will lose her best customer. But there's a silver lining to every cloud, you know. It may save you from dying of indigestion."

"Oh, really, Cherry! What I mean is that when a fellow's had hard luck like that, it's up to his pals to stand by him a bit."

"Good idea! Go and speak to your pals about it," suggested Bob.

Billy Bunter blinked at him indignantly. It was evidently his intention to bestow the honour of "palliness" upon the Famous Five.

"Considering what I've done for you, I think you might be decent about it, Cherry."

"My hat! What have you done for me?"

"I used to be in your study, too, Wharton."

"Don't remind me of that horrid time, old chap!" said Wharton beseechingly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you're going to be cads I won't say anything more about the matter," said Bunter, with dignity. "But I think, under the circumstances, you might do the decent thing. My pater has been serving his country, and he's losing money. He's been selling things to the War Office, you know, from—from patriotic motives. I think there ought to be a whip-round for me."

"Well, of all the cheek!"

"I think that's the decent thing for you fellows to do. The fact is, I'm hard up."

"Not really?"

"Stony, in fact!" said Bunter sorrowfully.

"Quite a new sensation for you," grinned Nugent. "What does it feel like to be stony, Bunter?"

"And if you fellows were decent, you'd have a whip-round for me," said Bunter. "I'm hard up! Well, suppose you contributed half a quid each——"

"My hat!"

"And Wharton could go round with the hat——"

"Great Scott!"

"And get in contributions," said Bunter. "I really think it's up to you."

The chums of the Remove simply stared at Bunter. They were accustomed to cheek from the Owl of the Remove, but the idea of a whip-round in the Remove for Billy Bunter because he was once more in a state of impecuniosity was really the limit. Wharton could not exactly picture himself going round with the hat to raise contributions for Bunter to expend in the tuck-shop.

"Well, what do you think of the idea?" demanded Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at. I don't expect anything of you, Wharton. Everybody knows how selfish you are. I know you've got a quid in your pocket at the present moment, and you haven't even thought of offering it to me!"

"Oh, dear!"

"Why the dooce should Wharton give you his quid?" demanded Nugent.

"You're selfish, too, Nugent. I never really saw such selfish chaps," said Bunter. "I rely on you, Bob."

"Oh, you rely on me, do you?" said Bob Cherry.

"Yes; you're not so selfish as Wharton and Nugent."

"Thanks!"

"Now, if you'll get up that whip-round for me——"

"I will!" said Bob.

"Why, you ass!" began Wharton.

"Shush! I think a whip-round for Bunter is a first-chop wheeze," said Bob Cherry. "Isn't he a deserving

object? He deserves it more than any other fellow in the Remove. I'll put it in hand at once!"

"Look here——" began Johnny Bull.

"Wait here a minute, Bunter."

Bob Cherry dashed into the School House in a great hurry. Billy Bunter blinked triumphantly at the chums of the Remove.

"Bob Cherry's worth the lot of you put together," he said. "He's a decent chap! I hope you'll help in the whip-round, though. I think you all ought to play up, and follow Bob's example. Bob's a really decent chap!"

The Co. waited in some surprise for Bob Cherry's re-appearance.

In a couple of minutes the cheerful junior came dashing out of the House again and joined them in the Close. He held his right hand behind him.

"All serene!" he announced.

"You've been for a hat?" asked Bunter.

"No, not a hat."

"Well, anything will do to collect the tin. And the fact is, I'm rather hungry. The sooner we have the whip-round the better!"

"There's not going to be a whip-round, you fat boulder!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Don't take any notice of that selfish chap, Bob," said Bunter loftily. "I never could stand selfishness."

"You're quite sure you want that whip-round, Bunter?" asked Bob Cherry seriously.

"Yes, rather!"

"You feel that you deserve it?"

"Certainly!"

"Well, so do I," said Bob. "You deserve it for your cheek, if for nothing else. Here goes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Removites, as Bob Cherry's hand came round from behind his back.

There was a dogwhip in Bob's hand.

"Ready?" asked Bob.

Bunter blinked at the whip.

"W-w-w-what's that for?" he stuttered.

"The whip-round," said Bob. "Here you are!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow-ow-ow!" roared Bunter, as the whip curled round his fat legs. "Yarooop! Oh! Ah! Beast! Chuckit! Stoppit! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Go it! Give him the whip-round!" shrieked Squiff.

Lash! Lash! Lash!

"Yow-ow-ow-ow! Yarooop! Help! Fire! Murder! Yoop!"

Bob Cherry gave Bunter the "whip-round" with great energy.

The Owl of the Remove danced like the proverbial cat on hot bricks, as he strove to elude the dogwhip.

He was getting the whip-round, but not in the way he had intended. Still, he was getting it—there was no doubt whatever about that!

"Ow! Ow! Ow! Help! Yarooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Ugh! Ahhhh! Yahhhh! Oh! Rescue! Fire!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter hopped, and danced, and leaped, and roared, and the dogwhip played like lightning round his fat legs. He fairly bolted at last, and Bob rushed after him, still giving him the "whip round."

Billy Bunter streaked out of the gates, roaring, and Bob Cherry halted, laughing too much to pursue him further. The chums of the Remove were yelling.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter had had his whip-round, but, to judge by the speed with which he was sprinting down the road, he did not want any more.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Does Not Have Tea!

"O H, what rotten luck!"

Billy Bunter grunted savagely.

He had arrived at Highelife. He had covered the first half-mile at a rapid run; and then, discovering that he was not pursued, he had slackened down, and continued on his journey with the leisurely gait of a tortoise. He was going to Highelife to tea.

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"THE FELLOW WHO WON!"

EVERY
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ONE
PENNY.

De Courcy's study had an irresistible attraction for Bunter, especially when he was hard up. It was a land flowing with milk and honey, and, so far, the Caterpillar's politeness had stood the strain of Bunter's visits.

But the Owl of the Remove felt that his luck was out as he crossed the quadrangle after coming in at the gates of Highelife.

Courtenay and the Caterpillar were not to be seen. Probably they were at tea in their study. But in the doorway of the house several juniors were lounging and talking, and Bunter recognised Ponsonby & Co. They had spotted him, and were watching him come on, and from their looks it was easy to guess that he would not get into the house without running the gauntlet.

The noble nuts were still showing very plain traces of the fight in Ponsonby's study a few days before. Pon's Greek nose was still more like a Roman one. The select company of nuts were glad of a chance of ragging anybody from Greyfriars, and Bunter was specially welcome for ragging purposes because he was no use as a fighting-man.

Billy Bunter halted in the quad. Ponsonby made an inviting gesture towards him, but Bunter was not inclined to chance it. He blinked round the quad, hoping to see Courtenay or De Courcy, but they were nowhere visible.

"Come on, Tubby!" called out Gadsby.

As Bunter did not come on, the nuts descended the steps. Bunter blinked round towards the gate, and to his horror found that Drury and Merton were coming up from that direction. His retreat was cut off.

"Oh, dear!" mumbled Bunter. "I wish I hadn't come! The—the beast! ducked me in the fountain once. Oh, dear!"

"Collar the porpoise!" called out Ponsonby.

Billy Bunter broke into a run. He dashed away up the quad, and the whole band of nuts whooped in pursuit.

Fear lent Bunter wings.

He knew what would happen to him if he fell into the hands of Ponsonby & Co. He would be made the scapegoat for all that the Famous Five had done. Fer- vently he wished that he hadn't come over to tea that afternoon. But repentance came too late, as it generally does in matters big and little.

He tore away round the School House as if on the cinder-track, with the chums of Highelife yelling after him.

Bunter blinked round desperately for a hiding-place. He passed the bike-shed, but a junior was looking out of the door; there was no refuge there. He found himself among the ruins of the disused wing of Highelife.

"After him!" yelled Ponsonby. "He's in the ruins! Don't let him get out! We can deal with him there!"

"Hurray!"

Bunter shivered. In his flight he had placed himself out of reach of all help, for the ruins were a good distance from the House and other buildings.

In desperation, he rushed down a stone stairway which led, apparently, into the depths of the earth. It was the entrance to the vaults, which extended for a great distance under the school.

At the bottom of the steps was a stone, arched doorway, from which the door had long vanished. Bunter lumbered through the doorway, and found himself in darkness, panting like very old bellows.

There was a whoop in the ruins above.

"He's down in the vaults!" came Ponsonby's voice. "Bagged, by gad!"

"I say, we can't follow him there," said Vavasour. "That place is too jolly mucky for our clothes."

"Hallo! Are you there, Fatty?" Ponsonby shouted down the steps.

"I say, you fellows!" quavered Bunter.

"Ha, ha! Listen to his dulcet voice!" grinned Gadsby. "Come up, Bunter!"

"We're not going to hurt you!" called out Monson. "Come up, dear boy!"

"We want you to come to tea," said Drury.

Billy Bunter stayed where he was. He did not place

much faith in the friendly words of the Highcliffe juniors. Their strong regard for their elegant clothes prevented them from seeking him in the dusty old recess of the vaults, for the moment, at any rate. Bunter remained where he was, and pumped in breath.

"The fat beast!" said Ponsonby. "We can't stay here watching for him. Some of you go down and fetch him up."

"Yans; you go, Gaddy."

"Rats! You go, Vav."

"Oh, come on!" said Ponsonby. "Follow your leader!" Ponsonby led the way down the steps, and some of the juniors followed him.

"Oh, dear!" moaned Bunter, as he heard them coming.

It was very dark in the vault, and he did not know what pitfalls might be hidden by the darkness; but anything was better than falling into the hands of the ragers in that secluded spot. The Owl of the Remove stumbled away, feeling his way along the clammy wall of the vault.

He blinked back towards the doorway.

In the glimmer of light there half a dozen figures appeared, and they were peering into the vault.

"Too jolly dark," said Ponsonby. "Can't see the beast. Where are you, Bunter?"

Billy Bunter grinned, and remained silent.

"I say, Bunter, show up! We've got a ripping feed in our study, and we want you to come."

Bunter chuckled silently. It was no use Ponsonby attempting the old game of the spider and the fly with Bunter. The Owl of the Remove was not likely to walk into his parlour.

"Oh, the rotter!" said Drury. "Better chuck it up, Pon. We can't grope about here in the dark."

"We'll wait for him in the ruins," said Ponsonby, in a loud voice. "We'll wait till six o'clock. We don't want tea before then."

"But, I say—"

"Oh, cheese it! Come on!"

The nuts departed, and their footsteps died away on the stone stairs. In the ruins above Ponsonby jerked off Merton's cap, and set it on a mass of masonry, where the edge was just visible from the vaults below.

"What the dickens are you doing with my cap?" demanded Merton.

"That's to keep the fat beast from bolting," said Ponsonby. "Now we'll go and have tea."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chuckling nuts streamed away. It was about ten minutes later when Billy Bunter peered cautiously from the doorway of the vault below. His little round eyes were twinkling with anxiety behind his spectacles as he blinked up the steps. He could hear no sound in the ruins, and he wondered whether his tormentors were gone.

"Beasts!" murmured Bunter. "I can't hear them. Rotters! I know they're gone! Oh, my hat!"

Billy Bunter jumped back as he caught sight of the

edge of a cap peeping round the masonry at the top of the stone stair.

He scuttled back into the vaults, palpitating.

"The rotters! They're still here! Oh, dear!"

The fat junior waited dismally in the gloomy vault. Outside it was a warm afternoon, but in the vault it was decidedly chilly. The Owl of the Remove allowed another ten minutes to elapse, and then he crept cautiously out again. There was no sound from the ruins above. He listened intently for several minutes, and then made a cautious step up the stair.

"Oh, dear!"

The cap was still there!

Bunter backed away to the opening of the vault, ready to dodge back into the darkness if the enemy made an advance.

But the enemy made no advance. As a matter of fact, the enemy were at that precise moment in Ponsonby's study, having tea. But Billy Bunter could not guess that.

He stood quaking, with his eyes fixed on the edge of the cap that showed past the masonry.

"The brutes! The Huns!" mumbled Bunter. "They've left a beast to watch for me, and they'll duck me in the fountain—oh, dear—and black my face, perhaps! Oh, dear, dear! Oh, the rotters! I sha'n't get any tea now! Blessed if I'll come over and see Courtenay again, the beast, if this is the way he looks after his guests! Oh, my hat! What am I going to do? Why doesn't that beast move, I wonder?"

The beast did not move.

It dawned upon Billy Bunter at last that the cap was surprisingly still, and later it occurred to him that it was in a somewhat peculiar position, if there was a head in it.

A suspicion came into his mind, and his little, round eyes glittered with rage behind his spectacles.

He tiptoed cautiously up the steps, closer and closer to the threatening object, which still remained quite motionless.

"Oh, the rotters!"

Bunter had a full view of the cap at last. It was only a cap! He blinked at it furiously.

The Highcliffe nuts were gone; the ruins were deserted, save by himself.

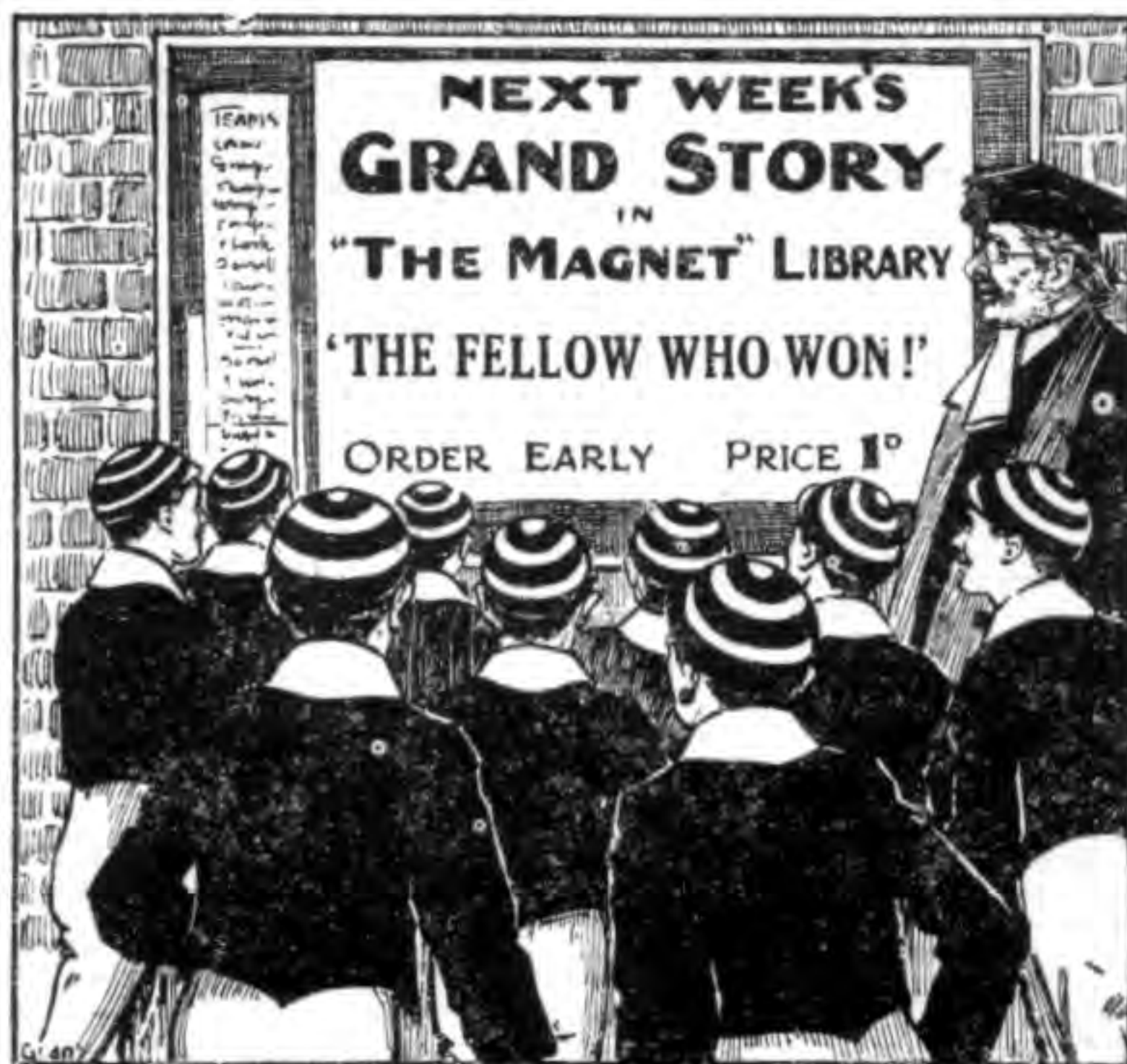
For over half an hour he had been kept a prisoner in those damp recesses by—a cap!

Billy Bunter kicked the cap furiously down the steps and rolled away.

He did not head for the School House. Even the horn of plenty in Courtenay's study had no temptations for him now. He was only anxious to give Ponsonby & Co. a wide berth.

He crept away disconsolately towards the gates.

When he reached them he scuttled out, and took the road for Greyfriars. There was no tea at Highcliffe that afternoon for the Owl of the Remove.





The Caterpillar lounged out elegantly to the wicket, pulling on his gloves. "Play up, old man!" said Courtenay to him, as he passed. De Courcy nodded. (See Chapter 14.)

THE TENTH CHAPTER. The Day of the Match!

"I WONDER what they're plottin'?"

The Caterpillar made that remark in a reflective sort of way.

It was Friday, the day before the match with Greyfriars, and Courtenay and his chum were on the cricket-field.

The Caterpillar had been dragged down to practice, and, somewhat to the surprise of the rest of the junior eleven, he had acquitted himself very well. Courtenay was quite pleased with him. The Caterpillar had a peculiar gift of being able to do almost anything well, when once he could be driven to putting his mind into it.

The chums were watching the rest of the team at practice now, Courtenay keeping a keen eye on his men. Courtenay was a first-class cricketer, and he had coached the somewhat poor material of his eleven into something like form at last.

The Caterpillar was not looking at the cricketers, however. He was looking at Ponsonby & Co., who were watching the practice, and whispering and grinning.

"Plotting!" said Courtenay absently. "Who? What?"

"Our friends, the nuts."

Courtenay glanced carelessly at the group of nuts.

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"Let 'em plot!" he said. "I think we've stopped their little game. Pon's nose has not gone back to normal yet."

The Caterpillar shook his head.

"They're up to somethin'," he remarked. "I shouldn't wonder if somethin' happened yet, Franky. Pon is dead set on spoilin' our match with Greyfriars. Pon isn't at the end of his resources yet."

"I don't see what he can do."

De Courcy rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"Neither do I," he confessed. "But Pon is a fellow of resource, and he'll leave no giddy stone unturned. You see, Franky, you've robbed him of all his giddy prestige. They've made you captain of the Fourth, captain of cricket—in fact, Chief Panjandrum and Lord-High-Everything. It's a nasty pill for our good Pon to swallow. Now we've got the Greyfriars match on again, and our energetic friends at Greyfriars declined to play with Pon because his methods are so Prussian. That is a nasty rap for Pon. If we should beat them it would put the lid on, for Pon never could beat them. And there's something on, Franky—I know that by the glitter in Pon's eye. I wonder what it is. Will you take a bet?"

"No, fathead!"

"Excuse me, I forgot!" said the Caterpillar gracefully.

"Of course, I don't bet now, since you imparted to me the stern morality of the workin' classes, Franky. But if I were still a bettin' chap I would offer you five to one, in quids, that somethin' happens before the match comes off."

Courtenay shrugged his shoulders uneasily. All his attention had been given to cricket of late, and he had taken no notice of the nuts. But he knew that the Caterpillar was as keen as Sheffield steel, with all his sleepy ways.

"I don't see what they can do, Caterpillar," he repeated.

"I don't either. I haven't the brains of Pon. But they're up to somethin'," said De Courcy. "We shall have to keep our eyes peeled."

The Caterpillar's remarks gave Courtenay food for thought.

Now that he observed it, there was certainly a good deal of whispering and smiling among the nuts, and it probably boded something.

Yet it was difficult to see what Ponsonby could be planning for the purpose of "mucking up" the Greyfriars match.

On the morrow the Remove team were coming over, and the match would be played on Little Side at Highcliffe, and it would certainly be impossible for Ponsonby to interfere. Once upon a time the nuts had "mobbed" the Greyfriars players, which had led to the cancelling of the fixture. But Ponsonby could hardly be contemplating anything of that kind now. Courtenay had more friends in the Highcliffe Fourth than even the great Pon in these days.

Whatever Ponsonby was planning was undoubtedly something underhand if he was planning anything at all.

Courtenay dismissed the matter from his mind at last, but the Caterpillar mused over it, seeming to take a lazy and nonchalant interest in it. It was barely possible that the Caterpillar wouldn't have been disappointed—at least, on his own account—if the match had been knocked off. He was looking forward with inward dismay to the exertion of a cricket match. Only his friendship for "Franky" could have induced him to come up to the scratch.

The next day, the day of the match, dawned bright and sunny.

Courtenay was looking forward keenly to the afternoon. It was only with great exertion that he had got together a cricket eleven in the slack Fourth Form of Highcliffe, and imbued them with something of his own enthusiasm. The eleven was his own creation, and he took almost a fatherly interest and pride in it. That afternoon they had a chance to win their spurs, so to speak, if nothing went wrong.

After morning lessons Courtenay and the Caterpillar strolled down to look at the pitch. The pitch was perfect, and the Caterpillar nodded with satisfaction.

"Nothin' doin'," he remarked.

"What do you mean, Caterpillar?"

"I fancied there might have been some trick with the pitch."

"They'd never dare— Why, we'd slaughter them!"

"Exactly; and that's why they haven't done it. Pon is deeper than that."

Courtenay laughed.

"Still on that, Caterpillar? If they're going to do anything they'll have to buck up. The Greyfriars fellows will be here soon—before two, you know."

"Yaas!"

"I really think you're on the wrong track this time, old chap."

"Qui vivra, verra!" said the Caterpillar imperturbably.

"A match isn't started till it's begun, Franky. I'm awfully interested in what Pon's plannin'. If nothin' comes of it I shall be disappointed in Pon."

They went in to dinner. After dinner there was not much time to elapse before the Greyfriars team arrived, as the stumps were to be pitched at two o'clock. The Caterpillar was puzzled now.

"It beats me, Franky," he remarked, as he sauntered in the quad with his chum. "It beats me hollow. I've got tremendous faith in my own judgment—tremendous."

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If I'm mistaken in Pon, I shall chuck up the business of a prophet, and never make another prediction. Why, they'll be here in half an hour, and there's nothin' doin'. It's amazin'."

"They've given it up as a bad job—the nuts, I mean."

"Yaas, perhaps!"

And the Caterpillar rubbed his nose in a thoughtful way. He did not believe that Ponsonby & Co. had given it up as a bad job, and he was puzzled.

"Hallo, here's Gaddy! What does Gaddy want?" said the Caterpillar.

Gadsby of the Fourth came up to them in the quad. There was a peculiar expression on Gadsby's face, and his manner was curiously nervous. Gadsby looked like a fellow to whom had been assigned a task that he did not quite find to his taste, but who had made up his mind to go through with it.

"Top of the afternoon, Gaddy!" said the Caterpillar affably.

Gadsby did not reply.

He made a sudden catch at Courtenay's cap, jerked it off, and smote him across the face with it. Then he smote the Caterpillar in the same way.

The sudden assault, from a well-known funk like Gadsby, astounded the chums of the Fourth. They simply gasped.

Before they could recover their breath Gadsby was running, and flourishing Courtenay's cap in the air as a sort of trophy.

"By gad!" gasped the Caterpillar. "By gad!"

Courtenay did not speak. He rushed fiercely after Gadsby.

The Caterpillar broke into a run after him. A blow in the face was more than enough to rouse even the sleepy Caterpillar to wrath.

Gadsby disappeared round the School House at top speed.

"My hat! I'll scalp him!" panted Courtenay. "The cheeky cad!"

"Yaas, we'll boil him in oil, and strew the hungry churchyard with his bones!" said the Caterpillar.

They gained on Gadsby, who was heading for the ruins with a rush.

But they were a dozen yards behind him when he disappeared into the ruins.

The chums of the Fourth rushed in after him.

Then there was a sudden yell.

"Pile in!"

It was Ponsonby's voice.

In a second the ruins seemed alive with juniors.

Too late the chums of the Fourth realised that they had been led into an ambush.

Far from their friends, out of the sight of the cricket-field and the quad, in the midst of the enemy, the two juniors were surrounded, and in another second they were fighting desperately against a dozen assailants.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Trapped!

"DOWN with the cads!"

"Collar 'em!"

"Get 'em down, quick, and stop their yelling!"

Courtenay and the Caterpillar hit out desperately, but the odds were too great.

They went down among the old masonry and stones of the ruins, with the enemy simply swarming over them.

They were pinned down by sheer weight.

Three or four foes sat on each of them, crushing them flat on the old flagstones, and there was a general chuckle of triumph among the happy nuts. Ponsonby grinned down at their furious faces.

"Trapped, by gad!" said Ponsonby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let us go, you cad!" shouted Courtenay, struggling furiously.

"Knock his head on the ground if he won't shut up, Monson!"

"You bet!"

Rap! Rap!
"Oh, you cowards! Oh!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do you want any of the same, Caterpillar?" grinned Ponsonby.

The Caterpillar shook his head. His head was all that he could move, for the rest of him had disappeared under the enemy, who was swamping him. But De Courcy had recovered his coolness at once.

"Thanks, no, Pon," he replied. "This is rather a surprise, but I do not want any. Please don't shove your hoof under my chin, Gaddy. You can sit on me without bringing your hoof in contact with my chin. I'm goin' to be as quiet as a lamb. Don't forget your manners, even when you're playin' a dirty trick, you know."

"See if any of the other cads are in sight, Drury."

Drury scuttled out of the ruins, and came back in a minute or two.

"Not a sign of them," he grinned: "not a suspish. Most of the rotters are down at the gates, waiting for the Greyfriars cads."

"Let 'em wait," said Ponsonby. "They can play Greyfriars if they like without their skipper."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the little game?" drawled the Caterpillar. "I knew there was somethin' on, though I didn't expect anythin' quite so drastic as this. You remember, Franky, I told you there was somethin' on."

Courtenay gritted his teeth. The Caterpillar, with his usual perspicacity, had been right. But who could have foreseen this or anything like this? It was really the limit, even for the cads of Highcliffe.

"What are you goin' to do, Pon?" asked the Caterpillar, in the most urbane manner. "Some little scheme for muckin' up the match—what?"

"Exactly."

"Absolutely," chirruped Vavasour. "That's the little game, Caterpillar. Sorry to handle you like this, but if you will chum up with a workhouse cad, you know, you must take the consequences."

"Yaas, I suppose so!" said De Courcy. "I'm takin' them. But you might ease off a bit, Monson. You're sittin' on my watch, and it causes me a certain amount of inconvenience."

Monson grinned, and "eased off." Bitter as the nuts were against Courtenay, they did not dislike the Caterpillar. They had not given up hope that some day he would return to the fold, so to speak.

"Got the cord, Merton?"

"Here you are!"

"Tie 'em up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Merton proceeded to tie the ankles of the two prisoners together. Then he tied their wrists. It was impossible to resist, and in a few minutes they were tightly bound.

Courtenay was pale with rage, but the Caterpillar submitted with calm philosophy. What couldn't be cured had to be endured, and there was no use in making a fuss about what couldn't be helped.

"This is really surprisin', even for you, Pon," remarked the Caterpillar. "I suppose you know you're actin' in a way that would disgrace a Prussian?"

"Oh, pile it on!" said Ponsonby.

"But what's the game? You want to keep us out of the match?"

"Just so."

"But you're not goin' to spend the afternoon sittin' on us, I hope? I don't want to be unreasonable, but Vavasour is rather bony."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No, we're not," said Ponsonby; "we're going to shove you into the vaults, and leave you there."

"Oh, by gad!"

"Your freak eleven can play the match without you," said Ponsonby. "I hardly think they'll make a success of it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the nuts.

"Awf'ly deep card, Pon, isn't he?" said the Caterpillar admiringly. "Has it occurred to you that we may catch cold in that beastly vault, Pon?"

"That's your look-out."

"Yaas, it's the fortune of war, I suppose," assented the Caterpillar. "Far be it from me to grumble at the fortune

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ONE
PENNY.

of war. But I suppose you know you'll get a tremendous hidin' for this—simply tremendous?"

"Shove 'em down the stairs!" said Ponsonby, without replying to that remark.

Courtenay struggled in his bonds as the enemy released him. But he struggled in vain. If he had been a real prisoner of war, he could not have been secured more thoroughly.

The nuts grinned as they watched his efforts, and the Caterpillar observed him with a sympathetic smile.

"Nothin' doin', Franky," he remarked. "It's no go, dear boy. We're up against it, and Pon takes the jack-pot."

"Will you let us go, you cads?" muttered Courtenay.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Take it smilin', Franky. It's the fortune of war. We'll give them a fearful hidin' later on. Gaddy, allow me to compliment you on your astuteness. You led us into this trap in a really masterly manner. I never knew you were so jolly deep, Gaddy, by gad!"

"Rescue!" shouted Courtenay, in a faint hope that someone might be within sound of the ruins.

"Knock his head on the ground, Monson!"

Rap! Rap!

"Now put on the dusters," said Ponsonby.

Several large dusters, in a somewhat chalky condition, evidently borrowed from the Form-room, were produced, and tied over the mouths of the two prisoners. They were effectually gagged.

Then the nuts bore them down the steps into the vaults.

Ponsonby struck several wax-vestas in succession, and lighted the way. The two prisoners were carried into the second vault, and set down on the cold stone flags. The last match went out, and they were in darkness.

"I hardly think you're likely to be found here," remarked Ponsonby. "You can take a good long rest, and meditate on your sins."

The nuts chuckled in chorus. Their triumph was complete, and they were highly pleased with their leader and themselves.

A faint mumble came from the prisoners. They could not speak.

"But I'll tell you what, Caterpillar! I really don't like leavin' you here along with that cad." Ponsonby struck another match. "If you'll promise to come back to us, Caterpillar, and give that outsider the go-by, we'll take you back with us. Nod your head if you mean yes."

The Caterpillar's head did not move.

"Now, Caterpillar, be a sensible chap. You don't want to stick it out here with that workhouse cad, you know. Chuck him over, and we'll have a rippin' game of bridge in my study this afternoon."

No sign from the Caterpillar.

"Have your way, then," said Ponsonby savagely. "Take your chance along with him. Come on, you chaps!"

The match went out. Ponsonby & Co. quitted the vaults, and their footsteps died away above.

Silent, in the darkness, unable to move a limb or to speak a word, lay the two prisoners. The blow, foreseen by the Caterpillar, had fallen, and Ponsonby & Co. had scored, and scored heavily.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Missing!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. wheeled their bicycles down to the gates in a cheerful mood that sunny Saturday afternoon.

A score of fellows were going over to Highcliffe for the match.

It was a considerable time since the last match had been played with Highcliffe, and then it had been with Ponsonby & Co. The present occasion was quite a different matter. Ponsonby & Co. were off the scene; and whatever kind of an eleven Courtenay had scraped together, at least their visitors could depend upon it that they would play the game.

Billy Bunter joined the party as they wheeled their machines down to the gates. Bunter intended to accompany them; but he, unfortunately, had no bicycle. That was entirely his own fault, for he had a machine, and only neglect had turned it into a crock that was unrideable. Bunter depended upon other fellows' machines when he wanted to ride; but the way he treated a borrowed machine did not encourage other fellows to lend.

"I say, you fellows, which of you is going to give me a lift?" he inquired.

A general chuckle was the only reply. Nobody was inclined to take Billy Bunter's tremendous weight behind him.

"Can I get up behind you, Bob?"

"Yes, if you like," said Bob Cherry, putting one long leg over his bike. "You can do it while I'm going, Buntie."

"How can I get on while you're going, fathead?"

"That's for you to settle."

"Look here, Cherry——"

Bob Cherry started off. The Owl of the Remove turned to Wharton, who jumped on his machine and followed Bob. The rest of the cyclists streamed after them, deaf to the voice of the charmer.

"Beasts!" howled Bunter. "I say, Desmond, you're a good-natured chap—I always said you were good-natured—you'll give me a lift?"

Micky Desmond grinned.

"Jump on!" he said.

"Wait a minute till I get on the step," said Bunter. "I'll hold on to your shoulders, old chap. Keep still! How can I get on if you begin to pedal, you wild Irish idiot? Yow!"

The Irish junior pedalled on, and Bunter sat down in the dust. He shook a fat fist after the humorous Micky.

"The rotters!" grumbled Bunter. "Now I shall have to walk! They want to leave me out of the feed, the beasts!"

And Billy Bunter picked himself up, and dusted down his tight trousers, and rolled on after the cyclists, grumbling. Bunter was not at all keen to see the cricket-match, but he was very keen to join in the cricket-tea; and with so many Greyfriars fellows present he did not fear Ponsonby & Co.

The cyclists vanished down the long, white road, and Bunter tramped on, grumbling at the dust, the sun, the warmth, the Greyfriars juniors, and the universe in general.

Harry Wharton & Co. arrived at Highcliffe after a rapid run. They wheeled in their machines cheerfully. Smithson and Yates and several other Highcliffe juniors met them in the gateway. The porter took charge of the bicycles, and the Greyfriars juniors, carrying their bags, walked down to the cricket-ground with Smithson & Co.

"You're in good time," remarked Smithson; we've got the stumps pitched. Hallo! Where's Courtenay?"

There were a number of Highcliffe fellows gathered round the pavilion, but the junior cricket captain was not visible.

Smithson showed the visitors into their dressing-room, and then set off to look for Frank Courtenay. He did not find him.

Harry Wharton & Co. changed, and came out of the pavilion, and chatted with the Highcliffe cricketers, while they were waiting for the Highcliffe skipper to put in an appearance.

Smithson came back, looking puzzled and mystified.

"Anybody seen Courtenay?" he called out.

"I saw him in the quad half an hour ago," said Benson.

"He was trotting with the Caterpillar," said James minor.

"The Caterpillar seems to have disappeared, too," said Smithson. "I can't find either of them anywhere."

"That's jolly queer."

"It's turned two," said Smithson. "They ought to be here. I suppose you fellows don't mind waiting a bit. Our skipper hasn't turned up yet."

"Right-ho!" said Harry Wharton.

Smithson and his friends scattered to look for the missing cricket captain. But he was not to be found.

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Smithson looked in his study. The study table was piled with good things, which the chums of the Fourth had laid in for the entertainment of their visitors; but the owners of the study were not there. The common-room, the Form-room, the gym, all were drawn blank. Indoors and out of doors, there was no sign of Courtenay or the Caterpillar.

The unsuccessful searchers returned to the cricket-ground at last, in the hope that Courtenay might have turned up there while they were looking for him. But he was not there.

"Haven't you found him?" asked Harry Wharton.

Smithson shook his head.

"No. Blessed if I can make it out. He can't have gone out; if he'd gone to meet you on the way, you'd have seen him. Besides, I've been at the gates some time, and I didn't see him go out."

"Must have gone out," said Benson. "We've looked for him everywhere. He's gone to meet these chaps and missed them."

"We came by the direct road," said Bob Cherry. "I don't see how he could have missed us."

"Hasn't anybody seen him?" exclaimed Smithson, in great exasperation.

"Hallo! What's the row?" asked Monson, sauntering up to the surprised and worried cricketers.

"Can't find Courtenay."

"Hasn't he come in?" asked Monson.

"Come in? He hasn't gone out that I know of."

"He went out nearly half an hour ago," said Monson calmly. "The Caterpillar was with him. They went on their bikes."

Smithson looked very suspiciously at Monson.

"Buzz off and see if their bikes are gone, Benny," he said.

Benson cut away to the bicycle-shed. He returned in a couple of minutes, to announce that Courtenay and De Courcy's bicycles were not on the stands.

"That settles it," said Smithson. "They've gone out. They must have gone to meet you chaps after all."

"We'll wait a bit," said Wharton.

"Nothing else to be done," remarked Bob Cherry.

The cricketers waited. Smithson, like Sister Anne, took up his position at the gate, to watch for the two juniors. Minute followed minute. Harry Wharton & Co. waited patiently and politely. They could not see how they had missed the two juniors on the road, if Courtenay and his chum had come to meet them en route. Yet it was scarcely possible that the two could have gone out for any other purpose, just before the time fixed for the match.

"It's jolly queer," said Bob Cherry, at last, when nearly half an hour had passed. "They don't seem to be coming."

Harry Wharton frowned thoughtfully.

"May be some trick in it," he said. "Ponsonby may be at the bottom of it. They may have been got away somehow."

"Likely enough," said Peter Todd. "Perhaps some message supposed to come from us. Ponsonby is cad enough!"

"The cadfulness of the esteemed Ponsonby is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But if they do not come, what is to be done, my august chums?"

"The Highcliffe chaps will have to play without them, I suppose."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's somebody—— Bunter!"

Billy Bunter had arrived, in a state of great warmth and perspiration. He joined the Greyfriars cricketers at the pavilion.

"Jolly warm, ain't it?" puffed Bunter, fanning himself with his straw hat. "I say, you fellows, is there any ginger-pop going?"

Smithson had followed Bunter from the gates. Smithson was looking worried and downcast.

Courtenay had infected Smithson with his own keenness for the great game, and Smithson was very enthusiastic about the match. His enthusiasm was considerably damped by this extraordinary disappearance of his skipper.

"You didn't see anything of Courtenay or De Courcy on the road, Bunter?" he asked.

Bunter shook his head.

"They've been tricked into going out, somehow," said Smithson. "I'll bet you Ponsonby is at the bottom of it. They can't have gone to meet you chaps; they've had time to get to Greyfriars and back. Blessed if I knew where they've gone to!"

"Give 'em another half-hour," said Yates. "If they don't turn up by then, we'd better get on. We can't waste all the afternoon."

"Make it three for the start," said Squiff.

That was agreed to. The cricketers waited in a worried mood. But three o'clock rang out, and there was no sign of Courtenay. The general opinion was that Cecil Ponsonby was somehow at the bottom of it. Courtenay would not have gone out and left his team in the lurch without a motive, and he would not willingly have acted so rudely towards the visiting team. There was trickery somewhere. But that did not alter the fact that the cricket skipper was missing, and that his team had to play without him, or not play at all.

The prospect of playing without him was dismaying to the Highcliffe eleven.

It was easy enough to find two substitutes for the missing players, and Smithson could undertake to captain the team; but there was little prospect of keeping their end up with the players from Greyfriars.

But it was pretty clear that there was nothing else to be done. It was useless to wait any longer. Whatever was keeping Courtenay and his chum away, it was impossible to guess when they would return, or whether they would return before dark at all.

"We'd better get on," said Smithson dispiritedly. "This is awfully rotten. You fellows may be sure that Courtenay wouldn't be away if he could help it. He's been dodged into going out, somehow."

"I'm sure of that!" said Wharton. "I'll tell you what. If we go in first, you can play a couple of substitutes in the field; and then if Courtenay and De Courcy turn up after all, they'll be able to bat for you."

"Good! That's the best we can do," said Smithson.

Smithson selected a couple of substitutes to field in the places of the missing two, and the Highcliffe side went into the field. Wharton and Johnny Bull went in to open the innings for Greyfriars.

As the play began, Ponsonby & Co. sauntered down to the ground, and stood looking on, with smiling faces.

"I hardly think our cheery cricketers will make a win of it!" murmured Ponsonby. "I fancy Master Clever Courtenay's new fixture will start with a licking—what?"

"Absolutely!" grinned Vavasour.

"It was a giddy stroke of genius, shoving those bikes out of sight in the woodshed," remarked Gadsby. "Otherwise——"

"Otherwise, they might have guessed that the two cads are still close at hand," chuckled Monson. "Oh, it was great!"

"If they only knew——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat! The leather-huntin's beginnin'!" said Ponsonby.

And the nuts chuckled in chorus. The eleven Courtenay had got together with so much trouble was evidently not up to the weight of the Greyfriars side, and without their skipper they were soon in parlous straits. Wharton and Johnny Bull were hitting the leather right and left, and the Highcliffe field were hunting it, while the runs piled up. Ponsonby & Co. looked on with great glee. They were going to see Courtenay's new team licked to the wide, while within a couple of hundred yards Courtenay lay chafing, a helpless prisoner. Truly, Ponsonby was scoring at last!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter Makes a Discovery!

BILLY BUNTER sat outside the pavilion, fanning himself with his straw hat, and blinking discontentedly at the cricket.

Bunter wasn't interested in cricket. He didn't care twopence for the fact that Courtenay and De Courcy had disappeared; he didn't care the half of twopence which way the match went. He was only concerned with one person, and that one person was William George Bunter of the Remove.

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NEXT
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"THE FELLOW WHO WON!"

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William George Bunter was warm, and he was thirsty. There was a tuckshop quite close at hand, but what was the use of that to a fellow who was in the uncomfortable condition known as "stony"? Bunter thought of flowing ginger-pop, and grumbled. There was no refreshment for him till the cricketers knocked off for tea, and that would not be till the end of the Greyfriars innings. And to judge by the present state of the proceedings, the end of the innings was very far off indeed.

Billy Bunter thought it over, and he rose at last and rolled away. He knew that there was to be tea, *al fresco*, and it occurred to him that, as Courtenay and De Courcy were standing the tea, it was probable that preparations had been made in their study. The School House was almost deserted, and the way to that study was quite open. Billy Bunter did not see any reason why he shouldn't help himself. He believed in a guest making himself at home.

He rolled away towards the House, followed by some uncomplimentary remarks from Ponsonby & Co., who caught sight of him. Bunter did not heed them. He made his way to Courtenay's study.

His eyes fairly danced behind his spectacles as he beheld the store of good things stacked ready on the study table.

"My hat! This is luck!" ejaculated Bunter.

A fat and juicy jam-tart was in his mouth at once. But he remembered Ponsonby, and glanced from the window.

Ponsonby and Monson and Gadsby were sauntering towards the House. Bunter gave them a ferocious blink from the window.

"Beasts! They're after me!" muttered Bunter. And those rotters wouldn't come and help me if they ragged me bald-headed. They'd stick to their rotten cricket if Ponsonby was scalping me. Selfish beasts! If those rotters find me here——"

Bunter knew what to expect if Ponsonby & Co. found him there. He stood for a moment undecided, then a fat grin overspread his face. He hastily caught up as many of the good things from the table as he could cram into his pockets, took a cake under one arm, and three bottles of ginger-beer under the other, and bolted from the study.

He did not go towards the stairs. He scuttled along the passage in the opposite direction. He halted when he had turned a corner, gasping. Along the passage came a sound of footsteps, and then voices.

"Isn't he here?"

"Look for the beast! We'll jam him up with some of Courtenay's tarts, and pour ginger-beer down his neck!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter quaked. He could not remain where he was, that was evident. He heard the sound of opening doors, and knew that the nuts were searching the studies for him. He blinked round, and scuttled down a back staircase which led him to a door at the back of the House. In his hurry he dropped a ginger-beer bottle, but he did not stay to field it. He opened the door, and rolled out, and closed it after him. Then he paused to gasp for breath and consider his movements.

Ponsonby & Co. were looking for him, and they were likely enough to try the back staircase, and to find the bottle of ginger-beer, which would show them that he had passed that way. Bunter was not a very bright youth as a rule, but necessity is the parent of invention, and he had to escape the raggars. He remembered his previous experience in the old vaults, and he started for the ruins at a rapid run. He disappeared among the masses of old walls and shattered windows, but he did not stop there. Without a pause he lumbered down the steps into the vault, and there he halted at last, breathless, but safe.

"Beasts!" mumbled Bunter. "Rotters! They won't look for me here, the cads! I can dodge 'em if they do, the rotters!"

Pop!

It was the first ginger-beer cork. Bunter had neglected to provide himself with a drinking-vessel, so he had to drink from the bottle. But he did not mind that. He

had the ginger-beer, and that was the main thing. After emptying the bottle he proceeded to empty his pockets, setting out the good things in an enticing array just within the doorway of the vault.

The vaults behind him were dark and chilly, but Bunter never glanced into them. His eyes were fixed upon his plunder. His jaws worked away as if by machinery. Tarts and cakes and buns vanished as if by magic.

Billy Bunter was too busily engaged at first to note some faint sounds that proceeded from the darkness of the vaults behind him. But they impressed themselves upon his ears at last, and he started and listened.

A faint dragging sound and a fainter mumble came from the depths of the darkness.

Billy Bunter blinked round in alarm.

"What the dickens! I—I wonder if this beastly place is haunted!" muttered the Owl of the Remove uneasily.

Mumble, mumble!

"It's some blessed animal—a dog, or something," muttered Bunter. "Shoo!"

And he went on with the cakes.

Mumble, mumble!

"Shoo, shoo!" shouted Bunter, his voice echoing through the hollow vaults.

He started up. There was a heavy dragging sound, and it was approaching him, as if some heavy body was dragging itself along the floor of the vaults. Billy Bunter was not famous for his courage. He blinked in the direction of the sound, a quiver running through his fat limbs.

"Tain't an animal," muttered Bunter, his fat flesh creeping. "W—w—what is it? I—I—I believe the rotten place is haunted. Oh, dear!"

But for the danger of running into Ponsonby & Co. Bunter would have gathered up what remained of his plunder and fled. He stood hesitating, blinking into the darkness. He groped in his pockets for a match-box and struck a vesta. The light glimmered in the deep, dark vault.

Bunter dropped the match in his astonishment as he caught sight of an object on the floor rolling towards him with slow and painful efforts.

It was the figure of a schoolboy in Etons, with his hands and feet tied, and a duster bound over his mouth. The match went out.

"Mum—mum—my hat!" gasped Bunter.

He struck another match. He could see now that he had nothing to fear. He bent over the bound figure and blinked at it through his glasses.

"Courtenay!" he gasped.

Mumble, mumble!

Bunter trembled with excitement now. He understood now why Frank Courtenay had not turned up for the cricket match. He, William George Bunter, had found him, and frustrated Ponsonby's knavish tricks. He hastily dragged the dusters away from the bound junior's face, and Courtenay was able to speak at last.

"Let me loose!"

Bunter struck another match.

"Right-ho, Franky! So that's you?"

"Yes, yes! Cut me loose! Have you a pocket-knife?"

"Yes, rather!"

Bunter fumbled for his pocket-knife and opened it. He struck another vesta, and then sawed at the cords round Courtenay's wrists. In a minute the captain of the Fourth was free, and he jerked the knife away from Bunter, and cut his feet free. Then he staggered up, gasping for breath and racked with cramp. It was all he could do to keep back the cry of pain that rose to his lips as the circulation was restored in his cramped limbs.

"My hat!" said Bunter. "This takes the cake! Was it Ponsonby tied you up like that, old chap?"

"Yes," said Courtenay, between his teeth.

"And I've jolly well found you," said Bunter. "The other fellows were wondering what had become of you. They never thought of looking for you here. I'm jolly glad I found you, old chap."

Courtenay made no reply. He disappeared into the darkness of the vault with the knife in his hand. In a couple of minutes more the Caterpillar was freed, and

he came into the half-light of the doorway, blinking and rubbing his cramped limbs.

"By gad!" said the Caterpillar. "I don't want to go through that again! Is that Bunter?"

"Yes, rather, old chap!" said Bunter affectionately.

The Caterpillar made a grimace. He was very grateful to Bunter at that moment, but that did not wholly reconcile him to being called "old chap" by the Owl of the Remove.

"Jolly glad I've found you!" said Bunter. "They're playing without you, you know. We're batting, and the innings must be jolly near over by this time. They waited till three o'clock, and it's getting on for five now."

"Did you come to look for us?" asked Courtenay.

"Certainly! I suspected that Ponsonby was at the bottom of it, and I—I searched, you know," said Bunter calmly.

"And you brought this grub along in case we should be hungry when you found us?" asked the Caterpillar blandly, with a gesture towards the remaining eatables arrayed just within the vault.

Billy Bunter stammered. He had forgotten the feed.

"You see, I—I—I—"

"All serene," said Courtenay, who knew something of Billy Bunter and his powers as an amateur Ananias. "We're much obliged to you, Bunter, whether you came to look for us or not. Come on, Caterpillar! No time to lose!"

The chums of the Fourth hurried up the stone stair from the vault. Billy Bunter blinked after them, and then sat down to finish his feed.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Play Up!

THE Greyfriars innings was over. Harry Wharton had declared for 100 runs, with the idea of giving his opponents a chance. It was nearly five, and the cricketers were to have tea before the Highelife side went in. Smithson & Co., though most of the pleasure of the occasion was gone for them, brought out the good things that Courtenay had laid in for tea, minus the articles that had been commandeered by Billy Bunter.

It was a very pleasant tea under the trees, a sort of picnic. Ponsonby & Co. had gone to tea in their study. They had given up looking for Billy Bunter. After tea the cricketers prepared for business again, and the nuts of Highelife sauntered down lazily to the ground to watch the home innings. They were specially interested in that innings. They expected to see Smithson & Co. knocked out for about a dozen runs by the Greyfriars bowling. It was a single-innings match; but even if the Highelife side had batted twice, it would hardly have been necessary for the visitors to bat again. Smithson & Co. were hopelessly outclassed.

Smithson cast an anxious look round, in a faint hope of yet seeing the Caterpillar and Courtenay.

"It's jolly queer those fellows don't turn up," he remarked. "I can't imagine why they should stay away, even if they were tricked somehow into going out. We shall have to bat without them, after all."

"Put 'em down for last men in," said Harry Wharton. "They may turn up at the last moment."

"Yes; I'll do that."

Smithson and Jones minor went on to open the innings for Highelife, and Harry Wharton & Co. went into the field. Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh took the ball for the first over. He was about to deliver his first ball, when there was a sudden yell round the cricket-field, and the Indian junior paused.

"Here they come!"

Two running figures came in sight, easily recognised as Courtenay and De Courcy. But they did not come from the direction of the gate. They came speeding round the distant School House.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here they are!"

"The herefulness is terrific!"

Ponsonby & Co. stared at the two juniors blankly. Ponsonby's jaw dropped. How had they got loose? At the last moment the plot had been frustrated, and

Ponsonby could not guess how. But he had no time to think about it. Courtenay and De Courcy came dashing up, and they headed for the group of nuts.

Without a word, Courtenay dashed his fist into Ponsonby's face, and the dandy of Highcliffe went sprawling to the ground.

The Caterpillar let out right and left, and Gadsby and Monson rolled in the grass.

The rest of the nuts backed away rapidly.

There was a buzz of voices on all sides. The fieldsmen crowded to the spot.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Where have you been?"

"What's the name of that game, Courtenay?"

Courtenay did not heed. His blazing eyes were fixed on Ponsonby as the cad of Highcliffe lay gasping at his feet.

"Get up, you rotter! Get up, you cad!" panted Courtenay.

"Where have you been?" yelled Smithson.

"We've been in the vaults, tied up there by those cads!" shouted Courtenay.

"Most uncomfortable, dear boys," said the Caterpillar plaintively. "A very unclean place to put us in, y'know. Look at my trousers!"

Ponsonby staggered to his feet, his face white and furious. But he did not keep on his feet more than a second. Courtenay hit out fiercely, and the dandy of Highcliffe rolled in the grass again. This time he decided to stay there. It was the safest place.

Courtenay turned from him with a gesture of contempt.

"Jolly glad you've got out, Courtenay," said Wharton. "If we'd guessed——"

"Of course, you couldn't guess," said Courtenay. "I'd never have guessed myself that even Ponsonby could be such a rotten cad. One of your fellows let us out—Bunter. He came there and found us."

"Bunter, by Jove!"

"The esteemed Bunter has been useful for once," remarked Hurree Singh; "but I cannot understand the whyfulness of the worthy Bunter going to the vaults."

"He brought a supply of tuck with him!" grinned the Caterpillar. "I fancy he'd been raiding somebody."

"Oh, that's where the things were gone!" said Smithson. "I noticed there were some missing."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The fat bounder!" exclaimed Wharton wrathfully.

"Don't mench, dear boy! He's more than welcome," said the Caterpillar. "I've never been so glad to see anybody as I was to see Bunter. He's a jewel—a fat jewel!"

"How's the match gone?" asked Courtenay. "Anything left for us?"

"Yes, rather!" said Smithson promptly. "Greyfriars have batted—out for a hundred—and we're just starting. You are going to bat, anyway."

"Oh, good!"

The cricketers returned to the field. Courtenay and the Caterpillar hurried to change. Ponsonby & Co. slunk away, followed by a loud hiss from the crowd. The nuts of Highcliffe were glad to get indoors, and hide their diminished heads. Ponsonby was also glad to bathe his eye. It needed it.

Smithson and Jones minor opened the innings, and Jones fell quickly to Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's bowling. But Courtenay was ready to take his place when he left the wicket. A ringing cheer greeted the captain of the Fourth as he came to the wicket.

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EVERY
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"
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ONE
PENNY.

Highcliffe's chances were looking up, after all. Courtenay seemed to show no ill-effects from his rough experiences. The Caterpillar, in spotless flannels, but with a smudge on his nose, stood waiting for his turn at the wickets, in his most urbane and imperturbable mood.

"Franky is goin' strong," remarked the Caterpillar, as Courtenay cut the next ball away to the boundary. "Franky is goin' great guns. And I'm goin' great guns, too, presently. Simply burstin' with energy at the present moment."

Smithson went out for six, and Yates took his place and fell speedily, and then Benson had a brief experience at the wickets. But while wickets were falling, Courtenay was keeping his end up and scoring runs. The Highcliffe junior captain, at least, was able to deal with the Greyfriars bowling, and he gave the field no chance. The Caterpillar watched him with great admiration. De Courcy was down for last man in, his chum wishing to give him a rest, and he had no doubt that Courtenay would be his partner at the wickets. Courtenay was playing a splendid game.

The score was at fifty, of which two-thirds or more belonged to Frank Courtenay, when the call came "Last man in."

The Caterpillar lounged out elegantly to the wicket, pulling on his glove.

"Play up, old man," said Courtenay as he passed.

De Courcy nodded.

"I'm goin' great guns, Franky!" he said impressively. "Awful fag, you know, but I'm goin' to do it, just to make Ponsonby turn green, you know. We're not losin' this match if I can help it. I'm simply burstin' with energy."

And the Caterpillar trotted on to his wicket.

"Beaten to the wide, of course," said Smithson dispiritedly. "That ass won't keep his wicket up for a single over, or I've made a gigantic mistake!"

Smithson's opinion was the general one; nobody expected the Caterpillar to put up a good innings. The crowd looked for the fall of his wicket when Hurree Jamset Ram Singh took the ball.

But luckily the wicket did not fall.

De Courcy stopped three balls in succession, and cut at the fourth, and the batsmen ran, and ran, and ran again. There was a cheer for the three.

"Bravo, Caterpillar!"

"Well run!"

"The ball came in too late," Harry Wharton frowned a little. He had declared the Greyfriars innings closed because his men could have batted all the afternoon against Smithson & Co., and he wanted to give the other side a run. But he could see now that the Highcliffe innings was finishing with two first-class batsmen, and a win for Highcliffe was quite on the cards.

The runs continued to pile up. The Caterpillar's performance astonished his comrades. Whatever kind of ball was sent down to him the Caterpillar dealt with it, and though he left most of the run-getting to

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE FELLOW WHO WON!"

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

Courtenay, he kept his end up with great efficiency. The juniors could hardly recognise the slacker of Highcliffe in the active figures that crossed the pitch again and again like a streak of white.

"Ninety-five!" said Bob Cherry. "Oh, my hat! Wharton, old man, for once in a way you were a little too previous."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Can't be helped," he said. "Inky, old man, go on and get that boulder out, or I'll fry you in lard!"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh took the ball, and grinned, and went on to bowl the last over against Courtenay. It was pretty certain that that would be the last over, win or lose. Courtenay knocked away the ball into the long field, and the batsmen ran again and again, and four were scored by the time the ball came in to the wicketkeeper.

"Ninety-nine!" said Squiff. "Oh, my only chapeau!"

One wanted to tie, two to win! But Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was on his mettle now. The next ball came down to Courtenay with a weird twist on it that beat even that excellent batsman. There was a roar from the Greyfriars fellows as the bails went down.

"Well bowled, Inky!"

"How's that, my esteemed umpire?" chirruped Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Out!"

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo, Inky!"

Courtenay clapped the Caterpillar on the shoulder as they came out. The Caterpillar was "not out."

"Good man!" said Courtenay. "We jolly nearly did it; but, after all, we should have had no chance but for Wharton declaring. But it was a close thing. If you ever tell me again that you can't play cricket I'll scalp you!"

"But what an awful fag!" groaned the Caterpillar. "I'm exhausted—simply expiring, in fact. Hallo, here's our cheerful plump friend!"

Billy Bunter blinked at him.

"Jolly good innings," he said patronisingly. "You're a blessed slacker, De Courcy, but I must say that innings was jolly near as good as I could have done."

"You don't say so!" ejaculated the Caterpillar.

"Yes, really! I say, you fellows, I suppose you know it was I who rescued these chaps? I don't want to brag—"

"Go hon!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"I don't want to brag," repeated Bunter firmly, "but I do say that I found them when all you duffers were only wondering where they were, and I descended into the dark, noisome vaults at the risk of my life."

"Oh!"

"And rescued them," said Bunter, "and after that I think—"

"After that Ananias may consider himself put in the shade," said Bob Cherry. "You can beat him in his own line, Bunter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But the Caterpillar linked his arm in Bunter's, and walked him away to the school shop quite affectionately. And for the next half-hour the Caterpillar stood the Owl of the Remove unlimited treat, and watched him with growing wonder, even his powerful brain being unable to solve the problem of where Bunter stowed it all.

There was a little celebration in No. 3 Study after the match, and in the dusk of the summer evening the Greyfriars fellows and the Highcliffians parted on the best of terms. From Ponsonby's window two black eyes gleamed after them—two very black eyes, and the good looks of the dandy of the Fourth were considerably marred for a long time after the Highcliffe match.

THE END.

(You must read—and your chum must read—"THE FELLOW WHO WON!"—a great tale of Greyfriars School, by Frank Richards. Out next Monday. Be wise and order now!)

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No. 2.



I praise the stalwarts of the Shell,
So valiant and victorious—
Three splendid fellows, who excel
In all things grand and glorious.
Superbly smart in shots at goal
And mighty at the wicket,
They play the game with heart and soul,
And hate what isn't "cricket."

Tom Merry leads the brilliant band,
His chums are quick to follow,
At all times keen to lend a hand
In licking rivals hollow.
Search all the schools, the country round,
From Redclyffe unto Eton,
No finer trio could be found—
They stand erect, unbeaten!

Their deeds are daring and true blue,
They always spend their "tanners,"
And many famous feeds accrue
To Monty, Tom, and Manners.
On such occasions quite a crowd
Of juniors fresh and ruddy
Acclaim, with voices long and loud,
The banquet in the study.

Our good friend Henry Manners shines
In all things photographic,
From Skimpy's "phiz" to German mines,
And features just as graphic.
A useful gift, without a doubt,
And one that has been ripping,
In bowling many bounders out,
And catching rascals tripping.

The perpetration of bad puns
Makes Lowther's comrades martyrs;
Such lame attempts would rouse the Huns
And make them bigger Tartars.
But Monty is serenely cool—
In fact, one of the wary 'uns—
When fighting rivals in the school
Or chasing the Grammarians.

Hats off to them, the Dauntless Three!
By closest ties united;
To "fight and fear not" their decree
Till every wrong is righted!
Let every lad who shoots and swims,
Or on the "track" rejoices,
Applaud the stalwarts of St. Jim's
With hearts and hands and voices!

Next Monday:

JIMMY SILVER & CO.

No. 3 of this grand new series.

OPENING CHAPTERS. START TO-DAY!



Driven to Sea!

The Opening Chapters of a Magnificent New
Serial Adventure Story.

By T. C. BRIDGES.

Cripps have boarded the Rainbow, and Dick and Barry discover, to their horror, that they have fired their last shot!

"Ho, ho!" comes the jeering of Burke. "You've done yourselves brown this time, my lads!"

(Now go on with the story.)

Cripps Plays Foul!

Barry turned in a fury.

"Keep your mouth shut, you swine!" he ordered.

Burke only laughed again.

For a moment it looked as though Barry would finish the man by stamping out what life remained in him, but Dick caught him by the arm.

"Don't notice him. He's beyond doing us any more harm. Here, let's move out of earshot of him."

Barry controlled himself with an effort, and Dick led him away.

"I was a fool to use that last shot," said Dick. "But it was the only thing handy. You see, I had no gun."

"You were perfectly right, old chap. If the rest of Burke's crowd had boarded us, that would have seen our finish in about half no time. Don't blame yourself."

"But what are we going to do?" said Dick. "We can't leave Kempster and Barstow to the tender mercies of Cripps & Co., to say nothing of the rest of our Chinamen. And the gun is the only weapon of any sort aboard the Brant."

Barry stood silent for a moment. There was a frown on his big, handsome face. He was evidently thinking hard.

All of a sudden the frown passed, and he gave a short bark of laughter.

"I've got it, Dick—I've got it! We must put up a bluff. They don't know that we've not got any more shot. What's to stop us from sailing up, and telling them that we'll blow the Rainbow to blazes if they don't make terms?"

Dick gasped.

"Jove, it's a gorgeous notion, Barry! Yes; after what we've done already to their old iron tank, I believe it will work all right."

He paused.

"I've got a better notion still," he said eagerly. "See here, Barry; we've got plenty of powder left. Let's put a charge of that in, and fill her up with nails and scrap-iron. Then, if the worst comes to the worst, we have always a chance of finishing off some of the sweeps!"

"Good egg!" said Barry. "I can always trust you to think out something smart. All right; you go and take the wheel, and tell Chang to scoot below, and hunt out some nails. Keep her on and off until I give the word."

Dick nodded and obeyed. The moon was rising, and by her faint light he could plainly see that the deck of the Rainbow was thick with men. It seemed to him that they were watching the movements of the Brant with considerable suspicion. He chuckled a little to think what a horrid fright Wesley Crane must be suffering under at that moment.

Barry did not waste much time in reloading the gun.

"Ready, Dick!" he shouted. "Put her about!"

The Brant swung obedient to her tiller, and turned her shapely bows once more towards the Rainbow. As before, Dick crouched low. He fully expected that rifle-shots would soon be flying again.

But in this he was wrong. Aboard the Rainbow all remained quiet, and the Brant had come within a couple of hundred yards before the silence was broken.

"Schooner, ahoy!" came Cripps's familiar bellow. "Schooner, ahoy! Is Damer aboard?"

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

Dick Damer, an orphan, is invited by his uncle out to Australia. On arriving he hears of his uncle's death, from a man named Wesley Crane.

Wesley Crane, for some sinister purpose, has Dick drugged and smuggled aboard the Rainbow, a small schooner commanded by Captain Cripps.

The Rainbow sights a derelict. Captain Cripps and Dick, going aboard the vessel, find a youth, who is overpowered by gas fumes, has been left aboard her.

Dick and the youth, Barry Freeland, reach the Rainbow safely; but Captain Cripps, staying longer on the derelict, is apparently drowned, owing to a storm rising, which causes the vessel to founder.

Barry Freeland takes charge of the Rainbow, and, finding some papers relating to pearls on a mysterious island, decides to go in search of the treasure, which rightfully belongs to Dick.

On reaching the island, however, they are informed by Captain Kempster, whom they find stranded there, that he is the sole survivor of the Stella, which was originally commissioned by Dick's uncle to recover the pearls. The Stella was attacked by the Brant—a vessel captained by a pirate named Burke, who steals the pearls.

While on the way to the Solomon Islands in search of Burke, the comrades on the Rainbow pick up three of his colleagues, and one of them, Barstow, helps in the recovery of the pearls, which were hidden on the island of San Cristobal.

They encounter the pirate, and he is made prisoner and taken aboard the Rainbow.

Finding that a tidal wave which struck the Rainbow and drove it aground has also broken one of the masts, Dick and Barry, with two other members of the crew, go ashore in order to find a tree suitable to make a new one.

They complete their task, and on returning to the water's edge, are startled by the sound of shots on the Rainbow. At the same time they notice a strange craft coming towards the island.

Dick scans the new vessel with his glasses, and is surprised to see, standing on the bridge, Captain Cripps and Wesley Crane.

Fearful lest the two scoundrels should succeed in boarding the Rainbow, the comrades go alongside, hoping to frustrate them. Suddenly a boat appears on the scene, and after a desperate struggle, its crew, with the exception of the pirate Burke, are drowned. Burke is captured, and placed on board the comrades' vessel.

During the struggle, however, Wesley Crane and Captain

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"Ay, I'm aboard!" shouted back Dick. It was a shout, too; very different indeed from the timid voice which Cripps had last heard from him. So different that Cripps seemed staggered. "That's not Damer!" he answered. Dick felt a queer throb of exultation. "You'll jolly soon find who it is, if you don't get off that ship, you infernal pirate!" he roared back. "Bravo, Dick!" chuckled Barry from the gun. "That's the way to talk to the blighter!"

"Me get off my own ship!" bellowed Cripps, in a fury. "You let me get my hands on you, and I'll skin you alive!" "Two can play at that game, Cripps!" retorted Dick, in a voice that carried half across the bay. "What's to hinder us from blowing you and Crane and the rest of your pirates into the sea?"

The Brant was so close to the Rainbow that Dick could distinctly hear the gasp of surprise which came from Cripps's lips. When he answered, it was in a decidedly milder tone.

"You daren't do it! You'd kill your own folk as well as us!"

"I reckon they'd as soon be dead as in your hands!" shouted out Barry, for the first time taking a share in the conversation. "Anyhow, I guess I can finish you right now without touching them. I've only got to put this match to the touch-hole, and if there's anything left of you after—why, I'll eat it!"

There came a terrified shriek from the deck of the Rainbow, and someone flung himself flat on his face on the planking.

"It's all right, Barry," laughed Dick. "It's only the brave Wesley!"

Cripps, if a brute, had pluck. He stood up, big, square, and menacing, in the pale moonlight.

"What do you ducks want, anyway?" he demanded. "I suppose you ain't a-going to say as this ain't my ship?"

"Exactly what I do say," returned Dick, as he gave the spokes a turn so as to hold the Brant in the eye of the wind. "Exactly what I do say. You lost her when you left her, and Mr. Freeland here salvaged her. Any Court would give us the verdict, and that you know as well as I do!"

Cripps swore savagely.

"There ain't no courts o' law in the Solomon Islands. What I wants to know is what you fellers are after? What do you want?"

Dick did not answer at once.

"I say, Barry," he said, in a lower voice, "do you give me a free hand to make terms?"

"Go ahead!" was the quick reply. "Anything you say goes. But look out for treachery. I wouldn't trust one of 'em!"

"All right," answered Dick.

Then, raising his voice again:

"I'll tell you what we want, Cripps. You hand over Captain Kempster, Barstow, and our Chinamen, our own personal possessions, and the stores we need for the journey home. Then you can keep the Rainbow, and the rest of the grub aboard."

"Of all the infernal impudence——" began Cripps, in a voice that was like a bull's.

And then he stopped suddenly as some one beside him plucked at his sleeve.

The two talked in voices too low to be heard aboard the Brant.

"Hurry up!" shouted Dick. "We haven't all night to waste! Do you agree, or don't you?"

"All right!" growled Cripps sourly. "We'll agree!"

Dick noticed a curious tone of surprise in the man's voice. He almost laughed, for he himself fully realised that when he and Cripps had last met, he could not for the life of him have tackled the great bully so successfully.

"We agree!" repeated Cripps. "One o' you had best come aboard for the things!"

"You will send Captain Kempster and Barstow over first," answered Dick sharply. "And the Chinamen. Afterwards, I will come across for our kit!"

"Bravo, Dick!" exclaimed Barry, from the gun. "That's the way to do it, my boy!"

There was further consultation aboard the Rainbow. Cripps was clearly unwilling to agree to Dick's last suggestion, and Dick himself waited very anxiously indeed. If Cripps refused, it was a case of stale-mate. He and Barry dared not fire for fear of killing some of their own folk.

But his suspense did not last long.

"All right! They're a-coming!" Cripps called across.

And as he spoke Dick saw several men being led across the deck to one of the steamer's boats which lay alongside the Rainbow.

He counted them—six in all. Kempster, Barstow, and the four remaining Chinamen.

Barry stood by his gun, match in hand, fully prepared for

any sign of treachery. But nothing of the sort occurred, and in a very few minutes the refugees were safe aboard the Brant.

"Say, Mr. Damer, I never thought you'd got the nerve to talk to Old Man Cripps the way you did!" was Barstow's greeting as he hobbled up to Dick.

Old Kempster's face, still yellow from the bout of fever, bore an unaccustomed grin.

"I'm mighty glad to see you again, Damer!" he remarked.

"But what's pleased me a sight more than anything else was the way you and Freeland used that gun. My word!" He chuckled outright. "It was fine to see the way it made hay of Crane's new steamer. I reckon he won't get much insurance back on that; and I'll lay the charter cost him a cool thousand!"

He gave Dick his hand as he spoke, and Dick grasped it warmly.

"There's about a score of questions I want to ask you, captain," said the boy; but they'll have to wait. I must go across now, and get the stores we want for our trip home."

"Then you look out for Cripps," said Kempster warningly. "He's in a mighty ugly temper."

"I've no doubt of that," Dick answered, with a smile; "but you needn't worry. We've got that old gun loaded up with nails and potlog, and if Barry touches it off there won't be much left of that crowd of larrikins on the Rainbow's deck."

"Perhaps you'll take the wheel, sir?" he added courteously. "And, by the by, Burke is lying there on the deck. You might order two of the men to carry him below."

"Burke?" snarled Kempster, his face changing in the most extraordinary fashion. "Burke? How did he come here?"

"In a boat he must have stolen from the Rainbow. No need to worry, captain. His accomplices are dead, and he is as good as dead. By the look of him, his back is broken."

"And a good job, too!" said Kempster fiercely. "Of all the work you youngsters have done, that is the best."

His whole face was absolutely lighted up. He looked as if years had suddenly rolled off him. And Dick, remembering those fleshless bones on Nameless Island, could not wonder at the old man's delight.

But there was no time to waste. He called Chang, and he and the tall Chinaman got into the same boat in which Kempster and Barstow had just come across. Then, while Captain Kempster and Barry kept the muzzle of the gun full on the other schooner, they pulled quickly across, and within a couple of minutes were on the Rainbow's deck.

Cripps was standing by the rail, a huge and formidable figure. He scowled at Dick as the boy sprang lightly aboard.

"Think yourself some pumpkins, don't you?" he sneered; and yet, even in the sneer Dick caught the same tone of wonder that he had noticed before.

"Oh, I'm learning to take care of myself, thank you, captain!" he said easily. "Barry Freeland has seen to that."

"You mean that cub we found in the Kauri?"

"Ay! He's a fine sailor, and a good friend!" said Dick emphatically. "But how did you get away safe, Captain Cripps? We saw nothing of the Kauri after the storm had passed."

"I was picked up," Cripps answered sourly. "And as you're so fond o' questions, what about them there pearls?"

Dick laughed.

"They're all right. And if it interests you to hear it, we took them from Burke and his crowd, and we mean to make the most of them when we get back to Sydney."

"And what about my share?" demanded Cripps.

Dick laughed again.

"Upon my word, captain, you really are the limit. What earthly right have you got to any share in them?"

Dick had gone too far. Cripps's savage temper rose to the surface, and before the boy knew what was happening, the man had him in a grip like that of a gorilla.

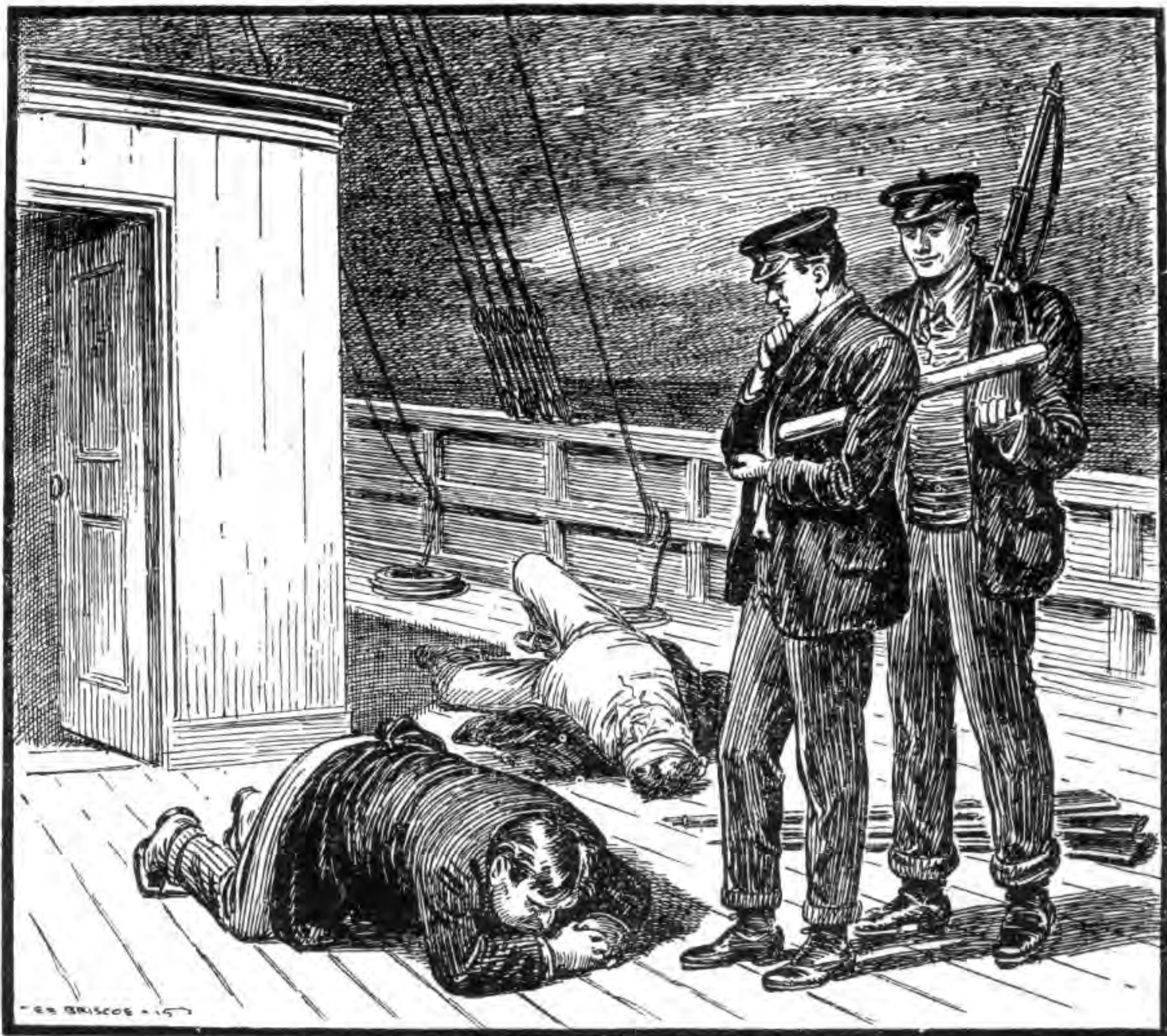
"You tell me where them pearls are!" he growled in Dick's ear. "Tell me where they are, or, by the living jingo, overboard you go to the sharks!"

The Defeat of Cripps.

Dick, though badly startled, did not lose his presence of mind.

"I wouldn't, if I were you," he answered. "You can chuck me overboard if you like, but if you do it will be the last act for you as well as me. That gun's loaded to the muzzle with potlog. There won't be many left alive on the deck if Freeland puts the match to the touch-hole."

The great brute paused.



Wesley Crane gave a scream and flung himself flat on his face at Dick's feet. "No, no! I'm not ready to die! Don't do it, Damer! I can be useful to you. I swear I can!" he moaned. (See page 26.)

"No, by thunder!" he snarled. "You're worth more alive than dead."

Still holding Dick in his tremendous grasp, he hailed the Brant.

"Say, you, Freeland, I'm going to have my share of them pearls, and don't you forget it. Half of 'em is the price o' Damer's life. You hear me?"

There was no answer from the Brant. Dick, so held that he could not see what was happening, was only aware that a cloud had covered the moon, and that a gust of wind was sweeping up the bay.

"You hear me?" roared Cripps again.

"Shoot!" cried Dick. "Shoot, Barry! Don't mind me!"

There was a moment's pause. Dick could not endure the suspense. He made a sudden struggle.

Cripps's grip tightened so that Dick felt his ribs crack. He could not breathe.

"No, you don't!" bellowed Cripps, in a fury. He began dragging Dick forward to the rail.

Dick, with a sudden conviction of what was happening, flung his own arms round Cripps's huge body, and clung like a leech. Still he was dragged forward. Instinctively, he realised that he was actually against the rail of the schooner.

His very flesh crawled. The screams of Burke's pirates as the sharks had seized them still rang in his ears. Was this going to be his fate, too?

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 393.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE FELLOW WHO WON!"

"Let go, will you?" cried Cripps, with a savage oath, as he made a furious effort to wrench away Dick's tight-clasped arms.

A month ago he would have succeeded easily, but that month had made all the difference. Dick was now as hard as nails. He was all muscle and sinew. In spite of Cripps's vast strength, the man was unable to release himself from the boy's clinging arms.

He let go of Dick with one arm, and made a brutal blow at his head. But Dick's head was almost buried in his opponent's burly chest, and Cripps's fist lit upon his shoulder instead of his skull. Even so the blow fell like a pile-driver, paralysing Dick's left arm.

With a beast-like roar, Cripps tore himself loose, and Dick felt himself being lifted high in the air.

Another moment, and he would have been food for the sharks which swarmed in the phosphorescent water below.

But even as Cripps lifted him, came a shock which made the Rainbow reel, and Cripps, flung off his balance, fell with a crash backwards on the deck.

Next instant a tall figure seemed to shoot through the air, and Dick heard something whiz past his head. There was a thud, a groan, and as Dick rolled away on to the bare planks of the deck he saw Barry, with the rammer of the gun in his hands standing over the prostrate and motionless form of the ex-captain of the Rainbow.

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

There came a thud of bare feet upon the deck. Several of the bolder spirits among Cripps's crew were running up to avenge their leader.

Barry did not wait for them. With savage rage he rushed at them, whirling his terrible weapon in swinging circles around his head.

As Dick scrambled, panting, to his feet, he saw the two nearest bowled over like ninepins. The rest, evidently thinking discretion the better part of valour, ran for their lives.

Barry chased them like a fury, and, screaming with terror, they bolted down the open hatch. The deck was left empty but for Dick, Barry, and the prostrate Cripps.

Barry swung round to Dick.

"Did the brute hurt you?" he panted.

"I feel rather as if I'd had a mix up with a grizzly," Dick answered; "but really I'm all right. So you rammed her, Barry?"

"It was the only thing to do, Dick. If I hadn't, he'd have had you over."

Dick looked down at Cripps. His great heavy face was livid; blood from a great cut on his head was staining the white deck planks.

"It will be quite a time before he can do anything of the same kind again, Barry," he said. "'Pon my word, you've done yourself proud to-night! To put out Burke and Cripps inside an hour is rather warm work."

"Only wish I'd finished 'em both!" growled Barry, glaring down at the insensible Cripps.

"Never mind that. They're both beyond doing us any harm for the time being. Tell me, is the Brant afloat, or did you ground her when you rammed the Rainbow?"

"Her forefoot's just on the shoal," Barry answered; "but she'll come off all right at high water."

"Then we'd best spend the time in getting all we want aboard the Brant," suggested Dick.

"Ay, and the first thing will be a couple of rifles to keep those steamship larrikins in order," said Barry. "I'll get 'em right now, before their scare's worn off. You keep the deck, old son."

He was off with his usual quickness, and Dick was left in sole possession of the deck. He kept a sharp look-out, and picked up a belaying-pin, so as to be on the safe side if anyone tackled him. But no one did, and he had time to get his breath back. Then he took a look at Cripps, and, kneeling down beside him, examined the wound on his head.

It was a bad cut, but the bone was not broken. Cripps's skull was evidently as hard as a board.

Dick took out a handkerchief and made a rough bandage.

A slight sound attracted his attention. In an instant he was on his feet, swinging up the heavy belaying-pin over the head of a man who had come up softly behind him.

"Oh—oh, don't do that! Don't hit me! I don't mean no harm!" whined the latter, in a terrified tone.

"Why—why, it's Crane!" exclaimed Dick.

"Y—yes," stammered the other. "I—I am Wesley Crane, your cousin, you know. I—I just came up to say 'How d'ye do?'"

Dick laughed outright.

"You're not a good liar, Crane," he said. "If the truth were told you hoped to give me a jab in the back, thinking you might collar the pearls from me."

"Drop that knife!" he added sharply, so sharply that the knife dropped tinkling out of Wesley Crane's hand upon the deck.

Dick put his foot on it.

"Lucky for you I heard you," he said grimly. "Freeland would have cut the liver out of you, you miserable cur!"

"I—I wouldn't have touched you," said Crane, his teeth chattering with fright. "I only carried the knife because I was frightened with all this fighting."

"Hullo! Whom have you got there?"

It was Barry's voice, and Barry himself appeared, a regular walking arsenal. He had four rifles, and his pockets bulged with cartridges.

"It's my kind friend, Mr. Wesley Crane," said Dick. "It appears that he had the amiable intention of sticking a knife into me."

"The swine who kidnapped you!" roared Barry, in such a voice that Wesley's legs gave under him and he dropped on his knees on the deck.

"He's the worst of the whole bunch, to my mind," growled Barry. "See here, Dick, we're making a clean sweep! What's the matter with putting him over the side? I guess there's sharks that are still hungry."

He nudged Dick as he spoke, and Dick, entering into the joke, spoke quite seriously.

"I agree with you, Barry. He's certainly fit for nothing but shark meat."

Wesley Crane gave a scream and flung himself flat on his face at Dick's feet.

"No, no! I'm not ready to die! Don't do it, Damer! I can be useful to you. I swear I can. You take me back to Australia, and I'll make you a rich man."

"Oh, oh!" said Dick. "Now we're hearing something. Make me a rich man, will you? How will you do that?"

"I'll share your uncle's property with you. A full half. I swear it!"

"My uncle!" said Dick shrewdly. "Just now you said you were my cousin. In that case, how is it he wasn't your uncle, too?"

"He was. I ought to have said 'our' uncle."

Dick laughed again, but it was not the sort of laugh to reassure the shrinking Crane.

"And because of 'our' uncle's property you bribed Cripps to kidnap me and carry me off to sea—eh, Crane?"

"I never did. It was Bale."

"Liar!" snapped Dick, now growing really angry. "I heard you with my own ears that night at Bale's place on the wharf. I heard almost every word you said. 'Pon my soul, you make me sick! You're worse than Cripps; you're as bad as Burke. Just now I was only pulling your leg, but now I really have a mind to put you over the side. The world would be a sight cleaner without you."

Wesley Crane was beyond speech. He could only squirm.

For a moment or two there was silence. Then Dick turned to Barry and whispered in his ear.

Barry burst out laughing.

"Good egg, Dick—oh, good egg!"

Dick gave Wesley a contemptuous kick.

"Get up!" he ordered; and Wesley, shaking in every limb, rose to his feet.

"Get into that boat!" Dick bade him. "Get into it, and if I catch you as much as moving, overboard you go that instant!"

Crane crept, shivering, into the boat which lay alongside.

Dick turned to Barry.

"Give me a rifle," he said, "just to be on the safe side. And then don't you think we'd best call over some of our Chinks? There'll be a heap of stuff to be carried aboard, and we don't want to lose the tide."

"There's the pearls to be got still," whispered Barry.

Dick nodded.

"That won't take long," he said. "An hour to load up, half an hour to the beach and back. We'll be off by two in the morning."

Homeward Bound.

Dick Damer lifted his head and drew in a long breath of the open sea breeze.

"Jove, that smells good!" he exclaimed. "D'ye know, Barry, I had begun to think that we were never going to get away from that stuffy bay."

Barry, standing beside Dick at the rail of the Brant, laughed drily.

"We mighty near didn't. And even now we're sailing home in a craft that we didn't come in and never saw before."

"What's that matter?" returned Dick, balancing himself as the schooner lifted to a real Pacific swell. "The Rainbow was not ours, either, and the Brant seems a decent sea boat."

"You bet she is. Burke never sailed in anything else. Of course, she's foul now, but put her in proper trim and I guess there's nothing of her size to touch her in the Islands."

"Speaking of Burke, have you seen him since he was taken below?" asked Dick.

"Not me," answered Barry, shrugging his great shoulders. "And I don't want to, either."

Dick hesitated.

"I think I ought to have a look at him before I turn in," he said slowly. "Perhaps I can do something for the wretched man."

"Deuced little," answered Barry shortly. "I believe his back is broken."

Dick nodded.

"That's what Chang thinks, and he's a bit of a doctor. It's rather awful, isn't it? If he lives, he'll be bed-ridden for the rest of his days."

Barry looked at Dick curiously.

"'Pon my soul, I believe you're sorry for the swine."

"I am in a way," said Dick. "I'd be sorry for a tiger in the same case."

Barry grunted.

"Your sorrow's wasted, Dick. Once a tiger, always a tiger, and as long as there's breath of life in Burke, just so long he's dangerous. Go and see him, if you want to, but

don't chance his getting a grip of you. One thing I'm sure of, and that is that he'd finish every last one of us if he had the chance, even if he had to go with us.

"I wish I'd finished him," he added, with a frown. "I sha'n't know a moment's peace with that beast still aboard."

He spoke so seriously that Dick was oddly impressed. For a few moments there was silence, then Dick straightened up.

"Well, I'm going below now, Barry. I'll be on deck at six to take over. Kempster won't be fit for duty for a day or two yet."

As Dick went below he became suddenly conscious of a faint smell of smoke. In the main cabin the swinging lamp was alight, though turned low. It seemed to him that the flame looked dim, as though seen through a faint haze.

"Something is burning!" muttered Dick.

There is perhaps nothing in the world more terrifying than a fire at sea, and Dick half turned, meaning to run on deck and inform Barry.

A few days ago that is what he would have done. Now, strong in his new-found manhood, he determined to investigate for himself.

He went on aft, sniffing and looking from one side to the other. Yes, the smoke was thicker here. It stung his eyes, he began to cough and choke.

A swift suspicion seized him, and he made straight for the cabin where he knew that Burke had been taken.

The door was closed. Dick listened for a moment, then softly turned the handle. As he opened the door, out rolled the smoke in a dense grey cloud. So dense was it that for the moment Dick was driven back. He leaned against the opposite bulkhead, choking, his eyes burning.

But only for a moment. Then he dashed into the little cabin.

It was quite on the cards that Burke still had sense and strength sufficient to seize him. And once in the grip of those mighty arms, Dick was well aware that he would be strangled as surely as between the paws of a grizzly bear.

But he wasted no time on thoughts of that kind. Without any hesitation he plunged through the smother to the bunk opposite. His groping hands touched the huge bulk of Burke's body. It did not move. There was no sign of life in it. He began to feel all round, and next moment his fingers encountered something scorchingly hot, and red sparks glowed through the smoke. The mattress was afire.

He could not breathe, his head began to spin, but he managed to find the tin water-can in the corner of the cabin, and, seizing it, dashed its contents over the blaze. Then he ran out and fled forward, shouting for Chang.

Within an incredibly short time the tall Chinaman appeared. "Bring water!" ordered Dick curtly. "Quick! Ship's afire!"

Chang could move when real occasion arose. He did so now, and inside twenty seconds was back with two brimming buckets of sea-water. These Dick took from him and dashed them impartially over Burke and his burning mattress.

Then he and Chang together continued to drag the great bulk of the insensible pirate out of the smoke-filled cabin.

The second bucket extinguished the remains of the fire which had been smouldering in the straw of the mattress, and then they were able to open the port so as to allow the smoke to escape.

By this time the ship had been alarmed, and Barry himself had arrived on the spot.

"What did I tell you?" he said to Dick, as he stared angrily at the smoking remains of the mattress and the great, bloated body of Burke. "What did I tell you? He'd have burnt himself if he could have made a bonfire of the rest of us. The brute!" he went on angrily. "If he wasn't half dead already I'd hang him at once."

As he spoke he took up a fresh bucket of water which Chang had just brought and shot the contents over Burke.

Burke opened his eyes, and looked around. That slow smile which Dick hated so intensely spread across his big flat face.

"Well, gentlemen," he said softly, "I am not dead yet."

Chang drew out the big claspknife which all Chinese seamen carry.

"Me makum dead pletty klick if boss Barry say so," he remarked, as he ran his finger along the keen edge. "Me no wantee be bulnt up by dis pilate man."

Burke did not flinch. His deep-set eyes regarded the tall yellow man with a contemptuous stare.

Barry looked at Chang.

"Put up that knife," he said shortly. "It was our own fault for not searching him. Dick, just see that he has no more matches in his pockets. I'll stand by while you do it."

Dick found a matchbox, a knife, and a small bottle full of white pellets, all of which he took away. Burke made no protest, and when the searching was over, and they were sure that the man could do no more harm, another mattress was fetched, and he was lifted on to it and left to himself.

Then Dick, who was quite worn out, turned in, and Barry went back to his watch on deck.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 393.

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NEXT MONDAY

The "Magnet" LIBRARY.

ONE PENNY.

In spite of all the excitement of the previous twelve hours Dick slept like a log, and felt mightily refreshed when he turned out in the dawn of a brilliant breezy morning.

He went on deck, stripped, and got one of the Chinese hands to fling half a dozen buckets of sea water over him, then, after a cup of hot coffee and a biscuit in the cabin, relieved Barry.

A glorious breeze was blowing, the ocean was covered with leaping foam-crests, and the Brant, now under a full suit of canvas, was lying down to it, and making a good ten knots.

Lost in a day-dream, Dick did not for the moment notice that the breeze was stiffening. It was not until the lee rail was buried and a wave-top came sluicing halfway up to the hatch that he realised that it was time to get in topsails.

He shouted the necessary orders, and the three Chinamen on deck sprang to obey.

"Where's Crane?" he demanded of Chang. "Crane—that white man I brought off the Rainbow last night."

"Me tinkum sleepee," answered Chang stolidly.

"Asleep—at this hour of the day! Go and roust him out, and tell him to come on deck this minute!"

There was a queer gleam in Chang's eyes, which Dick knew represented what would have been a smile in another man, and he went off briskly to obey.

He brought Crane straight up to Dick.

"G-good-morning, Damer!" said Crane, with a greasy attempt at geniality.

Dick looked at him a moment without speaking, and Crane wilted visibly.

"Foremost hands address their officers as 'sir,'" remarked Dick quietly. "You will go forward, Crane, and assist in taking a reef in the main tops'l."

"G-go forward! B-but I'm not a sailor!" answered Crane, in a tone of absolute terror.

"I feel quite sure that you have never done anything useful in the whole course of your life," said Dick, with some contempt. "It is about time you learnt. Now get forrard!"

Crane flared up.

"I can't. I won't. I'm a gentleman. I won't mix with a lot of dirty Chinks!"

Before he knew what was happening Dick had caught him by the collar, and with one sharp, decisive kick sent him flying forward. With the roll of the schooner he had lost his feet, and sat down with an emphasis that jarred the deck.

Dick took one stride after him, but Crane, with a cry of terror, scrambled to his feet again and fairly ran forward.

For once in his life Chang's lips parted in a real smile, and he hurried forward after Crane.

Dick had by no means forgotten his first days on the Rainbow, and the humiliation he had suffered at the hands of Cripps—humiliations which were due directly to Crane. He would hardly have been human if he had not thoroughly enjoyed the sight of Crane taking his first lesson in seamanship.

At supper that evening Dick and Barry met, and after Captain Kempster had retired to his bunk, the two went on deck together.

"I say, Dick," said Barry suddenly, "what in thunder have you been doing with that chap Crane? I give you my word I didn't know him when I saw him on deck this afternoon."

"I've been teaching him," said Dick quietly. "I've been giving him a little of what I went through myself under Cripps."

Barry stared at Dick for a full half-minute without speaking.

"You've got me beat, Dick," he said slowly. "Absolutely beat. I can't believe you're the same chap that I found hanging on to a stay that day of the squall aboard the Rainbow."

"I'm not the same," Dick answered simply. "I've learnt since then. And—and it's you have taught me, Barry."

"I reckon you've taught me one or two things, too, old chap!" said Barry.

Dick stared.

"Oh, yes, you have! You've taught me to keep my temper, for one thing, and to play the game all round. You see, Dick, I've never had any decent schooling. I've been knocking about at sea ever since I was thirteen. I've often thought what a queer thing it was, you and me meeting up like this, for I was kidnapped to sea very much the same way you were."

He paused. Dick waited breathlessly. He had long suspected that there was some story behind Barry's curious silence. But Barry had never yet breathed a word of it.

(The thrilling conclusion of this fine serial story next Monday. Order your copy early.)

MY READERS' PAGE

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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 FELLOW WHO WON!"

By Frank Richards.

Next Monday's grand, long, complete tale of Greyfriars School deals with the adventures of a junior rarely in the limelight—Russell of the Remove. In a scrap with Ponsonby & Co., Russell shows the white feather, an incident which turns Greyfriars against him as one man. Branded as a funk, scorned on all sides, and sent to Coventry by his Form-fellows, the wretched junior begins to feel that life is scarcely worth living. An opportunity occurs later, however, by which Russell can amply atone for his cowardice. He succeeds in winning a very high honour indeed, such as reinstates him in the esteem of the school, and causes Harry Wharton & Co. to heap unlimited praise upon the head of

"THE FELLOW WHO WON!"

CHARACTERS WHO TAKE A BACK SEAT.

A Reader's Request Granted.

Most of my chums will recollect the verses written by Jimmy R., of Repton, which appeared on this page a few weeks ago. The main theme of the poem in question was that a certain number of Greyfriars juniors are mentioned by name only in the stories, but nothing is ever heard of their escapades. In other words, all the limelight is accorded to Harry Wharton and his chums.

Since the publication of Jimmy R.'s poem, Mr. Frank Richards and I have met together in solemn conclave, and decided to give some of the little-known characters a prominent place in the stories. Next week's tale of Greyfriars, therefore, will deal almost solely with the adventures of Dick Russell of the Remove; and other characters will come to the fore as time goes on. But it must be remembered that Harry Wharton and his comrades are the characters of the "Magnet" Library; and it would be sheer folly to allow their doings to be placed entirely in the shade.

JEWISH READERS, PLEASE NOTE!

I have had a good many letters lately from Jewish readers, who seem to be under the impression that the companion papers are employed as a medium for sneering at those of the Jewish Faith. In order to combat this false belief, and to reassure my friends who are thus mistaken, I have arranged with Mr. Martin Clifford, the famous "Gem" author, to write a story introducing a Jewish character; and, moreover, showing him up in a good light. The story in question will appear in the "Gem" Library on Wednesday week, and is entitled

"THE JEW OF ST. JIM'S!"

Of course, nine-tenths of my readers take in the "Gem," but to the other tenth I would say: On no account miss the stirring story of which I have just written!

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

George F. (Melbourne).—If every boy in the Remove had a part in certain stories, I am afraid my readers would find the tales difficult to follow. Some of the characters you omitted from your list are Treluce, Rake, Esmond, Carlton, and Brandreth. There are twelve studies in the Remove passage.

"Submarine" (Northampton).—War stories are "off" at present.

"Two Orkney Magnet-ites."—Thank you very much for your letter. Bunions may be avoided by wearing special boots.

Stephen H. (Dublin).—I agree with you that the sinking of the Lusitania was the most glaring act of frightfulness the Germans have ever perpetrated.

"Bob" (Cape Province).—Sorry, "Bob," but the book you mention was sold out within two days, and is now entirely out of print.

G. A. Bidgood (Co. Durham).—If you are desirous of running an amateur magazine with a view to making a financial success of it, I fear you will be doomed to disappointment. Sorry, but it would not be fair to buoy you up on false hopes.

R. Shapcott and F. Brian.—Thanks for your letter. The ages of the various characters you name are as follows: Coker, 17; Hurree Singh, 15; Trotter, 14; Gore, 15; Mellish, 15; Bulkeley, 18; Jimmy Silver, 15; and Smythe, 15.

Frank Ellard (Oban).—The full names of the boys in question are William Stott, Harry Trevor, and George Bulstrode. The annual cricket match with St. Jim's will take place in September. Wingate and Courtney are each seventeen years of age. Billy Bunter's father has recently amassed considerable wealth.

"Bert" (Leeds).—Many thanks for your cheery little note.

V. T. Roberts-Sutton (Darlaston).—I am afraid no firm of publishers would undertake to produce novels on the terms you name.

J. A. Gibson (Wallsend).—Thanks for your letter. Will try and carry out what you suggest.

Harry W. (Tayport).—The highest individual score in junior cricket at Greyfriars is 156, made by Harry Wharton against Highcliffe two years ago. "The Greyfriars Herald" is published weekly.

J. Power (Bootle).—You should certainly see a doctor as to your condition. Thank you very much for your splendid support.

S. H. S. (Waterloo).—A good many readers considered, like yourself, that I should have done well to ignore the taunting letters published some time back on the subject of your Editor and the Army; but it was only right that my chums—and others—should be favoured with a frank explanation.

"A Seven Years' Reader."—If you will send me your name and address, I shall be quite willing to give you fuller particulars of my personal explanation. Your criticism of the same may be "honest," as you say, but it is none the less offensive.

L. Steer (Battersea).—Yes, the Levison mentioned in the "Gem" stories was formerly at Greyfriars.

F. Coveney (Colchester).—Thank you for sketch. It is not exactly a triumph of art, but it shows a certain amount of skill, all the same. Dr. Locke and Mr. Quelch live at Greyfriars.

H. M. (Corringham).—Send your spare numbers to Miss Doris E. Frodin, Hampton-in-Arden, near Birmingham. They will then be distributed among the wounded soldiers.

H. W. Heaton (Manchester).—Sorry I cannot insert the announcement you mention. It is against our principles.

Harry McDougall (St. Helens).—Harry Wharton's guardian is Colonel James Wharton, of the 21st Lancers.

G. M. (Wood Green).—Arthur Courtney, James Walker, and William Carne are the names you require.

The Editor

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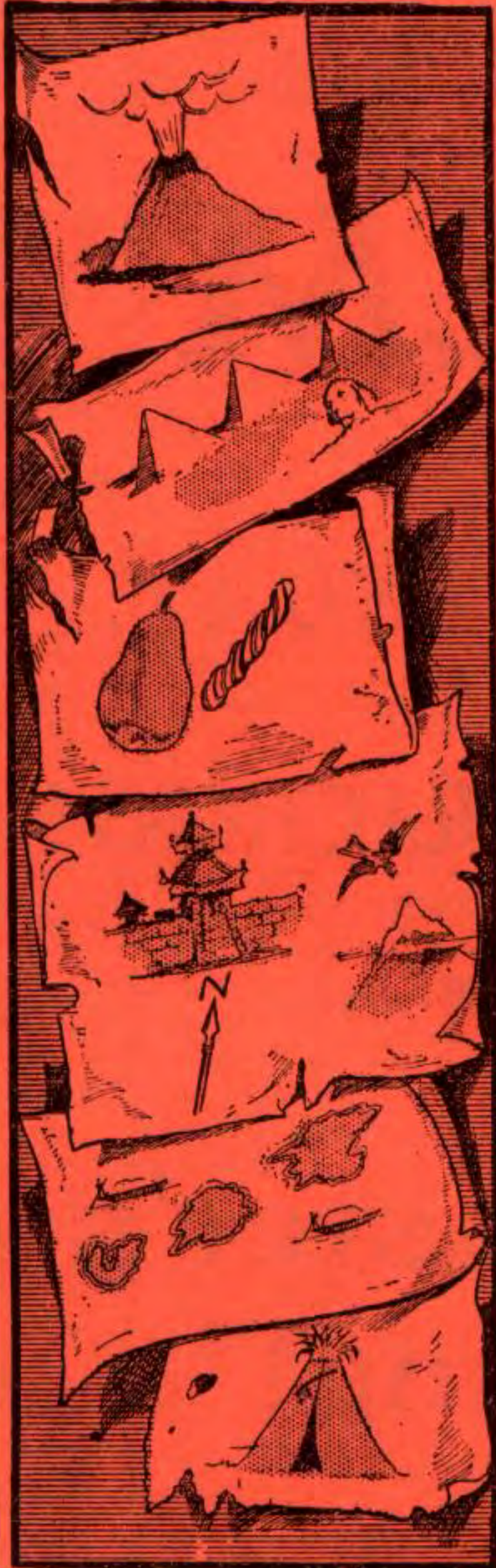
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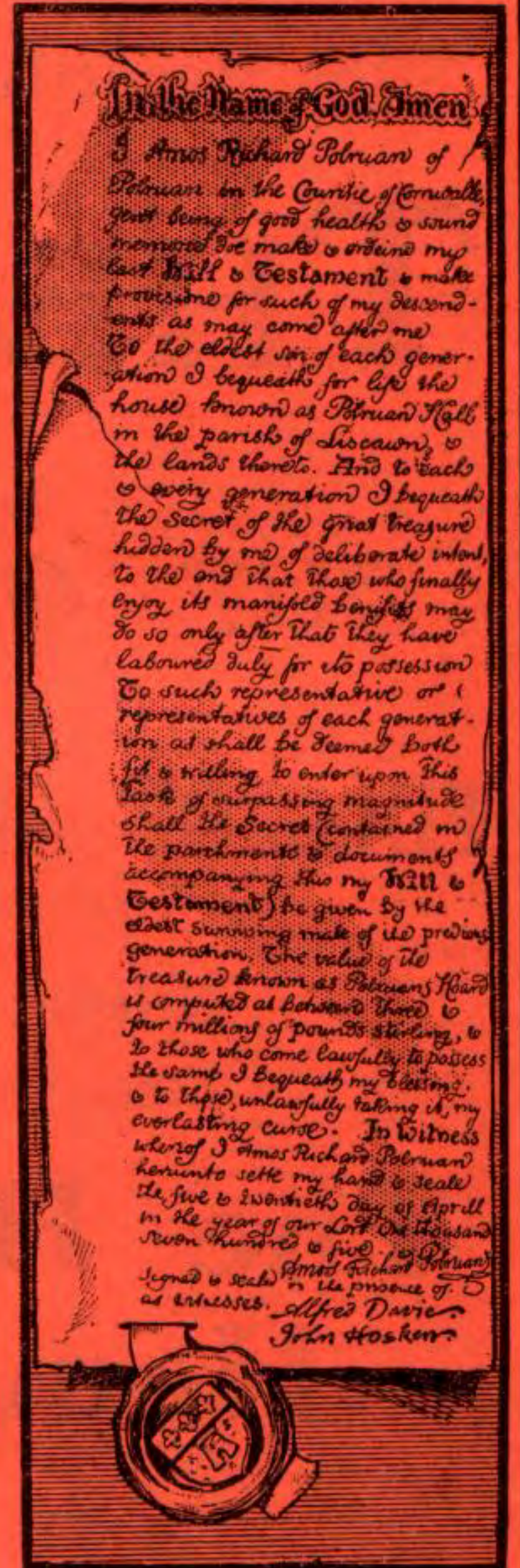
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