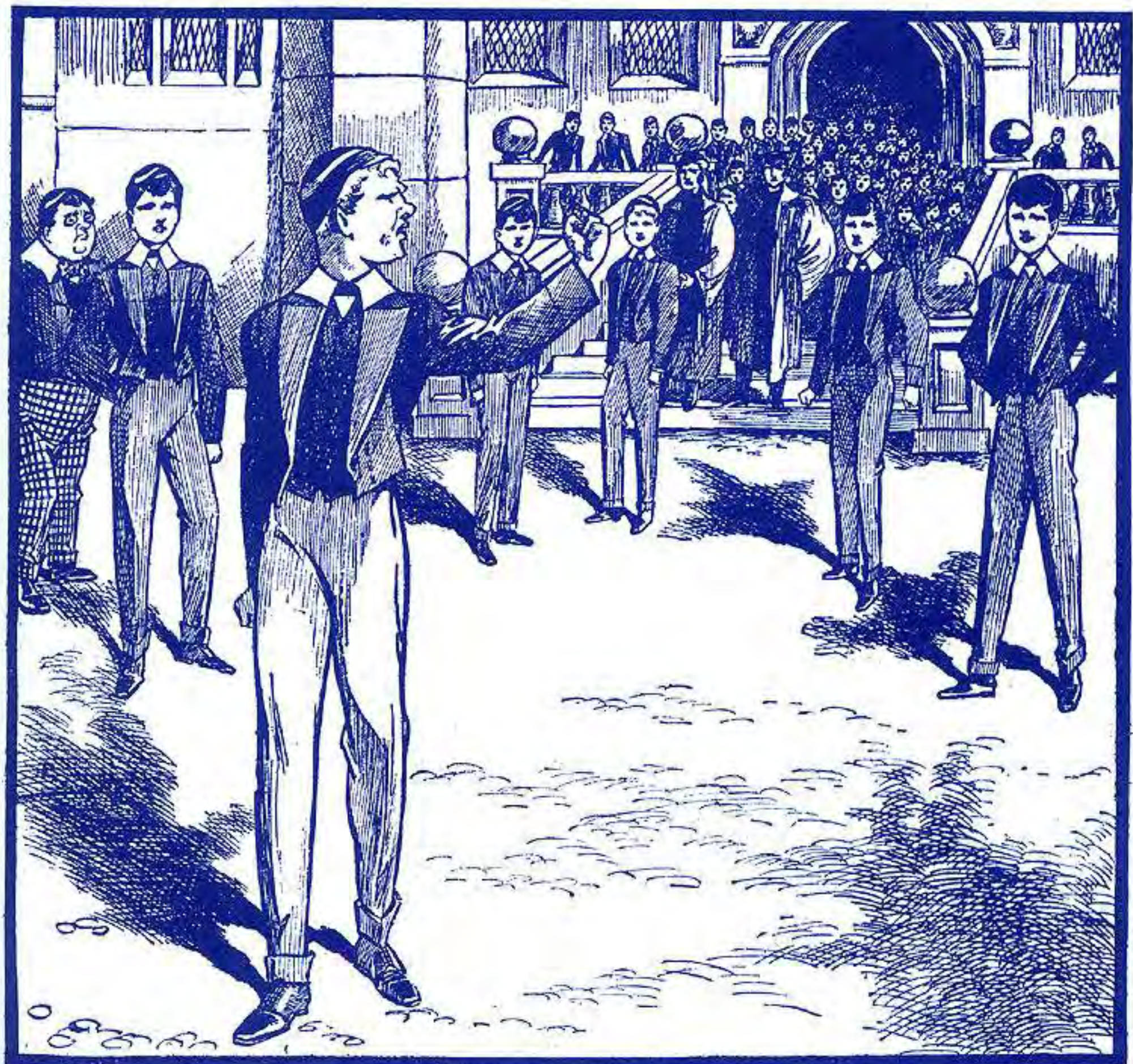
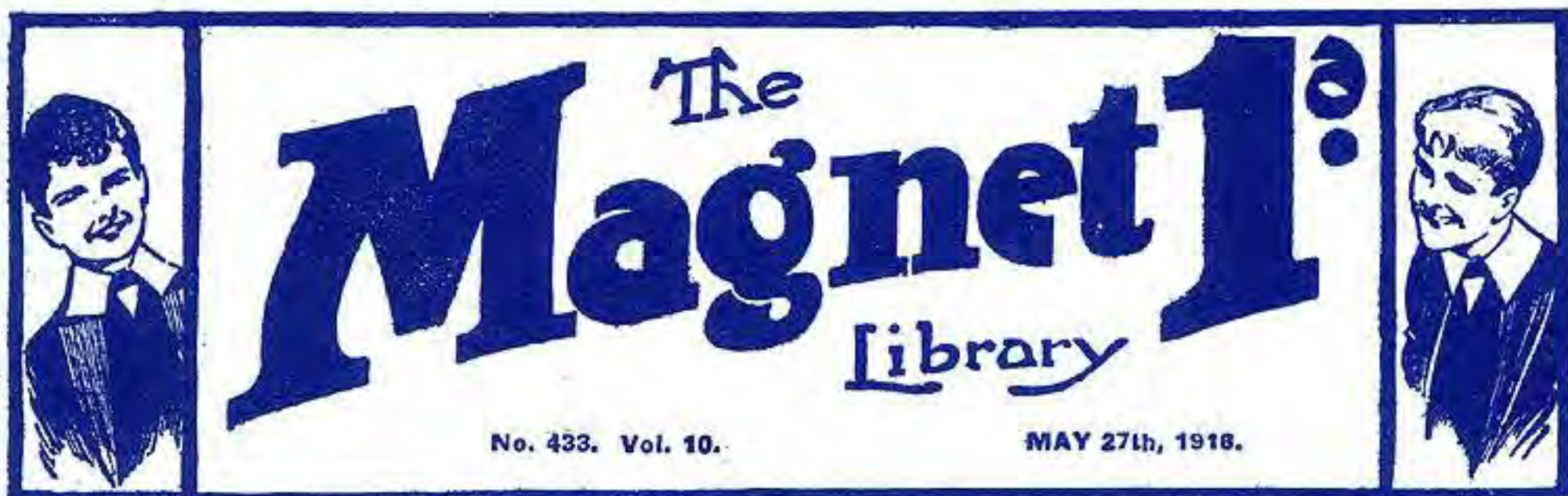


KICKED OUT OF SCHOOL!

A Grand Long Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.



WITH MALICE IN HIS HEART, THE GERMAN SCHOOLBOY LEAVES GREYFRIARS!

(A Thrilling Scene in the Magnificent Long Complete School Tale in this Issue.)

MY READERS' PAGE

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:

"FRANK NUGENT'S FOLLY!"

By Frank Richards.

Quite one of the best is next Monday's grand long, complete story of the famous chums of Greyfriars School. Sidney James Snoop, the oily, reprehensible cad of the Remove, gets into serious financial straits, and in a weak moment Frank Nugent, generous and easy-going, promises to provide the money wherewith to extricate Snoop from his scrape. Not having the cash himself, Nugent is compelled to obtain it from the junior cricket funds, of which he is treasurer; and his mortification and dismay when Snoop says he cannot possibly pay it back may well be imagined. The timely intervention of Vernon-Smith, the one-time Bounder of Greyfriars, prevents any adverse results accruing from

"FRANK NUGENT'S FOLLY!"

THE BOYS OF THE OLD BRIGADE!

One of Them Writes a Stirring Message to the Editors of the "Greyfriars Herald."

"Now, Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, and the rest of the staff, what do you mean by closing down your delightful paper just as we were all thoroughly enjoying it?"

"Don't you think you ought to be bumped? As dear old Gussy says, 'Yaas, wathah!' However, as it is the Kaiser's fault, I must let you off, and propose, instead, that the Kaiser be boiled in oil over a slow fire!"

"I look forward to the time when the war is over and the little paper springs into new life."

"Now, Bob and Harry, although I am a stranger to you, you are not so to me; for I knew you when you made your first appearance in the 'Magnet.' Many times my boys would ask me to read one of the books, and many a hearty laugh we have had at the expense of William George Bunter and similar amusing coves."

"Well, I used to buy the papers then; but my boy buys them now, and I read them with the same gusto as I did at first. Of course, when I was your age I read awful trash—'Dick Turpin,' etc. Then I remember dear old Brett's paper, 'Boys of England,' and 'Young Men of Great Britain.' Ah, they were delightful papers! But I think, after all, they do not come up to the 'Magnet' or 'Gem.'"

"But if I go on at this rate I shall tire your patience. So run along to cricket and enjoy yourselves, and take an old fogey's blessing. So au revoir, Bob, Harry, and the rest of you, and be sure to give us your paper again after the war. —Yours ever,

W. ALLEN."

The writer of the above genial letter is an old gentleman of seventy, living at Woolwich. There seems to be no age limit so far as readers of the good old "Magnet" Library are concerned, and I should not be surprised to learn that hundreds of hoary veterans still devour the Harry Wharton stories with the same avidity as a youngster of twelve.

In Harry Wharton's name I thank Mr. Allen for his warm tribute, and sincerely hope the magic pen of Mr. Frank Richards may serve to gladden the eventide of his life.

NOTICES.

K. Hargreaves, 374, Abbey Lane, Belgrave, Leicester, wants to buy the following: "Magnet," Nos. 380, 384, 387, 388, 391, 394, 410, and 418; "Gem," Nos. 379, 380, 382, 385, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 411, 413, and 415; and "Greyfriars Herald" No. 4.

John Lohle, 10, Old Compton Street, Soho, London, W., wants to form a "Gem" and "Magnet" League, open to readers anywhere, and will be glad if anyone interested will write him, enclosing a stamped and addressed envelope.

H. R. Warmington, 7, Osborne Road, Southville, Bristol, wants more members for a "Gem" and "Magnet" League, open to boys and girls anywhere.

Jack Lee, 20, North End, East Grinstead, particularly wants the "Magnet" story entitled "Champion of the Oppressed." B. Colling, 10, Coxwell Road, Plumstead, S.E., wants that called "The Slackers' Eleven." Will any reader oblige these two?

Private James Miller, 27th Reserve Batt., Manchester Regt., Alcester, Liverpool, asks for the numbers of the "Magnet" from 268 to 284, and would like to correspond with a reader.

Peter McCabe, Enagh, Swanns Cross Road, Co. Monaghan, would like to hear from readers who have for sale any of the following: "Magnet," Nos. 1-380; "Gem," Nos. 1-380; "Dreadnought," Nos. 1-150; "Through Thick and Thin"; "Tom Merry & Co.," and other school stories published in the "B. F." 3d. Library.

Private E. R. Chapman, 4,526, 2 Platoon, 1 Coy., 1st Herts Regt., B.E.F., France, would be very glad to have back numbers of the Companion Papers.

Miss Kathleen Ings, 4, Melbourne Villas, West Street, Woking, has just begun to learn shorthand, and would like to correspond with other readers who are learning in the script, for purposes of practice.

H. Junip, 61, Wavertree Vale, Wavertree, Liverpool, would like to buy numbers of the "Magnet" and "Gem" included in Vols. 1-6.

Private J. Lambert, 4,654, D. Coy., 4/10 Middlesex Regt., Hut 36, Purfleet, Essex, wants to buy back numbers of the "Magnet" for himself and his chums.

William Marshall, 22, Crystal Avenue, Cave Street, Beverley Road, Hull, wishes to buy "Through Thick and Thin" and "The Boy Without a Name."

J. Cracknell, Elm Lodge, Shirehall Lane, Hendon, London, N.W., wants to buy the numbers contained in Vols. 1-5 of both the "Magnet" and "Gem."

Private S. Pow, 1,517, A. Squadron, North Somerset Yeomanry, Kelvedon, Essex, would be glad to correspond with readers.

Charles Gressley, 2, Pleasant Road, Eccles, Manchester, wants to get the story of Nelson Lee entitled "Birds of Prey."

Michael Firlie, 46, St. Ann's Road, Rotherham, wants to buy the following numbers of the "Magnet": Those containing "The Schoolboy Auctioneer" and "Bunter the Boxer," and those in which Hurree Singh, Squiff, and Alonzo Todd came to Greyfriars.

Bandboy James McGhee, 22,227, Coy. No. 1, 3rd Batt. Scottish Rifles, Nigg Camp, Ross-shire, would be glad to correspond with a reader of about his own age—16.

Private R. W. Green, 097,393, 1st Section, 40 Coy., 5th General Headquarters, Ammunition Park, France, would be very glad to have back numbers of the "Magnet."

Miss Mollie Green, 11, Mount Street, Waterloo, Liverpool, wants to buy "The Boy Without a Name," and the "Magnet" numbers containing "Billy Bunter's Love-Affair" and "Billy Bunter's Postal Order."

Able-Seaman G. Craigie, C. 25,345, A. Coy., Hood Batt., R.N.D., 1st Naval Brigade, Eastern Mediterranean Squadron, c/o G.P.O., London, would like to correspond with a girl reader.

J. W. Jeffries, 131, Barclay Street, off Fosse Road, Leicester, wants a copy of "The Boy Without a Name."

Your Editor

A Complete School-
Story Book, attrac-
tive to all readers.



The Editor will be
obliged if you will
hand this book,
when finished with,
to a friend. . . .

KICKED OUT OF SCHOOL!

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

By FRANK RICHARDS.



"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" That sudden yell close behind him startled Mr. Banks almost out of his wits. He gave a wild jump and slid off the stile, plumping into the dusty lane on his hands and knees. (See Chapter 2.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Missing Lines!

"WHERE'S my impot?"

Harry Wharton asked that question wrathfully.

The captain of the Remove had run hastily into No. 1 Study. It was striking six, and at six o'clock the imposition had to be delivered to Mr. Quelch, his Form-master.

No. 433.

It was only a small impot—twenty lines of "Virgil"—and Wharton had dashed it off before joining his chums at cricket practice. He had left it lying on the study table when finished.

Cricket practice had proved interesting, and he had forgotten both the impot and Mr. Quelch until the first stroke of six reminded him of them.

Then he had rushed to the School House, and whipped into the study, to seize the written sheet and dash off to Mr. Quelch's study with it.

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May 27th, 1910.

To his surprise and wrath, it was no longer there! The study table, like Mrs. Hubbard's celebrated cupboard, was bare.

"What the dickens!" ejaculated Wharton. "What thumping ass has been playing tricks with my impot? Where the dickens—"

The last stroke of six died away.

Frank Nugent came into the study with a parcel under his arm. It was tea-time, and the juniors were quite ready for tea after cricket practice in the fine weather.

"Seen my impot, Franky?"

"No. 'Tome you took it to Quelchy. He's awfully particular about these things," said Nugent. "Buzz off while I get tea."

"But I can't find the impot."

"Where did you put it?"

"I left it on the table."

"Some ass has taken it for a joke, I suppose."

Wharton knitted his brows.

"I wish I knew the merry idiot! I'd joke him! Quelchy will double it if I don't take it in. I don't call this a joke."

The two juniors looked hastily about the study; but there was no sign of the missing sheet. The unknown practical joker had not simply put it out of sight in the room—it was gone.

Wharton stepped into the passage as a junior came along.

"Stop a minute, Newland!"

Monty Newland stopped.

"I suppose you haven't been joking with my impot?"

"No. Time you took it to Quelchy," said Newland.

"I know that, fathead! Have you seen anybody fooling round my study? It's been taken away."

Newland reflected.

"Yes; there was Rattenstein," he said. "I saw him coming out of your study a quarter of an hour ago, just when I was going out to the tuck-shop. He may know something of it."

"Thanks!"

Harry Wharton ran along the passage to the study which was shared by Lord Mauleverer, Delarey, and Rattenstein of the Remove. His brows were dark now. He had little doubt that that ill-natured joke had been played by Rattenstein. Rattenstein, the Hun schoolboy, was capable of that or any other unpleasant trick.

Wharton opened the study door hurriedly. Lord Mauleverer was there, and he blinked lazily at the excited captain of the Remove.

"Hallo, dear boy!"

"Where's Rattenstein?" asked Wharton.

"Gone down to the tuck-shop. He's kind enough to do the shoppin' for tea," said Lord Mauleverer.

Wharton sniffed. All the Remove knew that Rattenstein sponged most unmercifully on Lord Mauleverer, and that he never contributed his "whack" to tea in the study in all the weeks he had been at Greyfriars. The good-natured schoolboy earl did not mind; all he minded was Rattenstein's company in his study, and that could not be helped now.

"Well, I want the beast!" said Harry.

"Begad! What a curious taste!" yawned Lord Mauleverer. "But you can have him if you like, my dear fellow. I'm sure I don't want him."

"I mean, I want to speak to him," growled Wharton.

"Hallo! Here he comes!"

Rattenstein entered the study with a bundle. Evidently he had been doing shopping on an extensive scale. As Lord Mauleverer was footing the bill, the youthful Hun apparently saw no reason why he should stint himself.

"Here you are, Mauleverer," he said, taking no notice of Wharton. "And here's your change."

"Thanks, dear boy! Wharton wants to speak to you."

"The want is all on Wharton's side, then," said Rattenstein, with an evil look at the captain of the Remove.

There was no love lost between Harry Wharton and the German junior.

"I want to know what you've done with my impot," said Harry.

Rattenstein raised his eyebrows.

"Your what?"

"Impot."

"I don't quite understand."

"I left my impot on my study table when I went down to cricket. It's been taken away."

Rattenstein shrugged his shoulders.

"Has it? I don't see why you should suppose that I know anything about it. I'm not interested in your impots."

"You were in my study twenty minutes ago."

"I was not!"

Wharton's lip curled contemptuously. The first thought of the German schoolboy was a falsehood.

"Newland saw you," said Harry.

"That is not true."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 435.

"I'll call Newland."

"I'm here," said Monty Newland, looking in at the door. "You're mistaken, Rattenstein. You were coming out of No. 1 when I passed the door."

Rattenstein's pale-blue eyes glinted for a moment; then he nodded carelessly.

"Yes, now I remember. I stepped into the study for a moment," he said. "I did not see anything of the impot."

"What were you doing in my study, then?" demanded Wharton.

"I was going to ask you to lend me your 'Virgil,' as I have lines to do," said Rattenstein calmly. "As you were not there, I did not feel at liberty to take it. That is all."

"You denied going into the study a minute ago."

"I had forgotten."

"You didn't touch my impot?"

"No."

There was a pause. Rattenstein, apparently considering the matter at an end, was unpacking his bundle. Harry Wharton looked hard at him. Rattenstein was known in the Remove as untruthful and treacherous. He was on bad terms with most of the Remove, and especially with No. 1 Study. A lie cost him little, and Wharton could hardly doubt that he was lying now.

But he felt that he could not proceed further without proof. It was quite possible that someone else had abstracted the imposition.

"Well, I don't believe you, Rattenstein," said Wharton bluntly. "But I suppose I've got to give you the benefit of the doubt."

Rattenstein shrugged his shoulders again. Wharton left the study with knitted brows.

"I wouldn't say that he had it, you know," remarked Newland. "He hadn't it in his hand, anyway, when he came out of your study. Might have been somebody else."

Wharton nodded.

"Might have been; but it's just one of his rotten Hun tricks," he said. "I shall have to write it over again, and get a jawing into the bargain."

And Wharton went to his study, and started writing "Virgil" at express speed, instead of having tea. And when the lines were taken in to Mr. Quelch, that gentleman remarked that they were delivered half an hour late. However, he accepted the junior's explanation concerning the missing lines, and Wharton escaped without a fresh imposition.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Straight From the Shoulder!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"What's the row?"

"Our old friend Banks," said Bob Cherry.

The Famous Five were crossing the footpath through the meadows, returning from a visit to Cliff House. As they came through the last field towards the stile in Friardale Lane, Bob Cherry caught sight of a fat, squat figure seated on the stile.

It was a figure well-known in the neighbourhood—that of Mr. Banks, who followed the profession of bookmaker, sporting tout, and sharper generally.

Mr. Banks had his plump back to the juniors. He was seated facing the lane, and his eyes were turned in the direction of Greyfriars.

His bowler hat was perched on the back of his head, and he was poisoning the sweet evening air with the scent of a rank cigar.

"Banks, the bookie!" said Johnny Bull. "What is he doing here?"

"Waiting for somebody," said Bob; "and, to judge by the way he's blinking at the school, I should say it was somebody from Greyfriars."

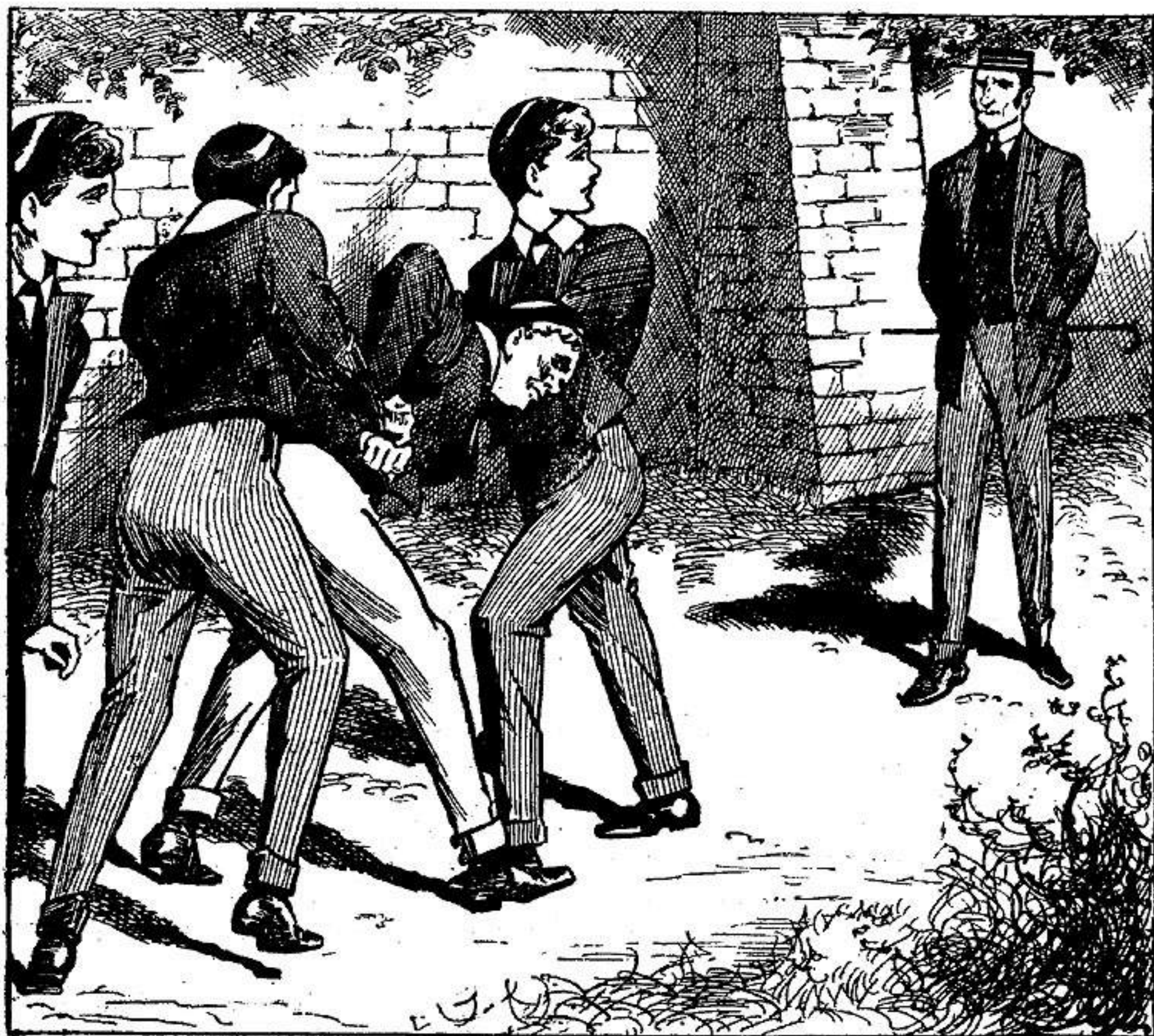
Harry Wharton frowned.

It was quite probable that Banks was there to see some reckless Greyfriars fellow.

All was grist that came to Mr. Banks' mill; and since the war had played havoc with the profits of sharp practice on the Turf, Mr. Banks was keener than ever to net the small sums that came to him from "goey" youths who were desirous of going the pace.

Wharton remembered only too well how Hazeldene of the Remove had fallen into serious trouble through the medium of Mr. Banks; he was not likely to forget it, or the distress it had caused his girl chum Marjorie Hazeldene. If Mr. Banks was "on the war-path" again it meant trouble for somebody at Greyfriars.

"The rotter!" said Harry. "Why can't he keep his blackguardism to its proper place—the racecourse? I wonder what silly ass he is waiting for now?"



Rattenstein began to struggle violently as he caught sight of the Remove Form-master. "My hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Chuck it, you ass! Don't you see Quelch?" "Let me go!" yelled Rattenstein, with all the power of his lungs. (See Chapter 3.)

"Not Hazel this time," said Nugent, with a laugh. "Hazel's chucked all that."

"Some other asinine duffer," said Johnny Bull. "Loder of the Sixth, perhaps. But Loder would have too much sense to meet him so near the school."

"I'll tell you what," said Bob Cherry. "If he's there to meet a Greyfriars chap, it's up to us to chip in. As leading persons in the school—"

"Ahem!"

"Leading persons in the Lower School, anyway, we're bound to keep an eye on reckless youths, and bring them up in the way they should go," said Bob. "My idea is to pitch Banks into the ditch."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"After all, he ought to be in khaki, you know," said Bob. "He's not too old. I suppose he's exempt as unfit. But why didn't he keep himself fit? Very likely a ducking in the ditch would buck him up."

"Fathead!" said Harry. "We don't want him to come complaining to the Head. Better find out first what his game is, anyway."

Mr. Banks had not heard the juniors approaching, as they were walking on the grass. Bob Cherry went ahead of his chums, and tiptoed up behind the bookmaker. Stopping close behind Mr. Banks, he emitted a sudden terrific yell.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 433.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"FRANK NUGENT'S FOLLY!"

That sudden yell close behind him startled Mr. Banks almost out of his wits. He gave a wild jump and slid off the stile, plumping into the dusty lane on his hands and knees. His cigar slipped into his mouth, and he gave a fearful howl as his lips touched the lighted end.

The fat gentleman sprawled over, and sat up dazedly, and ejected the cigar, and a string of oaths after it. He blinked at the face of Bob Cherry grinning at him over the stile.

"Good-evening!" said Bob cheerily.

"Grooooooh!"

"Did I startle you?"

"Gerrrrrg! You young villain! Ow!"

"Fancy meeting you!" went on Bob, vaulting lightly over the stile. "Did you come here specially to see us, Banks?"

Mr. Banks scrambled up, red with rage. He grasped his stick savagely, but he did not use it. Harry Wharton & Co. had followed Bob over the stile, and the Famous Five of Greyfriars were rather too big an order for the fat, unfit slacker to tackle.

"You young 'ound!" snarled Mr. Banks. "'Ang you!"

"Are you waiting here for a Greyfriars chap?" asked Bob.

"Find out!"

"That's what I'm asking you for. If you are, we're going to pitch you into the ditch! Now, own up!"

The juniors grinned. Mr. Banks was not likely to own up when his reward was to be a ducking in the ditch.

"I'm waiting for your answer," said Bob. "If you don't

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

answer you'll be bumped for contempt of court, according to law!"

"Ang you, you cheeky young sand!" snarled Mr. Banks. "That is not a satisfactory reply. I think we had better find the prisoner 'Guilty,' and execute the sentence of the law," said Bob.

"If you lay your 'ands on me——"

"Hallo!" said Johnny Bull suddenly. "Here comes the other rotter!"

"Rattenstein, by Jove!"

Rattenstein of the Remove was hurrying up the lane. He looked at the Famous Five in surprise as he came up. It was evident enough that the German junior was the person Mr. Banks had been waiting for.

"I expected to find you alone, Banks," he said.

"Blessed are those who don't expect," said Bob Cherry. "We're so attached to the dear old Banks that we can't leave him."

"So this is your latest, Rattenstein?" said Wharton, with a curl of the lip. "You are here to meet this rascal!"

"That is my business, I suppose."

"Not at all! It would be the Head's business if he knew."

"You had better tell him!" sneered Rattenstein.

"I shall not tell him. But——"

"I am not here to make bets with Mr. Banks," said Rattenstein. "I have quite another motive. It does not concern you, but I will tell you. I have good reason to believe that a Remove fellow has dealings with him, and I wish to put an end to it."

"My hat!"

"Gammon!" said Johnny Bull.

"The gammonfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The esteemed Rattenstein should tell us a more easyful one."

"If you do not believe me——"

"We don't!" said Harry Wharton quietly. "You can't expect us to when you are known to be a liar. But if that's your object you can go ahead—in our presence."

"I shall do nothing of the sort!"

"Then we conclude that you are lying—as usual! As you happen to belong to the Remove, you won't be allowed to chum up with bookmakers. You'll go back to Greyfriars."

"I shall do as I please."

"You'll do as we please in this matter. I suppose, as a Hun, you don't understand the rules of decency; but you won't be allowed to disgrace your school and ours while we can stop it. And you'll start at once."

"I won't!"

"Then we'll help you!"

"Pleased!" grinned Bob Cherry, and he took one of Rattenstein's arms. Johnny Bull took the other in a grip that made the German junior wince.

Rattenstein's eyes gleamed with rage.

"Will you let me go?" he hissed.

"No fear! Kim on!"

"The no-fearfulness is terrific. Proceed, my esteemed Hun, or I shall help you bootfully and behindfully."

Mr. Banks stood looking on with a savage brow. As the juniors marched Rattenstein off the bookmaker strode forward grasping a stick.

"Let the young gentleman alone!" he exclaimed. "Sharp, now, or I'll lay this stick round you!"

Harry Wharton swung round.

"Leave him to me, you chaps," he said. "Take that German cad away!"

"Right-ho!"

Mr. Banks ran forward flourishing his stick. Wharton jumped back and eluded the savage blow, dodged the stick, and closed in. His right came out straight from the shoulder and caught Mr. Banks on his fat chin like the blow of a hammer. The bookmaker staggered back and sat down in the dust with a gasping yell.

"Have some more?" asked Wharton, picking up the stick and tossing it over the hedge.

"Groogh! I'll make you pay for this!" Mr. Banks nursed his jaw in both hands in anguish. "Yow-ow-ow! You 'ound! Wow!"

Harry Wharton turned and followed his chums. Mr. Banks rose slowly to his feet, shook a fat fist after the juniors, and shambled away towards the village, to console himself at the Cross Keys. The meeting of the bookmaker and the German junior was evidently "off"—for that evening at least.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Ananias II.

RATTENSTEIN was pale with rage as he was marched away by the Famous Five. He did not venture to struggle, however. Among the qualities of the cad of the Remove was that of craven cowardice. But his eyes were burning with rage and hatred.

"Keep in step, dear boy," said Bob Cherry cheerily. "You'll be glad of this afterwards, you know. Banks would only have relieved you of your cash. And when you come to think of it you'll feel better for not behaving like a low blackguard—you will, really!"

"I'll make you suffer for this!"

"If you're spoiling for a scrap, you can pick your man!" said Johnny Bull. "I'd give you a hiding with pleasure!"

"Same here," smiled Nugent.

"The sameness is terrific."

Rattenstein tramped on savagely. He did not venture to lag, as he had no desire to be assisted "bootfully" by Hurree Singh.

The juniors arrived within sight of the gates of Greyfriars. Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was just coming out.

Rattenstein's eyes glinted as he caught sight of the Form-master.

He began to struggle violently.

"My hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Chuck it, you ass! Don't you see Quelch?"

"Let me go!" yelled Rattenstein, with all the power of his lungs.

"You silly ass!" growled Wharton. "If you bring Quelch here, he may find out what we're marching you in for. It will mean trouble for you."

"Help!" shouted Rattenstein, unheeding.

"Do you want Quelch to know——"

"Help!"

Mr. Quelch was already striding towards the group of juniors with a frowning brow. The chums of the Remove released Rattenstein, who stood panting.

"What does this mean?" exclaimed the Remove-master sternly. "Are you ill-using Rattenstein?"

"No, sir," said Wharton.

"Then what is the matter?"

"We—we were taking him home, sir," said Bob Cherry.

"He—he didn't want to come, so—so we were helping him."

"I suppose that is what you would call a 'rag'?" said Mr. Quelch severely. "How dare you treat Rattenstein in this way?"

"It was better for him to come home, sir," said Harry Wharton quietly. "As captain of the Remove, I felt bound to make him come."

"Indeed! Do you mean that Rattenstein was getting into some mischief?"

"Yes, sir."

"What have you to say, Rattenstein?"

"It is false!" panted Rattenstein. "I cannot tell you the circumstances, sir, because they would call me a sneak."

"You can tell Mr. Quelch everything, if you've the nerve," said Wharton. "We have nothing to hide, sir."

"You hear that, Rattenstein? Kindly tell me at once the cause of this dispute," said the Remove-master.

"They will call me a sneak if I do, sir."

"Nonsense! I command you to tell me!"

"Very well, sir," said Rattenstein. "I was walking to the village when I came upon these fellows in conversation with Mr. Banks, the bookmaker. I interrupted them, and they seized me and forced me away like this."

Mr. Quelch's brow became as black as a thunder-cloud.

"What! Is it possible? Wharton, have you any communications or dealings with that man?"

"Certainly not!" exclaimed Harry indignantly.

"Were you in conversation with him when Rattenstein met you?"

"In a way, yes; but——"

"Then what Rattenstein states is correct?"

"No, it isn't!" burst out Bob Cherry fiercely. "Banks was waiting there for Rattenstein to join him, and we were going to pitch him into a ditch for making appointments with a Greyfriars chap. That's all the conversation we had with him."

"Indeed! Your explanations do not agree. Rattenstein, were you going to meet that disreputable man?"

"No, sir. I have never spoken to him, and never intend to do so. It is not my way to make such acquaintances."

"What grounds have you for your statement, Cherry? Did Mr. Banks tell you he was there to meet Rattenstein?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Did Rattenstein tell you so?"

"He admitted it," said Nugent.

ANSWERS

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 433.

MAGNIFICENT TUCK-HAMPERS FOR READERS OF THE "BOYS' FRIEND," 1^d. OUT TO-DAY.

"I did not," said Rattenstein calmly. "They asked me if I had come to speak to him, and I said that I had reason to believe that a Remove boy had dealings with the man, and I wished to interfere. That is all."

"Indeed! And what Remove boy, Rattenstein, do you suppose has dealings with that rascally man?"

"Am I bound to tell you, sir?"

"Certainly."

"If Wharton does not object——"

"Why should I object?" exclaimed Harry fiercely.

"Very well. It is Wharton I mean, sir."

"J!" exclaimed Harry, utterly taken aback by this accusation.

"Yes, you!" said Rattenstein coolly. "I suspected you of underhand dealings with that bookmaker, and when I saw you in talk with him, I came up intending to interfere and remonstrate with you. You know it perfectly well, too!"

"Why, you lying cad——"

"Silence, Wharton! Rattenstein, tell me what reason you may have had for suspecting Wharton of anything of the kind?"

"I have seen him with Mr. Banks before, sir."

"It is a lie!" said Harry.

"Are you sure of what you say, Rattenstein?"

"Quite sure, sir. I did not intend to betray him, but he has given me no choice now. He accuses me."

"Wharton, do you deny Rattenstein's statement?"

"Every word of it, sir. It is false. Rattenstein is well known in the Remove as a liar and a slanderer, like all Germans!"

"I must conclude, Rattenstein, that you were mistaken. At the same time, Wharton, it was very injudicious of you to enter into any kind of talk with such a character, and you seem to have no evidence whatever that Rattenstein was going to meet him."

"What was he doing there, then?" growled Johnny Bull.

"I was going to the village, sir, for Loder of the Sixth. He asked me to go to the post-office. They have prevented me from performing the errand."

"What was the errand, Rattenstein?" asked Mr. Quelch, with a searching look at the German junior.

"To cash a postal-order for him, sir."

"Then you have it with you now?"

"Yes, sir."

"Show it to me."

Rattenstein produced a postal-order from his pocket. It was payable to Gerald Loder, and was signed by him.

"That is quite clear," said Mr. Quelch. "Rattenstein appears to have passed the spot by chance, Wharton, and your suspicion was quite unfounded. I have no doubt that his suspicion regarding yourself was equally without foundation. You have done one another injustice. Rattenstein, you may go to the village; and remember, I distinctly forbid you other boys to interfere with Rattenstein again!"

"Thank you, sir," said the German junior.

He turned away and walked off towards Friardale. Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another.

"My boys," said Mr. Quelch quietly, "I fear you have allowed yourselves to be carried away by prejudice on account of Rattenstein's German origin. You should endeavour to be more judicious and fair-minded. You may go."

And the Famous Five went, with feelings too deep for words.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

No Luck for Bunter!

"I SAY, you fellows——"

Billy Bunter met the Famous Five as they came in at the gates of Greyfriars. The fat junior had been waiting for them.

"I say, you fellows, can you lend me a tanner?"

"Hasn't your postal-order come?" asked Johnny Bull, as he fumbled in his pocket. Bunter's demand was unusually moderate; he generally wanted shillings at least.

"No; as a matter of fact, it hasn't, Bull," said Bunter.

"There's been a delay in the post owing to this conscription business, I suppose. I'll let you have that tanner immediately the postal-order comes."

"Right-ho! Call on me when I'm eighty!" said Johnny. "Catch!"

Billy Bunter caught the sixpence—with his nose. He gave a yelp, and the chums of the Remove walked on, and left him searching the ground for the "tanner." Having found it, Billy Bunter blinked dubiously at it through his big spectacles. Then he blinked round the quadrangle in search, apparently, of someone. Then he ambled away towards Mrs. Mimble's little tuck-shop in the corner of the Close, and the sixpence went the way of all sixpences that came into Bunter's fat hands.

Harry Wharton & Co. had gone in, and were in the Common-room about a quarter of an hour later when Billy

NEXT
MONDAY—

"FRANK NUGENT'S FOLLY!"

EVERY MONDAY, The "Magnet" LIBRARY. ONE PENNY.

Bunter ran them down once more. The fat junior came up with a somewhat doubtful expression on his face, not to mention a smear of jam.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Hand it over," said Johnny Bull.

"Eh? Hand what over?"

"The tanner. I suppose your postal-order's come, and you've come to settle up?"

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"Then buzz off. Tanners are limited."

"The fact is, you fellows," said Bunter, blinking at the juniors, "I'm specially in want of another tanner——"

"Bow-wow!"

"It's all the fault of that brute, Fishy," explained Bunter.

"He won't lend me his bunch of keys under a tanner. You know what a mean beast he is."

"Well, what do you want his bunch of keys for?"

"I've lost the key of my—my desk," said Bunter.

"There's some money in my desk——"

"Whose?"

"My desk, you ass!"

"I mean whose money?"

"Oh, really, Cherry! My money, of course. I forget how much there is, but quite a lot. And I've lost the key of my desk. You know Fishy deals in old keys and things, and he'll let me have the use of his bunch for sixpence. I really must open my desk, you know."

"But you've had one tanner."

"I was feeling faint," said Bunter pathetically. "I had to take a snack to keep my strength up. I'm delicate."

"Ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I suppose you wouldn't like to see me waste away to a shadow under your eyes?"

"Pretty solid shadow you'd make!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"You've had all the tanners you're going to get from me. Your turn, Bob."

Bob Cherry laughed, and felt in his pockets.

"Tanners are off," he said. "Fivepence is no good, I suppose?"

"Fishy wouldn't take fivepence," said Bunter. "Still, I—I'll try."

"Not with my fivepence!"

"Oh, really, Cherry, don't be a mean beast, you know! I'll return it immediately my postal-order comes."

"Give him a tanner, somebody, and roll him away!" said Bob.

"Hold on!" said Harry Wharton quietly. "Whose desk are you going to open with that key when you get it from Fishy, Bunter?"

"Mine, of course!"

"All serene. I'll come with you and get the keys from Fishy," said Harry.

"If you can't trust me with a tanner, Wharton——"

"Well, I can't."

"Ahem! Come on, then!"

"Come on, you chaps!" said Wharton.

His chums followed him from the Common-room, a little puzzled. Wharton had some reason for requesting their assistance in the matter, but they could not guess what it was. Billy Bunter led the way to Study No. 14 in the Remove passage. Fisher T. Fish, the Yankee junior, was there.

The Remove merchant was deep in some abstruse calculations in a pocket-book—probably one of his schemes for extracting cash from his Form-fellows. He looked up irritably as the juniors came into the doorway.

"I guess you're interrupting me!" he snapped.

"Bunter wants your keys," said Wharton.

Fish's face cleared at once. He was always ready for trade. That, as he would have expressed it in his native language, was "where he lived." Fishy was a great merchant, and he bought up all sorts of odds-and-ends cheap at second-hand shops to sell to fellows at enhanced prices. Whenever a Removeite wanted to replace a lost key, or a pocket-knife blade, or the hands of a damaged clock, he always went to Fisher T. Fish. Fisher T. Fish always had just what he wanted, and would turn a more or less honest penny in disposing of it.

The Yankee junior unlocked a drawer, and drew out a huge bunch of old keys of various shapes and sizes. There were keys enough there to fit half the locks of Greyfriars.

"Hyer you are," said Fish briskly. "Any key you like for a bob, or the loan of the whole bunch for an hour for sixpence."

"I suppose they cost you about a penny each?" sniffed Johnny Bull.

"Less than that," said Fish calmly. "A farthing a time

would be nearer the mark. But I don't beg you to trade with me. Suit yourself."

"Well, here's the tanner," said Wharton, tossing it on the table.

"And byer's the keys."

Billy Bunter took the big bunch in his fat hand and rolled out of the study. Harry Wharton & Co. followed him.

Bunter stopped in the passage.

"I say, you fellows, you needn't bother any further. I can manage all right."

"We'll help you get the desk open," said Wharton.

"Thanks all the same, but I don't want any help."

"You're going to have it whether you like it or not, my fat tulip. Come on to your study."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

The captain of the Remove took the fat junior by the collar.

"This way, Buntty!"

"Leggo!" howled Bunter. "Make him leggo, Johnny, old chap. You could lick him, you know. I'll hold your jacket."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's gratitude for the tanner, I suppose?" grinned Bob Cherry. "Stand clear while I kick him to the stairs."

"Yow-ow-ow! Keep him off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We're going to see that desk opened, Bunter," said Wharton quietly.

"What the dickens for?" asked Frank Nugent, in surprise.

"Because I think the fat bounder is spoofing," said Harry.

"If he wants those keys to open his own desk, well and good. If he wants to open somebody else's desk, he's going to be scragged. Savvy?"

"Oh, I see!"

The juniors looked grimly at Bunter now. Bunter's ideas of "meum and tuum" were decidedly mixed, and the chums remembered that he had borrowed Fishy's keys once before, to open Harry Wharton's desk.

Bunter's jaw dropped. There was guilt in his fat face.

"Oh, really, Wharton!" he said feebly. "Of—of course it's my desk I'm going to open; but—but—"

"Then let's see you do it."

"On the whole, I won't open it now," said Bunter. "I'll leave it till presently. You fellows can cut off. Yow-ow-ow! Leggo!"

Wharton did not let go. He marched Billy Bunter into Study No. 7 with a grip of iron on his collar. It was plain enough now that Bunter was fibbing as usual, and that he wanted the keys for a surreptitious purpose. Peter Todd was in the study, and he stared as the Famous Five marched in with the wriggling Owl of the Remove.

"What are you doing to my porpoise?" he demanded.

"Make the beast leggo, Toddy!" howled Bunter. "You can lick him; you know. I—I'll hold your jacket."

"We've come to help Bunter unlock his desk," said Wharton. "Go ahead, Bunter!"

"His desk!" said Todd. "His desk isn't locked. The lock's been broken for dog's ages."

"You fat spoofer!" shouted Wharton, shaking the Owl of the Remove forcibly. "Now, what did you want the keys for?"

"Yow-ow-ow! D-d-don't shake me, you beast!"

"Whose desk were you going to open?"

"Nun-nun-nobody's. 'Tain't a desk," howled Bunter. "It's a box."

"Your box?"

"N-n-not exactly. A box, you know," said Bunter.

"Any old box, you know. I—I'm not particular."

"You fat idiot! Give me those keys!"

"Yow-ow! I say, Toddy—"

"Leave him to me," said Peter Todd. "As he belongs to my study, it's up to me to look after him. Shove him over the table while I get a stump."

Billy Bunter yelled in anticipation.

"Toddy, you beast! Yaroooh! I say, you fellows, chuck it, and I'll let you into it, and we'll whack it out before Rattenstein comes back."

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Awful for Fishy!

"RATTENSTEIN!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Yes; that Hun beast, you know. Leggo!"

"So you were going to open Rattenstein's box?"

"Well, what right has a rotten German to lock up grub and keep it all for himself?" demanded Bunter. "We all know he sponges on old Mauly, so the grub isn't really his. Let's whack it out."

"Blessed if I understand this," said Bob Cherry. "Do you mean to say that Rattenstein has locked up a lot of tuck?"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 433.

"I know he has. He's got a box in his study that he always keeps locked," said Bunter eagerly. "I found him out, you know. I've often noticed that box when I've been in the study to see my pal Mauly."

"When you've been there to screw tin out of Mauly, you mean, you fat spoofer."

"Oh, really, Bull! It's a jolly strong box, and it has a good lock on it," said Bunter. "The Hun beast always keeps it locked. He cut up as rusty as anything when he found me looking at it yesterday. I was only just looking at it, and trying a penknife on the lock, and he kicked me out of the study."

"Serve you jolly well right!"

"But how do you know there's tuck in the box?" asked Nugent, puzzled.

"Of course there must be!" said Bunter peevishly. "Why should he keep it always so jolly carefully locked if there wasn't grub in it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"You fat duffer!" roared Peter Todd. "He might be keeping anything in it. I don't suppose for a minute there's tuck there."

"Oh, rot! Of course it's tuck, or he wouldn't keep it locked up," said Bunter. "It stands to reason it's tuck. My idea is, that the beast ought to be raided. The Huns raid us in Zeppelins and things, so why shouldn't we raid that young Hun's box?"

"Whether it's tuck or not, you're not going to raid it," said Peter Todd. "You've got to learn to keep your hands from picking and stealing, my infant."

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

"Shove him over the table," said Peter Todd, taking up the cricket-stump.

"Yaroooh!"

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Yoooop! Help! Fire! Murder!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now you'd better take those keys back to that Yankee," said Todd. "Might as well dot him on the nose while you're about it."

"Yow-wow-wow-wow!" mumbled Bunter.

The chums of the Remove left the study—with the keys. Billy Bunter blinked after them longingly. He was fully convinced that there was tuck hidden in the German school-boy's box. Bunter could not possibly imagine any other reason for locking it up so carefully.

Harry Wharton & Co. returned to No. 14. Wharton pitched the bunch of keys on the table with a clang.

"There's your rubbish, Fishy," he said.

"Thanks!"

"You'd better not lend them to Bunter again. He wanted them to burgle Rattenstein's box," said Harry.

"By gum, did he?"

"Yes, he did."

"Waal, I guess that was his business, not mine," said Fisher T. Fish coolly. "I can't refuse to do a trade when I'm asked; 'tain't my bizncy to keep an eye on the manners and customs of my customers. I guess Bunter can have these keys every time he pays a tanner."

"Why, you rotter, you know what he wants them for!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"I calculate I know what Wharton says he wants them for," said Fisher T. Fish. "I reckon Bunter would tell a different yarn."

"Does that mean that you doubt my word?" asked Wharton, taking a step towards the Yankee junior.

"Nunno!" said Fisher T. Fish hastily. "Not at all. But I guess I'm not goin' out of business to please any galoot."

"You mean that you'll let Bunter have the keys again when he asks for them?"

"Yep, if he parts."

"Very good," said Wharton, taking up the bunch of keys. "You've seen the last of them, then."

"Eh? You gimme my keys!" howled Fish, in alarm.

"Wharrer you going to do with my keys?"

"I'm going to throw them into the Sark," said Wharton coolly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wha-a-at! My keys! Into the river! Why, you galoot—you mugwump—you jay! You'll pay for them first!"

"How much did they cost you?" asked Wharton contemptuously.

"Never mind what they cost me. The price of that bunch of keys is twenty-five shillings."

Wharton did not reply. He walked out of the study, followed by his grinning chums. Fisher T. Fish rushed frantically after him.

"Gimme my keys!"

MAGNIFICENT TUCK-HAMPERS FOR READERS OF THE "BOYS' FRIEND," 1D. OUT TO-DAY.



"A bob!" yelled Fish. "They cost me a bob! I guess I'll let you have them cost price, you galoot!" Wharton's arm swept through the air, and the bunch of keys dropped into the middle of the river with a splash. (See Chapter 5.)

Wharton strode on, unheeding. The Yankee junior grasped him by the shoulder, but a shove on the chest sent him spinning along the passage. The captain of the Remove descended the stairs and walked out into the Close.

"Yow-ow-woop!" gasped Fisher T. Fish. And he rushed after Wharton, and the chuckling juniors followed fast. Fisher T. Fish's face was too good to be missed.

The Yankee junior sprinted across the quadrangle after Wharton, and overtook him breathlessly at the gates.

"Mum-mum-my keys!" he gasped.

"Rats!"

"Wharrer you going to do with my keys?"

"I've told you."

"I'll lick you—I'll make potato-scrappings of you—I'll——"

"Come on, then," said Wharton, laughing.

"Ahem! I'll—I'll complain to Mr. Quelch if you destroy my property!" yelled Fisher T. Fish.

"Then I shall have to explain why I did it," said Harry, following the path to the river with quick strides, the Yankee junior panting by his side.

"You mugwump!" gasped Fisher T. Fish. "You know Quelch would be down on a little harmless trading; he doesn't understand business——"

"That's your look-out."

"Look hyer, I'll let you have those keys for ten bob."

"Ten rats!"

"Five bob!" shrieked Fisher T. Fish, as they approached the bank of the gleaming Sark.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 433.

"Bosh!"

"A bob!" yelled Fish. "They cost me a bob! I guess I'll let you have them cost price, you galoot!"

Splash! Wharton's arm swept through the air, and the bunch of keys dropped into the middle of the river. Then the captain of the Remove turned back.

"You owe me a bob!" shrieked Fisher T. Fish.

Wharton shook his head.

"I owe you a thick ear!" he said. "If you lose a bob, it's because you're not honest. Honesty is the best policy, Fishy. If they cost you a bob——"

"They did, honest Injun!"

"You asked me twenty-five bob at first, so, on your own showing, you're a thief!"

"That was the profit, you dummy—that's business."

"Profits of that size ain't business—they're stealing," grinned Bob Cherry. "You ought to be a shipowner, Fishy."

The Famous Five walked back, chuckling, to the school. Fisher T. Fish followed them, his thin face crimson with wrath and dismay. But there was no help for it. Fishy was "too proud to fight." And his property was gone now; upon those particular articles he would never make a profit again.

The Remove merchant, like Rachel of old, mourned and would not be comforted. He was still looking decidedly gloomy when he came in for calling-over. Mr. Quelch took the roll-call, and Rattenstein of the Remove did not answer to his name.

As the juniors left the hall, Fisher T. Fish sidled up to the captain of the Remove.

"I guess you're going to settle up?" he said persuasively.

"Certainly!" said Wharton. "I owe you a thick ear for being a swindling outsider! Here you are!"

But Fisher T. Fish did not wait for the settlement.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Precious Pair!

"O H, 'ere you are!"

Mr. Banks was smoking his cigar in the garden of the Cross Keys when Rattenstein of the Remove entered at the gate, with a quick glance to and fro. The German junior hurried up the path and joined the bookmaker.

Mr. Banks looked at him sourly. He had been glad enough to make the acquaintance of Prince Rupprecht von Rattenstein, having the belief that a prince would have money to waste. But so far he had not seen any of Rattenstein's money, and he had a suspicion that the prince was far from well supplied with it. And his appointment with Rattenstein that afternoon had not prospered. He rubbed his aching chin as he thought of it.

"Step into this summer-house," said Rattenstein quickly.

"I must not be seen here."

Mr. Banks seemed in no hurry to move.

"If you're ready for business, I am," he said. "But what's the game? You owe me a pound, Mister Rattenstein."

"Come, come!"

Rattenstein stepped into the dirty summer-house, and the bookmaker followed him slowly. The German junior had little nerve, and he knew only too well the consequences of being discovered within the precincts of the Cross Keys.

"Well, wot is it?" asked Mr. Banks.

His manner could not be called respectful. But Rattenstein had learned his lesson since he had first come to Greyfriars expecting to "swank" on his cheap principedom derived from Germany. Rattenstein, having been born in England of naturalised parents, prided himself upon being British, as certainly he was in a legal sense—but certainly only in a legal sense. There was nothing British about his crafty, treacherous nature.

But his pride was great in his supposed rank, and he had been bitterly mortified to find that it was regarded rather with amusement than respect in the Greyfriars Remove, and that any Hun, whether prince or waiter, was simply looked upon there as a Hun, and nothing else. Only Fisher T. Fish had cared much about his title; and even Fishy had cooled off when he found that princes in Rattenstein's native country were numbered by the thousand, and when, moreover, Rattenstein had borrowed cash of him and failed to return it.

Rattenstein took no notice of the bookmaker's manner. Like a true German, he could be bullying and overbearing, or cringing and civil, as it suited his purpose. It suited him now to be very civil.

"I cannot pay you the pound now," he said. "It is something else I wish to speak to you about, my friend."

Mr. Banks grunted.

"No more betting till we're square," he said. "You might have known that without giving me the trouble to come down the road this afternoon."

"It is not betting, either."

"Then what is it?"

"Revenge," said the German.

Mr. Banks stared at him.

"Wot the dickens—" he began.

"I have spoken to you before of Wharton," said Rattenstein, in a low voice. "You have told me how he interfered between you and a boy you made money out of."

"Yes, hang him!" said Mr. Banks, rubbing his chin.

"He knocked you down this afternoon."

"Wot about it?" demanded Mr. Banks angrily. "I'll get a chance at 'im with my stick one of these days!"

"I can show you a safer way than that. That is what I wanted to see you for. I hate him, more than you do—I hate them all!" said Rattenstein, between his teeth. "But Wharton most of all. If all goes well, I will ruin him!"

"I'd like to see it done," said Mr. Banks. "But I don't see how you can do it, Master Rattenstein."

"You can write him a letter."

"Eh? Wot for?"

"Don't you see? It will come out that he has received a letter from you. I have already told his Form-master that I have seen him in talk with you. Write to him and ask him for the pound he owes you."

"My eye!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 433.

"Mr. Quelch will see the letter, and it will be a proof that he has dealings with you—that he is not what he pretends."

"Well, bust me!" said Mr. Banks. "You're a precious young German rascal, I must say, Mister Rattenstein!"

The German flushed angrily.

"You wish to make him sorry he struck you; well, I will help you," he said.

"But the kid will deny knowing anything about me or the pound," said Mr. Banks dubiously. "His master will believe him."

"Not if he is caught writing back to you and sending a pound."

"But he won't be."

"He will," said Rattenstein coolly. "I can contrive it."

Mr. Banks whistled.

"My hat! That would settle his hash!" he said. "But—but I don't see how you'll work that there game, Mister Rattenstein."

"Leave that to me," said the German junior. "I tell you I have it all cut and dried. Do your part—there is no risk in that. My part will be done, and there is the risk; but I shall take it."

Mr. Banks nodded slowly.

"He will be expelled from the school," said Rattenstein, his eyes glittering. "He will be sent away in disgrace. Not only for gambling and betting, but for lying and deceiving—for he will be judged guilty."

"My eye!" said Mr. Banks. "And you can do it?"

Rattenstein nodded.

"I can do it. I have taken all my measures, and it is certain—if you will do the first part. There is no risk in that for you. You simply write to Wharton asking him for the pound he owes you."

The bookmaker chuckled.

"Well, I'm game," he said. "It won't cost me much to do that. But I don't see how you'll work the game arter. Howsumdover, that's your business. I'll do it, Master Rattenstein."

"Good! And you can rely upon seeing him driven out of Greyfriars in disgrace," said the German.

Rattenstein looked cautiously out of the summer-house, and left. Mr. Banks blew out a thick cloud of smoke, and stared after him.

"Precious young rascal!" he said.

Rattenstein walked away quickly by the towing-path, and hurried back to Greyfriars. He was late for calling-over, and had to report himself in Mr. Quelch's study.

"You are late," the Remove-master said curtly, as the prince tapped at the door and presented himself.

"I am sorry, sir; I was delayed at the post-office," said Rattenstein civilly. "There were many people posting parcels to the Front, and I had been delayed so long by Wharton and his friends—"

"Very well, you are excused," said Mr. Quelch. "You may go!"

"I—I should like to say a word, sir, about—" Rattenstein paused.

"You may speak," said the Remove-master. "What is it?"

"About what I told you this afternoon, sir."

"That matter is closed."

"Excuse me, sir, I have a right to speak. Wharton forced me to speak out, but you did not believe what I told you."

"I think you were mistaken—at least in supposing that Wharton had any dealings with a man like Mr. Banks," said the Form-master coldly.

"I do not think I was mistaken, sir; but in fairness to me, it should be proved. I am certain that Wharton corresponds with the bookmaker."

Mr. Quelch started.

"Corresponds with him!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir."

"Impossible!"

"Very well, sir; but as my word has been doubted, I thought you would be willing to look into the matter. I did not desire to bring it to your notice at all, but Wharton has accused me of what he was himself guilty of—"

"That is enough, Rattenstein. I shall investigate this matter."

"Very well, sir!"

Rattenstein left the study, and closed the door, and grinned in the passage. He was grinning as he walked into the Common-room. Wharton was there, but he did not glance at the German junior. But Rattenstein's eyes dwelt on the captain of the Remove with deep malice and satisfaction. It was as certain as anything could be, now, that Wharton's correspondence would be examined by his Form-master—and on the morrow Mr. Banks' letter was to arrive. Everything was going well—from the peculiar point of view of the revengeful Hun.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter Makes a Wonderful Discovery.

BILLY BUNTER jumped.

The Owl of the Remove was in Lord Mauleverer's study.

That locked box, which Prince Rupprecht von Rattenstein was so careful to keep locked, exercised a sort of fascination upon William George Bunter. The loss of Fishy's keys had nipped in the bud his burglarious designs; but Billy Bunter had by no means abandoned them. Fully convinced that it was a supply of tuck that Rattenstein kept locked up from the public view, Billy Bunter hovered round the locked box like a fat Peri at the gate of paradise.

Having seen the three occupants of the study in the Common-room, Billy Bunter had hurried up to the Remove passage and whipped into the study, sure of not being interrupted for a few minutes at least. He was stooping over the box and examining it, debating in his mind whether the poker would be of much use on the lock.

It was a strong, iron-bound box, with a very strong lock, a couple of feet long and a foot deep. What could Rattenstein keep in it so carefully if not tuck? It was as clear as noon-day—to Billy Bunter.

The fat junior had not yet quite decided upon the poker, when footsteps came up to the study door. Then Bunter jumped.

He knew Rattenstein's quick tread. His last experience, when the German had found him fumbling over the box, had been a painful one. Billy Bunter blinked round the study desperately, and dived under the table. A handsome Persian cover, the property of Lord Mauleverer, was on the table, and it quite concealed the fat junior as he crouched underneath.

A few seconds later Rattenstein entered the study.

Billy Bunter could see his feet as he passed the table. Then he heard the German junior utter an exclamation, apparently of surprise at finding the gas alight in the study. Lord Mauleverer was careless in such matters, and he frequently left the gas burning—though, as a matter of fact, it was Bunter who had lighted it this time.

Billy Bunter sat tight, with his fat knees drawn up to his chin. Funk as the German was, he was not afraid of a fat and unwieldy fellow like Bunter, and he would certainly have licked him severely if he had found him spying again in his quarters. Indeed, in dealing with a fellow who was no match for him, the cruel and bullying nature of the Hun would have had free play. Bunter had no desire whatever to test how hard Rattenstein could hit with a cricket-stump.

He hoped fervently that Rattenstein had not come to stay. But that hope was short-lived. There was a click, and he knew that the German had locked the door. What on earth he should lock the door for was a mystery—till Bunter heard him go to the locked box and unlock it.

Then Bunter groaned silently.

Undoubtedly there was tuck in the box, and the German had locked himself in the study for a great feed "on his own." He listened for the sound of munching jaws, only fear of the German junior's savage temper restraining him from revealing his presence and claiming a "whack" in the spread.

But there was no sound of munching. Instead of that, there was a rustle of papers.

The German was taking papers from the locked box!

Bunter heard a low, soft chuckle. Rattenstein sat down at the table, his feet coming within a dozen inches of Bunter's.

Then there came the regular scratch of a pen.

Bunter sat motionless, hardly breathing, and in a state of great dismay.

Apparently the German junior had come to the study to do his preparation, though it was somewhat early for that. Yet why should he keep his foolscap in the locked box? He certainly could have had no fear of his paper being raided, whatever might have happened to eatables.

Bunter was puzzled, and he was curious. Curiosity was his besetting sin. There was something very curious in the conduct of the German. If he was doing his prep, what had he locked the study door for?

But if he wasn't doing his prep, what was he doing? What were the papers he had taken from the locked box?

Billy Bunter had a vivid imagination. The fellow was a German—the fact that he had been born in England made no difference to that, excepting as a point of law. True, he boasted himself British; but then, a Hun would lie as naturally as he would breathe. He was a prince, too; and it was common knowledge that spies are found rather among the upper than the lower class of naturalised Germans. Billy Bunter began to wonder whether Rattenstein was a German spy. Certainly he was none too good for that. Perhaps he was, even at this moment, drawing up a report for secret transmission to his native country. Bunter felt himself in a thrill of excitement at the bare idea. If Rattenstein was a German spy, there would be heaps of "kudos" for the fellow who bowled him out! Billy Bunter no longer regretted his uncomfortable position under the study table.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 433.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"FRANK NUGENT'S FOLLY!"

EVERY
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

Scratch, scratch, scratch! went the busy pen.

Bunter was beginning to feel cramped. It had lasted for half an hour, and he wondered how long he could hold out without betraying himself. To his relief, there came a rattle at the door-handle.

"Begad! It's locked!" It was Lord Mauleverer's voice outside. "What the dickens is the door locked for?"

Rattenstein jumped up.

"Wait a minute!" he called out.

There was a hurried rustling of paper as it was crammed into the box, and the click of a turning key.

Bunter grinned under the table.

Before opening the study door, the German had hurriedly crammed the papers he was engaged upon into the box and locked it. Evidently his mysterious writings were not to meet the eyes of his study-mate. Equally evident, it could not have been school work that he was engaged upon. There would have been no need to conceal that.

Rattenstein crossed quickly to the door and unlocked it.

Lord Mauleverer came in.

"What do you lock a fellow out for?" he asked plaintively. "This is about the sixth or seventh time you've locked me out, dear boy!"

"Oh!" murmured Bunter. "Is it?"

Rattenstein did not reply to the question.

"What the dickens do you do it for?" asked Mauleverer.

"I don't want to be interrupted when I'm working," said Rattenstein.

Lord Mauleverer glanced at the bare table.

"But you've not been workin'," he said.

"I—I was reading my Latin."

"Begad!"

Lord Mauleverer yawned, and sat down at the table. He had come to the study to do his preparation.

Rattenstein left the study, perhaps to avoid any further questioning as to his curious conduct in locking the study door.

Lord Mauleverer yawned again, deeply and dolorously, and started work. But he left off suddenly as a fat figure crawled out from under the table. He glanced at Bunter in astonishment.

"Bunter, begad!"

"It's all right, Mauly," said Billy Bunter. "Only a little joke, you know. Don't mention to that German beast that I've been here."

And Bunter rolled out of the study, leaving Lord Mauleverer in a state of astonishment.

In the passage Bunter paused.

He had made a wonderful discovery—he was almost sure of it. Either Rattenstein was a spy, or he had some shady secret of some sort. Bunter wondered whether Peter Todd or Wharton would lend a hand in investigating it. He decided that they wouldn't. They were not likely to trouble their heads about Rattenstein's private concerns—and they were certain to cackle at the suggestion that he was a spy—not being blessed with the great imaginative powers of William George.

In fact, Toddy was most likely to bring the cricket-stump into play again, as a warning to the Owl of the Remove to keep his insatiable curiosity within bounds.

Bunter decided to keep his discovery to himself—for the present. He rolled along to Study No. 14 to see Fisher T. Fish. The Yankee junior was there, beginning his preparation; Johnny Bull and Squiff had not yet come up. There was a sombre cloud on Fishy's brow—he had not yet recovered from the loss of his property, ruthlessly confiscated by the captain of the Remove.

He looked at Bunter with a grim and lowering eye.

"I say, Fishy, I want your keys——"

"I guess you'd better dive into the Sark for them," said Fish dispiritedly. "That galoot Wharton's chucked them into the river!"

"He, he, he!"

"What are you cackling at, you fat clam?"

"Haven't you got any more?" asked Bunter, repressing his merriment at the Yankee junior's loss. "I want them to—to open my desk, you know."

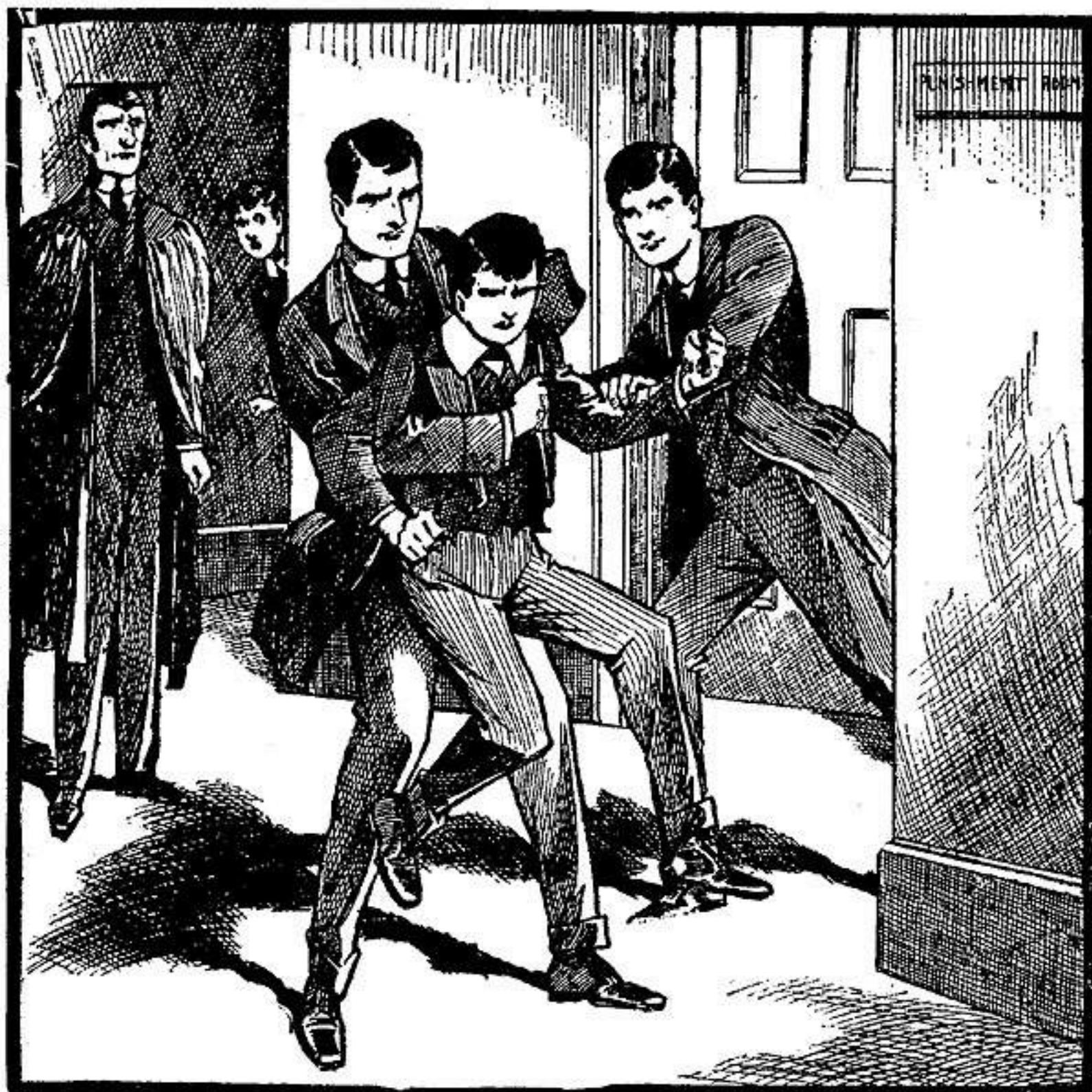
"I guess I know what you want them for," growled Fisher T. Fish. "But I calculate that ain't my funeral. Come along to-morrow and we'll trade. I'm going down to old Lazarus' to-morrow, and I reckon I shall get a fresh lot!"

"But I want them to-night."

"I guess you can wait!"

"Br-r-r!" growled Bunter

Evidently his wonderful discovery had to wait for confirmation. And it was hard for Billy Bunter to wait. He was keener than ever to see the interior of the mysterious box—his curiosity, if not his gargantuan appetite, would be gratified



The two prefects grasped the junior. Wharton, utterly reckless now, hit out furiously, and Wingate staggered back. (See Chapter 13.)

thereby, and Bunter was even more inquisitive than he was voracious. But there was no help for it—and Bunter had to wait.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Reward!

HAVING discovered that Prince Rupprecht von Rattenstein was a German spy—to his own satisfaction, at least—Billy Bunter determined to keep the secret carefully till he had found proof of it in the locked box.

There is a proverb that he who has a secret to keep should not only hide the secret, but hide that he has it to keep. But Billy Bunter did not bear that wise old maxim in mind. The fat junior was a chatterbox by nature, and he simply could not help talking. When he rolled into the Common-room he had a look of mysterious importance upon his fat face—the look of a fellow who knew what he knew, so to speak. Some of the juniors were discussing the latest Zeppelin outrages, and Billy Bunter joined them, and chimed in. Bolsover major was of opinion that the Zeppelin assassins were guided by lights displayed by spies in the country they traversed, and Bunter nodded a sage confirmation.

"Some of those spies may be nearer than you fellows think," he remarked mysteriously.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Have you been spotting spies?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Perhaps I have," said Bunter loftily. "It takes a fellow with brains to spot those rascals, you know. Perhaps there's one in this very school, and perhaps there isn't."

"With the odds on the isn't," said Vernon-Smith.

"That's all you know, Smithy," said Bunter. "Perhaps I could tell you something, if I chose."

"The perhapsfulness is terrific!" remarked the Nabob of The Magnet Library.—No. 433.

Bhanipur. "The esteemed fat Bunter is talking out of his ludicrous hat!"

"Oh, really, Inky! I could tell you something if I liked. Some fellows find things out, and some don't."

"What on earth have you found out, Fatty?" asked Bob.

"That's telling!"

"Well, tell us, then, you fat duffer!"

"Perhaps there's a spy in Greyfriars," said Bunter mysteriously. "Perhaps he's pretending to be a schoolboy, and perhaps he isn't."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rattenstein?" grinned Bolsover major. "Oh, my hat! Rattenstein a spy!"

"I didn't mention Rattenstein! But why shouldn't he be a spy?" said Bunter. "He's a Hun, and a sneak, and a cad, ain't he?"

"Well, yes, he's all that. But—"

"Don't be a young ass, Bunter!" said Harry Wharton. "You have no right to say such things even about Rattenstein!"

"What are his people naturalised in England for?" said Bunter. "Spying, of course. Then he's a prince, too—that settles it!"

"How does that settle it?" grinned Bulstrode.

"Well, a German prince is more likely to be a spy than a common German, you know. They have more chances of finding things out,

and the authorities go very easy with them, too!"

"I don't quite see what Rattenstein could find out at Greyfriars?" grinned Bob Cherry. "Do you think he sends the Kaiser reports of our footer matches?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or does he send off wireless reports of the state of the fortifications of the Remove passage?" asked Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"What's got this fatheaded idea into your silly noddle?" asked Tom Brown.

"Never mind," said Bunter, realising that he was saying a little too much. "I'm going to bowl him out, that's all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Catch him in the act," grinned Skinner. "Find him with a wireless message up his sleeve—what!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Ratty! Let's ask him if he's a spy."

"I say, you fellows, don't put him on his guard," said Bunter anxiously.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The German junior approached the grinning group.

"What is it?" he asked.

"When did you send your last wireless message to Berlin?"

"Wha-a-at!"

"How are they getting on at Potsdam?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Rattenstein flushed angrily.

"If this is a joke, I do not like it!" he exclaimed. "You know that I am British. Only my title is German!"

"Made in Germany, tuppence a dozen!" chuckled Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Trot it out, Bunter, and we'll court-martial him," said Bolsover major. "We'll try him under the Defence of the Remove Passage Act. Give your evidence."

"Oh, really, Bolsover—"

"So it is Bunter!" said Rattenstein. "What has Bunter to say against me?"

"Only that you're a German spy!" chuckled Snoop.

"You fat beast!" shouted Rattenstein, plunging at Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove dodged behind Bolsover in alarm.

"I say, you fellows, keep that German spy off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't get ratty, Rattenstein," said Wharton. "It's only Bunter's rot."

"He shall not speak so of me. I will thrash him!"

"No, you won't," said Bolsover major. "If you want to thrash somebody, you German bouncer, you can tackle a fellow as big as yourself. Me, for example!"

"Or me!" chortled Bulstrode.

Rattenstein gritted his teeth. He had no desire to tackle anybody who could give a good account of himself.

"Bah! The fat brute is not worth thrashing!" he said; and he walked away, much to Billy Bunter's relief.

"I say, you fellows, I suppose you could see guilt in his face?" said Bunter. "I could, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "It would serve you right to let Rattenstein lick you. You've no right to yarn like this even about a Hun."

"I know what I know."

"Well, what do you know, oyster?"

"That's telling."

"Oh, bump him!" said Bob. "Bunter can't help being a born idiot; but he can help being a jolly clever ass, and he wants bumping."

"Here, I say, you fellows— Yaroooooh!"

Bump!

"Yoooooop!"

The grinning juniors walked away, leaving William George Bunter seated on the floor, gasping. That was all the reward he received for his patriotic endeavours to show up a German spy.

"Beasts!" gasped Bunter, as he staggered to his feet. "Grooh! Beasts! Never mind, let 'em wait till I've got proofs—groogh!—they'll come round then, the silly asses—yow-ow-ow! Groooh!"

And Bunter wisely decided to let the denunciation of the supposed spy stand over till he had indubitable, irrefragable proofs in his fat hands.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Letter!

MR. QUELCH was a couple of minutes late in the Remove Form-room the next morning. When he came in there was a cloud on his brow, and he held a letter in his hand. And the Remove, to whom Mr. Quelch's brow was the barometer for the day, prepared for stormy weather.

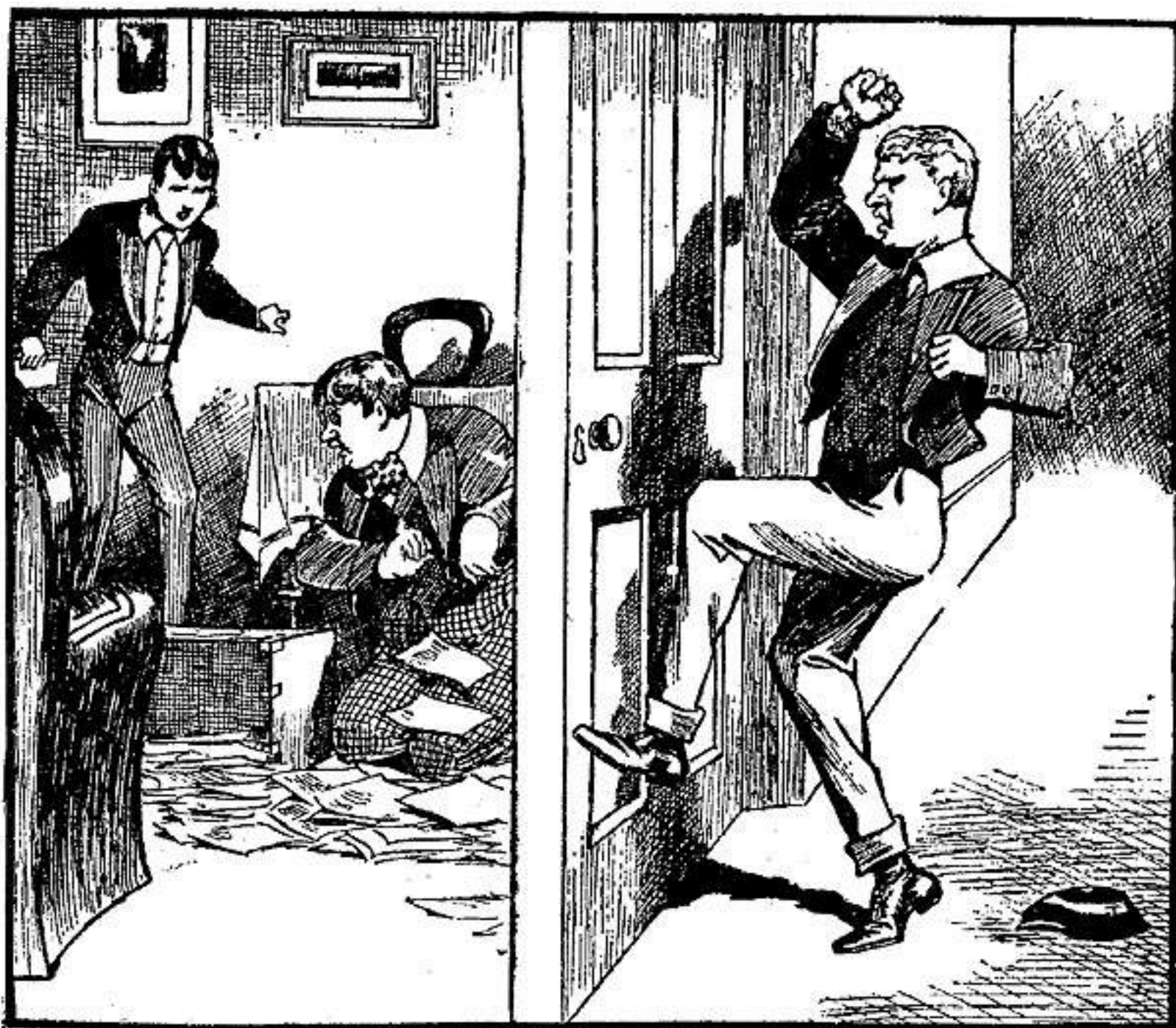
"The sereneness of his Highness is disturbed!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh to the captain of the Remove. "It behoves us to look outfully for squallfulness."

"Wharton!"

Mr. Quelch rapped out the name like a pistol-shot.

"Yes, sir!" said Harry, in surprise.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 433.



"Let me in! Let me in!" Rattenstein kicked furiously on the door. "You spying villain, you have opened my box! Open this door! Let me in!" His voice rose to a shriek of terror and rage. Crash, crash, crash! (See Chapter 14.)

"Step out here!"

Wharton, in astonishment, went out before the class. All eyes in the Remove were upon him. Evidently it was upon the captain of the Remove that the vials of the Form-master's wrath were to be poured.

"Wharton, take that letter and read it."

Wharton took the letter. His eyes almost started from his head as he read it. It was written in a crabbed hand, and it ran:

"Dear Master Wharton,—I'm sorry to have to trouble you but things have been going rather badly with me, and I shall have to ask you again for the pound you've owed me for some time. You are aware that all transactions are strictly cash, but I have given you a good deal of time. I must really ask you to send the pound to-day.—Yours sincerely,
JOSEPH BANKS.

"Cross Keys Inn, Friardale."

Harry Wharton stared at the letter. He could scarcely believe his eyes. It was a letter from Banks, the bookmaker—the sharper he had knocked down in Friardale Lane. What it meant he could not guess.

"Wharton"—Mr. Quelch's voice was like iron now—"that letter came by this morning's delivery. Owing to the discussion yesterday, I have exercised a supervision over your correspondence. That letter was opened in my study, and I have read it. What have you to say?"

"I—I—" stammered Wharton.

"You owe Mr. Banks a pound?"

"Certainly not!" exclaimed Wharton indignantly. "I owe him nothing. I have never had any dealings of any kind with the man."

"Yet he has written to you demanding the payment!"

"I can't understand why he should."

"If you owe him nothing, it is extraordinary that he should write to you," said Mr. Quelch.

Wharton's eyes gleamed. He was collecting his wits now.

"I think I can guess why he has done so," he said. "I had a row with him yesterday, and knocked him down."

"That letter does not read as if you had had what you call a row with the man. It is a friendly letter."

"It's written to cause me trouble," said Harry. "I suppose he knew you might see it. Or he hoped so, at any rate. I don't owe him any money."

Bob Cherry jumped up.

"Four of us were present when Wharton knocked Banks down yesterday, sir!" he exclaimed.

"The presentfulness was terrific, honoured sahib."

"And we jolly well know that Wharton doesn't owe him anything!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

Mr. Quelch hesitated.

"I have only your version of what happened when you were with Banks," he said. "I believe you to be truthful. But you were foolish and reckless to speak to such a man at all. You placed yourselves under natural suspicion. It is extraordinary that the man should write this letter without grounds. He cannot expect to obtain the money if you do not owe him anything."

"I don't owe him anything," said Harry. "He's written that letter in revenge."

"He could not know that I should see it. As a rule, the correspondence of the boys here is not interfered with. If you had received this letter, Wharton, what would you have done?"

"Thrown it into the fire, I suppose, sir."

Mr. Quelch pursed his lips.

"If a letter from him should reach you, Wharton, on another occasion, you will bring it to me."

"Very well, sir; I will do so."

"You give me your word of honour, Wharton, that the man had no grounds for writing such a letter to you?" asked Mr. Quelch, with a searching look at Wharton's flushed face.

"Certainly, sir!"

"Very well! The circumstance is extraordinary, but I am disposed to trust you. I may say, however, that if it should be proved that you have had dealing with that disreputable man, and that you have spoken falsely, you will be expelled from this school, Wharton!"

"I should deserve it, sir, if I were lying to you," said Harry quietly. "That letter has been written to cause me trouble, and for no other reason."

"You had no previous letter from him?"

"None, sir."

"You would not have replied to this letter if it had reached you in the ordinary way?"

"I—I suppose not. I might have written to tell the cad my opinion of him."

"H'm! Well, you will understand, Wharton, that you are forbidden to write to the man for any reason whatever. I require your promise."

"I promise, certainly, sir. I don't want to write to him."

"Very well; the matter will close here," said Mr. Quelch. "I have great faith in you, Wharton, and it has been put to the test in this matter, but I may say it is not shaken. If you should be further molested by this disreputable character, I shall take measures to deal with him. You may return to your place."

Harry Wharton went back to his Form, his face still flushed, and his eyes glinting. Mr. Quelch tore the letter into pieces and tossed them into the wastepaper-basket. Then morning lessons proceeded.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Backing Up Bunter!

HARRY WHARTON'S brows were knitted when he came out of the Form-room. His chums were looking very serious, too, and some of the juniors were looking at him curiously. Skinner and Snoop exchanged a wink, and Fisher T. Fish tapped Wharton on the shoulder, to give him a friendly word of advice.

"You must have been a jay!" Fish remarked.

"What do you mean?" demanded Wharton angrily.

"I guess it was soft, letting that galoot write to you hyer! Why didn't you arrange to have letters somewhere else?"

"You silly chump! That letter was written to cause me trouble, not because I've had anything to do with the man!" snapped Wharton. "Didn't you hear me tell Quelch so?"

Fisher T. Fish closed one eye.

"Yes, I heard you tell Quelch so," he assented. "I guess you wouldn't be jay enough to tell Quelch anything else. But—"

Wharton's eyes flashed, and the Yankee junior did not continue. He walked away grinning.

Harry Wharton went out into the quadrangle in a grim humour. He could see that a good many fellows did not wholly believe his explanation to Mr. Quelch.

It was, indeed, an extraordinary state of circumstances, and Wharton could not quite blame him. For a fellow discovered in correspondence with the bookmaker could scarcely have owned up to it. Why Mr. Banks should have written that letter, if there was nothing in it, was a puzzle. For it was seldom that the Form-master examined the juniors' correspondence—only when he had special occasion to do so. How, then, did Banks know that the letter would fall into Mr. Quelch's hands? And unless he was sure of that, he could not have written it to injure the captain of the Remove. And certainly he could not have written it without any motive at all.

"The spotless and immaculate Wharton has been having a flutter," Skinner confided to his set. "He's been bowled out at last. I always believed that Mr. Magnificent Wharton was a little too good to be true."

"Plain as anything," agreed Snoop. "Really, I've suspected something of the sort all along."

"It has been quite plain, you know, come to think of it," said Stott sagely. "Easy enough to say he was knocking Banks down when it came out that he had met the man. Anybody could say that. The letter doesn't look as if it came from a man he had knocked down. Quelch said it was a friendly letter, didn't he? Chaps who've been knocked down don't write friendly letters."

"Of course they don't! Wharton owes him the money right enough."

"And that's the chap who preaches to us about a cigarette or two!" said Stoop, in deep indignation.

"Rotten, I call it!"

Skinner & Co., in fact, were feeling disgusted. But even fellows who were less ready to believe evil, thought the matter very curious.

Wharton's friends, naturally, believed his explanation—in fact, the bookmaker's motives were clear enough to them.

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Bob Cherry proposed a visit to the Cross Keys, and the bestowal of a record licking upon Mr. Banks. But Wharton shook his head at that suggestion.

"We'd better keep clear of him," he said. "What's to prove that we went there to rag him, if we went at all? He's the kind of chap it's best to keep away from altogether."

"The touchfulness of the pitch is the esteemed defilefulness," remarked Hurree Singh. "It is better to keep off grassfully."

"But the rotter ought to be punished for playing such a trick!" exclaimed Bob warmly.

"Better keep off the grass," said Harry. "After all, it's done no harm, though it might have."

"I say, you fellows——"

"Oh, buzz off, Bunter!"

"Hold on a minute, you know," said Bunter eagerly. "It's rather important. I——"

"Nothing doing!" growled Bob. "Money is tight."

"Oh, really, Cherry, I'm not asking you for a loan, you fathead—I'm expecting a postal-order to-day, too. It's about that German spy."

"Ring off, you fat duffer!" said Wharton impatiently.

"I think it ought to be looked into," said Bunter. "I'm disposed to confide in you fellows, and tell you all I know——"

"That wouldn't take long!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Rattenstein——"

"Blow Rattenstein!"

"He's locked his study door again," said Bunter. "I heard his pen scratching away, too. He's writing something."

"What about it? Why shouldn't he?"

"My belief is that it's spying. What has he locked his door for?"

"Ask him."

"Mauly says he's always locking his door lately——"

"Perhaps it's to keep a greedy porpoise from getting at his study cupboard."

"Oh, really, Cherry! After he had locked his door, he unlocked that box of his, and took some papers out."

"How do you know?"

"I'm watching him," said Bunter loftily. "Shadowing him, like Sherlock Blake—I mean Sexton Holmes—that is, Sherlock Holmes, you know. Now he's writing, and I heard him chuckle through the keyhole."

"He chuckled through the keyhole!" grinned Bob.

"No, you duffer! I heard him through the keyhole. I tell you there's something going on—some report he's writing out for the Germans, you know. I think you fellows ought to back me up, and—and burst into the room, you know, like they do in newspaper serial stories, and confront him. If he's guilty, he will turn deadly pale——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! He's been burning papers, too, in his study, several times."

"How do you know that?"

"I've heard Mauly complaining about the mess it makes. And he keeps papers in that box—mysterious documents, you know."

"Not tuck?" chuckled Bob.

"Well, I think perhaps there's tuck as well," said Bunter cautiously. "My idea is this. You fellows follow my lead, and we'll surprise him in his study, and—and confront him. Then we'll search the mysterious box, and reveal the ghastly mystery. You fellows can take charge of the mysterious documents, and I'll have the tuck!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you know——"

The bare idea of Rattenstein as a German spy made the juniors howl with laughter. But Billy Bunter was in deadly earnest.

"I say, you fellows, you might back me up, for patriotic reasons, you know. Suppose we get a Zeppelin over Greyfriars again, all through that Hun. You back me up, and we'll unmask him."

"Well, I don't mind backing you up," said Bob Cherry thoughtfully. "You're sure you want me to?"

"Yes, rather! You see——"

"Well, here goes!"

"Yaroooh! Leggo!" roared Bunter, as Bob Cherry grasped him by the shoulders. "Wharrer you at? Yaroooh!"

Bob Cherry backed Bunter up against the nearest elm with a bump. The fat junior slid to the ground, and sat on a root, gasping.

"Grooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of the Remove walked away, grinning.

Billy Bunter blinked after them in speechless indignation. He did not ask for any more backing up.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 433.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"FRANK NUGENT'S FOLLY!"

EVERY
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"
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ONE
PENNY.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Hun Sports His Oak!

"BEGAD!"

Lord Mauleverer uttered that ejaculation in an irritated tone as he found his study door locked. His lordship had a very equable temper, but his study-mate sometimes succeeded in irritating it. On a dozen occasions during the past week the schoolboy earl had found his own door locked against him.

He shook the handle.

"Let me in, you ass! What have you got the study door locked again for?"

There was a hurried movement in the study and the click of a lock. Then the study door was unlocked and opened. Rattenstein's sallow face was a little flushed as he met the eyes of Lord Mauleverer.

"What the dickens is the little game?" demanded his lordship. "What are you always lockin' the door for?"

"I've been working, and I didn't want to be interrupted," said Rattenstein coldly. "What do you want?"

"I want to rest a bit," said Lord Mauleverer plaintively, sinking upon the sofa. "I've been workin' too hard this afternoon. Quelchy has been makin' me work. Awf'ly inconsiderate old fellow, Quelchy."

"You're going to stay here now?" asked Rattenstein.

"Yaas."

Rattenstein's brows knitted.

"Look here, I want to do some work," he said. "Couldn't you go and slack in the Common-room?"

"Can't move now."

"Why not?"

"Tired."

"Look here, Mauleverer, I've got to get through this Latin," said Rattenstein. "I can't work with you here and fellows coming in and out. Do let me have the study to myself for half an hour."

"Oh, begad!"

"Suppose you help me with this bit of Livy, though?" suggested Rattenstein.

Lord Mauleverer groaned.

"Excuse me, old chap. I'd rather be hung, if you don't mind. I'll clear out, if you make a point of it!"

"If you like to help me—it's the Carthaginian War, you know——"

But Lord Mauleverer retired hastily. He did not feel equal to tackling Titus Livius and the Carthaginian War. Rattenstein grinned as he closed the door and locked it after him.

Lord Mauleverer drifted down the passage somewhat out of humour. He was too good-natured to say "No" to anybody, but he did not like being turned out of his comfortable study, though that was better than having Livy inflicted upon him. Billy Bunter stopped him in the passage.

"Door locked again—what?" grinned Bunter.

"Yaas."

"And Ratty's turned you out?"

"Yaas. He's goin' to work."

"He, he, he!"

Lord Mauleverer stared at Bunter, but he was too lazy to inquire the reason of the fat junior's chuckle. He sauntered away to the common-room, where he stretched his tired limbs on a much less comfortable sofa than his own.

Billy Bunter tiptoed to the door of Rattenstein's study.

Within he could hear the scratch of a pen.

The German junior was undoubtedly at work; but Bunter could guess that the work he was engaged upon was connected with the mysterious documents in the equally mysterious box. Bunter's fat ear was glued to the keyhole, when suddenly his other ear was compressed between a hard finger and thumb. He gave a howl, and blinked round at Squiff.

"Spying again!" said Sampson Quincy Ifley Field severely.

"Yow-ow! I'm shadowing a spy!" gasped Bunter.

"Leggo!"

"I give you one second to get out of the passage!" said Squiff, releasing Bunter's ear and lifting his boot.

Bunter sprinted for the stairs.

He did not venture to return to the Remove passage until Squiff had gone down to the footer-ground. He was intensely curious as to what was going on in Rattenstein's study. But the door was locked, and there came nothing but the faint scratching of a pen from within.

The German junior was still very busy.

"I guess you're the galoot I want to see," remarked Fisher T. Fish, coming along the passage.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Got the keys?" he asked.

"Yep."

"Lend them to me, old chap!"

"Tanner a time," said Fish laconically.

"I happen to be short of money this afternoon——"

"I guess you'll be short of keys, too, then," grinned Fisher T. Fish, and he walked on to his own study.

"Beast!"

Fisher T. Fish had cycled over to Courtfield after lessons, and at Mr. Lazarus' second-hand shop he had secured a bargain in old keys—Mr. Lazarus having plenty of that kind of lumber to dispose of at low prices. Fishy had secured about fifty old keys of various sizes and makes for eighteenpence. But he was not in business, as he would have expressed it, for his health. He did not care a "continental red cent" what Bunter wanted the keys for so long as he paid up. But until he paid up, Fishy's property would repose in Fishy's keeping.

When Lord Mauleverer came up to tea, Bunter button-holed him in the passage.

"Can you lend me a tanner, Mauly? Only a tanner!"

The good-natured Mauly felt in his pockets.

"Yaas; here you are. Run away!"

Billy Bunter pocketed the sixpence with much satisfaction.

"Will you have this back out of my postal-order, or shall I put it down to the old account?" he asked.

Lord Mauleverer chuckled.

"Whichever you like, dear boy. I'm not particular." He turned the door-handle of his study, and gave a howl.

"Begad! Locked again! Rattenstein, let me in, you ass!"

"Wait a minute!"

"Look here, I've got three fellows comin' to tea!" shouted Lord Mauleverer. "I'll take that blessed key away and bury it! Open the door!"

There was a movement within, and Bunter's sharp ears detected once more the click of a lock. Rattenstein was locking the mysterious box again.

Lord Mauleverer kicked vigorously at the door.

"Open this door!" he shouted. "Will somebody lend me a hammer to bust this lock? Come and kick it for me, Cherry, dear boy. Your boots would bust anything!"

The door was hastily opened from within.

"It's all right," said Rattenstein surlily. "You can come in. I've finished work."

"Look here, I'm fed up with this!" exclaimed Lord Mauleverer, exasperated. "Every blessed day I'm locked out of my own study, and when I come in you've generally got the place in a mess with burnt papers. What's the little game?"

Bob Cherry and Squiff and Johnny Bull had followed Lord Mauleverer up; they were his guests to tea. They looked very curiously at the flushed face of the German schoolboy.

"Well, there's no burnt papers now," said Squiff, with a glance at the grate. "Shall I get the fire going, Mauly?"

"Yaas, dear boy."

Rattenstein left the study without a word.

"I'm gettin' fed up with that fellow," said Lord Mauleverer plaintively. "Lockin' me out of my own quarters, begad!"

"What does he do it for?" asked Bob.

"He says he's workin'."

"No need to lock himself in to work."

"Well, he's always doin' it, and I'm fed up. I'm goin' to take the key away," said Lord Mauleverer. "It's really too thick, you know!"

"I say, Mauly, if you want some shopping done——"

"Thank you, I don't."

"Well, I'd like to make myself useful, as I'm coming to tea with you," said Bunter.

"Begad! Are you comin' to tea, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Mauly——"

Billy Bunter stayed to tea, and his felonious designs upon the locked box had to be postponed for the present.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

In the Toils!

"WHARTON! Stop!"

Harry Wharton halted in surprise. Two or three fellows in the Lower Hall, who heard Rattenstein's sharp, imperative voice, looked round.

Rattenstein strode directly up to the captain of the Remove. Wharton stared at him, wondering what he wanted.

"Well?" he said.

"I want a few words with you," said Rattenstein.

"Buck up, then!" said Harry calmly. "I've got to get to the post-office and back before locking-up. I've no time to spare!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 433.

MAGNIFICENT TUCK-HAMPERS FOR READERS OF THE "BOYS' FRIEND," 1^d. OUT TO-DAY.

"You will spare time for me!" said Rattenstein arrogantly.

"You have been talking about me with Bunter."

"His Highness mustn't be talked about!" grinned Skinner.

"I haven't taken the trouble to talk about you," said Wharton haughtily. "I've never hidden my opinion of you, certainly. I will tell you now what I think of you if you like."

"You are a liar and a coward!" said Rattenstein.

There was a gasp of astonishment from the fellows who heard him. Rattenstein was a known funk—he had been licked even by Fisher T. Fish, the Yankee junior. To see him standing up to the captain of the Remove in this way was astounding. Wharton could scarcely believe his ears.

"I—I'm what?" he gasped.

"You heard what I said!" said Rattenstein. "Take that!" Smack!

Before Wharton could guard, his open hand came across the cheek of the astounded junior, and Wharton staggered. The next moment he sprang forward, his eyes blazing. He forgot that he was within a few yards of his Form-master's study door—he did not think of anything but the insult, and of avenging it. Rattenstein met his rush and closed with him, struggling like a cat.

In a few moments he was flung down, but he held on, and Wharton was dragged down with him. They crashed on the floor.

"Cave!" yelled Tom Brown from the stairs.

Mr. Quelch looked out of his study.

"Wharton! Rattenstein!" he almost shouted.

Wharton shook off the grasp of the German and sprang up. Rattenstein picked himself up more slowly.

"How dare you fight in the passage!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

Then the Remove-master's expression suddenly changed.

On the floor where the two juniors had been struggling lay a letter with the addressed side turned up full in view.

And the address written upon it was:

"Joseph Banks, Esq.,
The Cross Keys Inn,
Friardale."

Mr. Quelch stared blankly at it, and then stooped and picked it up. He looked at the address again, as if he could scarcely believe his eyes.

"Wharton!" he thundered. "You have dropped this letter!"

"Did I, sir?"

"You did—a letter to Banks, the man with whom you assured me you had no communication whatever!"

Wharton staggered.

"To—to Banks!" he exclaimed. "Is that letter addressed to Banks?"

"It is!"

"Then I did not drop it, sir. It does not belong to me!"

"Do not prevaricate, Wharton. I know your handwriting, I suppose!"

"My—my handwriting?"

"Yes. Follow me into my study."

"But, sir, I—I——"

"Follow me!"

Mr. Quelch whisked back into his study, his face thunderous, the letter in his hand. Wharton followed him like a fellow in a dream.

Rattenstein tapped him on the arm.

"Wharton, I am sorry! I did not know you would be so careless as to drop your letter——"

Harry shook off his hand fiercely.

"It is not my letter!" he said.

Rattenstein shrugged his shoulders.

Harry Wharton entered the Form-master's study. There was a buzz among the fellows in the Lower Hall. They had all heard Mr. Quelch's words.

"Fairly bowled out, by gum!" said Skinner.

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"What an awful ass!" said Bolsover major. "It's hard luck on him, though! All the fault of that beastly Hun, too, for tackling him just outside Quelch's door."

"I did not know—I could not know," stammered Rattenstein.

"Of course you couldn't; but you shouldn't have picked a row with him here, and you know that!" growled Bolsover. "It looks to me as if you knew he had the letter about him and planned it."

"Well, Ratty may have known that he had the letter, but he couldn't have known he'd be ass enough to drop it," said Skinner.

"No, I suppose not—though he's mean enough for a thing like that."

Rattenstein turned away without a word. But when he was alone in the quadrangle he grinned.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Expelled!

MR. QUELCH stood with the letter in his hand, his eyes fixed upon Wharton.

The captain of the Remove gazed at the letter dazedly.

He had seen it now, and seen that the superscription was in his hand. Yet he had never written it—unless he was out of his senses.

"Wharton, this letter is addressed by you to Mr. Banks."

Wharton tried to collect his wits.

"I did not write it, sir."

"You deny your own hand?"

"It—it looks like my hand, sir."

"It is your hand, Wharton!"

"I—I can't understand it!" stammered Harry.

"I shall open this letter, Wharton."

"Yes, sir. It is not mine."

The Remove-master made an impatient gesture, and slit the envelope. Wharton watched him as he drew out the letter.

A one-pound note fluttered upon the table.

Mr. Quelch read the letter grimly.

"Wharton," he said, "I have never heard of such duplicity in a boy before. I am shocked and astounded! This is an acknowledgment of your debt to Mr. Banks—a full acknowledgment that the letter destroyed this morning was written to you to claim a debt that was due from you to this book-maker."

"May I see the letter, sir?"

Mr. Quelch laid it on the table. Wharton looked at it dazedly. It was in his own handwriting. It ran:

"Dear Banks,—I enclose the pound. Don't send a receipt here; wait till I meet you in the usual place. Your letter to me was opened by Mr. Quelch, and very nearly got me into trouble.

"Yours,
"H. WHARTON."

Wharton's brain seemed to reel.

Mr. Quelch took a sheet of impot-paper—lines lately done by Harry Wharton. He placed it beside the letter.

"Do you deny now, Wharton, that that is your writing?"

Wharton panted. It was the same! Every trick and turn in the writing was the same!

"I—I can't understand it, sir!" he said. "I did not write that letter!"

"Yet you had it about you. It dropped from you while you were fighting in the passage."

"I—I don't understand it!"

"I understand it only too well!" said Mr. Quelch grimly. "You have deceived me, Wharton—grossly deceived me! You have taken unscrupulous advantage of my faith in you!"

"I—I—"

"You have had gambling transactions with this man Banks. You have spoken falsehoods on the subject. I warned you what would be the result, Wharton, if I discovered that you had deceived me, and now the discovery has come about by chance! You are not fit to remain in this school!"

"I did not write that letter!"

"You will follow me to the Head," said Mr. Quelch, unheeding. "You will be expelled from Greyfriars, Wharton! You will leave the school to-morrow morning!"

"I—I—"

"Come!"

The Remove-master turned to the door. Harry Wharton stood rooted to the carpet. His brain was in a whirl; he was unable to think clearly. It had all been so sudden and so terrible that he could not grasp it. The letter was in his hand, yet he had not written it. Was it possible that in some moment of mental aberration he had done so? What was the meaning of it all?

"Do you hear me, Wharton? Come!"

"Mr. Quelch"—Wharton's voice was hoarse and husky—

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 433.

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ONE
PENNY.

"I—I did not write that letter! I don't know who wrote it!"

"That is enough, Wharton! Follow me!"

Wharton followed the Form-master unsteadily from the room. There was a crowd outside already; the news had spread like wildfire.

Frank Nugent ran forward, and caught Wharton by the shoulder. His face was pale and anxious.

"Harry, what's the matter?"

Wharton gasped.

"I—I don't know. I can't understand it, I'm going to be expelled!"

"Expelled!" yelled Nugent.

"Yes."

"What have you done?"

"Nothing."

"Wharton, I am waiting for you!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Nugent—"

"What has Wharton done, sir?"

"He has deceived me, deceived everyone, and acted like an unscrupulous young scoundrel!" said Mr. Quelch, in raised tones. "He will leave Greyfriars. Wharton, follow me at once!"

Wharton followed him, and Nugent went with his chum. Mr. Quelch tapped at the Head's door, and the two juniors followed him into the study.

Dr. Locke laid down his pen.

"Dear me! Is anything the matter, Mr. Quelch?"

"A very serious matter, sir!" Mr. Quelch laid the letter on the Head's desk, and Dr. Locke glanced at it.

"That letter was written by Wharton, sir."

"Good heavens!"

"This morning I opened a letter addressed to Wharton by that man Banks, to whom this is addressed. He demanded a pound that Wharton owed him. Wharton denied all knowledge of Banks, and declared that the letter had been written simply to injure him. I believed him." Mr. Quelch's tone was bitter now. "I trusted him, and took his word. By accident, this letter has now fallen into my hands. It was dropped by Wharton outside my study. As you see, it is in reply to the letter of this morning—of which Wharton denied all knowledge. It contained this currency-note for one pound."

"Bless my soul!"

Wharton stood dumb. Frank Nugent looked at him with a haggard face. For a moment a chill of doubt crept into Nugent's heart. Had Wharton deceived the Form-master—and deceived his own chums, too?

"Franky"—Wharton found his voice at last—"you don't believe it?"

Nugent drew a deep breath.

"No, I don't," he said. "But—but what does it mean, Harry?"

Dr. Locke, his kind old face very hard and stern now, fixed his eyes on the captain of the Remove.

"Wharton," he said, "what have you to say to this?"

"I did not write that letter, sir."

"Is it not in your hand?"

"It seems so, sir."

"Nugent, are you acquainted with Wharton's handwriting?"

"Certainly, sir!"

"Look at this letter, and tell me whether it was written by Wharton."

Nugent took the letter, and he almost staggered. His look was sufficient, without words.

"Harry!" he muttered.

"You know that handwriting, Nugent?"

"It—it looks like Wharton's, sir!" gasped Nugent, in a dry voice.

"Is it Wharton's?"

"He says he did not write it, sir."

"If that letter were of an innocent and harmless character, Nugent, you would say that it had been written by Wharton, from the handwriting?"

"I—I suppose so, sir."

"That is enough."

"I have a specimen of Wharton's writing here, sir," said Mr. Quelch, laying the impot on the desk. "It is only necessary to compare the two."

Dr. Locke glanced at the paper, and nodded.

"Wharton," he said, "take this pen, and copy out the letter word for word."

"Very well, sir."

Wharton stood at the Head's desk, and copied the letter upon a sheet of notepaper. When he had finished, the Head examined the two letters.

"There is not the slightest distinction here," he said.

"But for the difference in the paper it would be impossible to distinguish one letter from the other. In the face of this, Wharton, you still deny having written this letter?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. I do not believe you Wharton; and unless you are out of your senses you cannot expect me to believe you. You are proved guilty of blackguardism, of lying, and of deceit! To-morrow morning you will be expelled publicly from Greyfriars!"

"Sir!"

"Until then you will be confined to the punishment-room. You will not be allowed to exchange one word with the boys whom you may have already contaminated with your presence!" said the Head sternly. "Mr. Quelch, you will kindly see that Wharton is locked in."

"Certainly, sir."

Mr. Quelch signed to Wharton, and left the study. Wharton followed him, as if drunkenly, almost dizzy. At the door of the punishment-room, however, he halted. Mr. Quelch threw the door open, and signed to him to enter.

Wharton drew back, his eyes blazing.

"Kindly go in, Wharton!" said the Remove-master coldly.

"I will not!" exclaimed Wharton passionately. "I am not guilty, and I will not be locked up like a criminal!"

"Obey me!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"I will not be locked in!"

"Wingate! Courtney!"

The two prefects of the Sixth came at the Form-master's call.

"Please take Wharton into the punishment-room," said Mr. Quelch quietly.

Wharton sprang back and put up his hands.

"Keep off!" he shouted. "I tell you—"

"Come!" said Wingate. "Don't be a young ass, Wharton!"

"Hands off!"

"Harry!" whispered Nugent. "It's no good, old chap—"

The two prefects grasped the junior. Wharton, utterly reckless now, hit out furiously, and Wingate staggered back. The next moment the junior was swept off his feet in the grasp of the two seniors. Nugent, forgetting everything else, rushed to the rescue, but the Form-master caught him by the collar.

"Stand back, Nugent!"

Bump! Wharton, tossed bodily into the punishment-room, sprawled on the floor. There was the click of a key, and the captain of the Remove was a prisoner.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Makes Another Discovery!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! What's up?"

Fisher T. Fish burst into Lord Mauleverer's study with an excited face. The tea-party there had nearly finished tea. Rattenstein had joined them—though not much to the pleasure of the tea-party, certainly.

"Begad, you look excited, dear boy!" yawned Lord Mauleverer.

"Hain't you heard the noos?" howled Fisher T. Fish.

"Another Zeppelin raid?" asked Squiff. "Or has the Government woke up, or what?"

"Wharton's sacked!"

"What?"

"You silly ass!" shouted Bob Cherry, jumping up.

"What do you mean?"

"Straight goods!" gasped Fisher T. Fish. "Why, the hull place is in a buzz with it. Wharton's got the push!"

Bob Cherry glared at the Yankee junior, and rushed from the study. Squiff and Johnny Bull followed him fast.

"Come on, Mauly," said Fisher T. Fish. "Don't you want to be in at the death, you slacker?"

Lord Mauleverer shook his head.

"Tired," he replied.

"I'll come presently," said Bunter. "I'm going to finish tea first. This is a ripping cake. What have those asses left their tea for? Bob hasn't finished his jam—look!"

"I guess I'll help finish it," grinned Fisher T. Fish, dropping into Bob Cherry's chair. "Pass the tongue. No objection, Mauly—what?"

"None at all, dear boy," said Lord Mauleverer, sinking gracefully on the sofa; "so long as you don't talk, you know."

Rattenstein's eyes were gleaming. He left the study quietly. To the German junior, more than to anyone else, the news was exciting. It was he that had been expecting to hear it. He hurried downstairs, that catlike gleam in his pale-blue eyes, his lips curved in a cruel smile.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 433.

Downstairs, the house was in a buzz of excitement.

"What is this, Skinner?" exclaimed Rattenstein. "Wharton—"

"Bowled out and sacked!" said Skinner.

"Where is he now?"

"Locked in the punishment-room. Grand dramatic scene in the morning!" grinned Skinner. "Thus are the mighty fallen! Can't help feeling sorry for the poor beast, though. He's kept it pretty dark a long time. I suppose he was bound to get bowled out in the long run."

"What's that?" roared Bob Cherry. "So you think it's true, do you, you rat?"

"Of course it's true!" snapped Skinner. "Why, what—Wo-wo-owwwoop!"

Skinner went spinning. Bob Cherry glared at Rattenstein.

"Do you think it's true, too?" he demanded.

"The Head seems to," said Rattenstein sarcastically.

"You had better go and punch him, Cherry!"

And he walked away, smiling.

Meanwhile, Billy Bunter was actively clearing the tea-table in Lord Mauleverer's study, assisted by Fisher T. Fish. When it was cleared, Fisher rose to go. Lord Mauleverer was asleep on the sofa.

"Got those keys, Fishy?" asked Bunter.

Fish chuckled.

"Got that tanner?" he asked, in turn.

"Yes, I have—and here it is!"

"Good enough! Here's the keys! One hour, mind, or I charge you another tanner," said Fisher T. Fish, laying the bunch of keys on the table.

Bunter sniffed, and Fisher T. Fish quitted the study. The Owl of the Remove blinked at Lord Mauleverer.

"Mauly!" he murmured.

His lordship did not reply. He was in a doze. Bunter grinned, and crossed to the door and locked it. Then he tiptoed to the mysterious box in the corner.

His opportunity had come!

If one of Fishy's huge variety of keys fitted the box, the German schoolboy's secret would be revealed now to the inquisitive eyes of the Owl of the Remove.

Billy Bunter proceeded to try key after key on the box.

He tried fifteen or sixteen without success. Lord Mauleverer, still dozing on the sofa, was quite unconscious of Bunter's actions, and, indeed, of his presence. It was the seventeenth key on the bunch which glided into the lock, and turned under the pressure of Bunter's fat fingers.

Click!

Billy Bunter gave a satisfied blink. The box was unlocked!

He raised the lid.

The first glance into the interior was disappointing. There was no trace of "tuck." Eager as Bunter was to prove his remarkable theory that Prince Rupprecht von Rattenstein was an enemy spy, he would have preferred tuck.

The box contained no tuck, however. It was half full of papers. They were some, at least, of the mysterious writings of the German junior.

Bunter drew the sheets out with eager fingers.

"Mum-mum-my hat!" he ejaculated.

His little round eyes almost started through his spectacles, for the first sheet he saw was in Harry Wharton's handwriting, in Latin.

"That giddy impot!" exclaimed Bunter.

He had heard of the lines abstracted from Wharton's study nearly a week before. Nothing more had been heard of the missing impot, and Wharton had concluded that the practical joker who had taken it had destroyed it, remaining pretty convinced that the guilty party was Rattenstein.

And here it was!

"My only hat!" murmured Bunter. "But what did he want to keep it for? And—and what's this?"

Bunter gazed at the sheets in utter astonishment.

There were copies of Wharton's imposition, some of them in writing so like his that the difference could hardly be told. Then there were sheets written in English—disconnected words in Wharton's hand, or a close imitation of Wharton's hand.

In some cases the imitation was so close that Bunter could not tell whether it was genuine or not. In other cases it was not quite so close, and betrayed the heavy strokes of Rattenstein's own writing. But most amazing of all was several sheets covered with constantly-repeated copies of a letter, and the letter ran:

"Dear Banks,—I enclose the pound. Don't send a receipt here; wait till I meet you in the usual place. Your letter to me was opened by Mr. Quelch, and very nearly got me into trouble.—Yours,
H. WHARTON."

This precious effusion was repeated a dozen times at least—some of the copies, evidently the earlier ones, showing traces

of Rattenstein's own hand, the others more and more like Harry Wharton's writing.

Bunter blinked at the sheets dumbfounded.

Evidently the box did not contain any spy reports. Even Bunter had to admit now that his wonderful discovery was all moonshine.

But what did it mean?

Billy Bunter was not remarkable for intelligence, but he could see that Rattenstein had obtained a copy of Wharton's handwriting, and had practised it assiduously until he was able to imitate it with exactitude.

For what reason had the German junior been practising forgery?—for that was what it was.

If Bunter had known of the letter in Mr. Quelch's hands, he would not have needed to be told the reason; but he knew nothing of it as yet.

"The awful rotter!" murmured Bunter. "He's practising Wharton's fist to play some trick on him! That's why he boned the impot. That's why he's been keeping the study door locked—while he was practising forgery, the horrid Hun beast! That's what all those burnt papers were for. He burned the sheets he practised on, and when he hadn't time to burn them when he was interrupted, he locked them in this box for safety!"

Bunter grinned. He felt that he had fairly bowled out the Hun schoolboy—as indeed he had.

"The rotter! He hadn't time to burn these, as Mauly came up to tea, so he locked them up. He'll come back and do it as soon as he gets a chance. I——"

There was a hurried rattle at the door.

"Let me in!" came Rattenstein's voice from outside.

"Mauleverer, what have you locked me out for?"

Bunter chuckled. Mauleverer sat up and yawned.

"Begad! What's the row?"

"Let me in!"

"Why can't you come in?"

"The door's locked!" shouted Rattenstein angrily.

"One good turn deserves another," chuckled Lord Mauleverer. "You've often locked me out, dear boy! Hallo! Is that you, Bunter?"

"It's me," said Bunter, taking the key out of the lock.

"You're not going to let him in, Mauly. He's a forger, and he's not going to destroy the evidence!"

"What!"

"Look at those papers!"

Lord Mauleverer looked lazily at the papers, and then his face became suddenly serious.

"Begad!"

"That's what he has locked in his box," grinned Bunter. "He's been practising forging Wharton's fist for something. I've bowled him out!"

There was a yell outside the study. Rattenstein had heard the words.

"Let me in!" he shrieked.

"No jolly fear!" howled Bunter. "You're not going to burn the evidence, you forging Hun! Wharton's going to see these papers!"

"Let me in! Let me in!" Rattenstein kicked furiously on the door. "You spying villain, you have opened my box! Open this door! Let me in!"

His voice rose to a shriek of terror and rage.

Crash, crash, crash!

The Hun junior kicked savagely, and the door groaned and creaked. Billy Bunter made no movement to open it. It would not have been quite safe for him to let Rattenstein in then. And Bunter meant to dazzle the Remove with his great discovery. There was no chance for Rattenstein to destroy the evidence.

"Let me in!"

Bang, bang! Crash!

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Order of the Boot!

"HE, he, ho!"

"Oh, begad!"

"What's the thundering row?" angrily exclaimed Squiff, coming along the passage.

The Australian junior was worried and disturbed by the calamity that had fallen upon his chum, locked up in the punishment-room under sentence of expulsion. He caught the German junior by the shoulder somewhat roughly.

"What are you making that confounded row for?" he went on.

Rattenstein panted.

"I must get in! Bunter has locked me out!"

"I say, is that you, Squiff?" howled Bunter from within the study.

"Yes, you fat duffer!"

"Call Wharton!"

"Don't you know where Wharton is, you fathead?" growled Squiff. "He's in the punishment-room, locked in!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 433.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"FRANK NUGENT'S FOLLY!"

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ONE
PENNY.

"Oh, call Bob Cherry, then!" said Bunter. "I say, Squiff, I've made a discovery! I've found that Hun beast out!"

"Fathead!"

"He ain't a spy, after all——"

"You silly ass!"

"He's a forger!" hooted Bunter. "I can prove it! Mauly knows! He's been practising Wharton's fist to play some trick on him!"

Squiff jumped almost clear of the floor.

"What!" he yelled.

"Ah, that startles you, does it?" chuckled Bunter. "I've bowled him out, the rotten Hun! I've got all the proofs here, and he wants to burn them. I'm not letting him in—not much!"

"It's not true!" screamed Rattenstein. "Let me in!"

Squiff gave the German a grim look.

"Are you there, Mauly?" he called out.

"Yaas, dear boy."

"Is Bunter talking out of his hat, or is there something in it?"

"Oh, really, Squiff——"

"There's somethin' in it," yawned Lord Mauleverer.

"There's a heap of papers, and the Hun has been practising Wharton's fist right enough!"

"Oh, what gorgeous luck! Let me in, Bunter! Wait a minute, though. Keep the door locked till I call the fellows!"

"What-ho!" chuckled Bunter.

Squiff dashed away down the passage. Rattenstein leaned heavily on the wall, white as a sheet, the perspiration streaming down his face. There was terror and despair in his eyes now.

Half a dozen juniors were gathered in No. 1 Study—Nugent, Johnny Bull, Bob Cherry, Hurree Singh, Mark Linley, and Tom Brown—dismally discussing the misfortune that had fallen upon the Co. They believed Wharton's statement that he had not written the letter, though it put their faith in him to a severe test. But who had written it? What fellow could be so skilled a forger that he had imitated Wharton's hand so exactly?

The mere theory seemed absurd on the face of it—that any fellow in the school could be so skilled and so cunning and unscrupulous seemed impossible. Utterly impossible it seemed to all but Wharton's best chums; but they held firmly to their faith in him.

But their faith, firm as it was, could not help him. He was to be expelled—kicked out of Greyfriars in black disgrace.

What news for his uncle, out in Flanders, facing the Huns! What news for the kind old aunt at home! And Wharton himself—and his chums! Their faces were pale and grim, utterly miserable. And there was no help!

Then Squiff burst into the study, his face flushed with excitement.

"Come, quick!" he panted.

Bob Cherry jumped up.

"What is it—what— Has anything turned up?"

"Yes, yes! Come along!"

The juniors, wondering, but with a glimmer of hope, followed Squiff down the Remove passage. Rattenstein met them with a ghastly look. The miserable plotter had abandoned hope now. He had whispered entreaties through the keyhole to Bunter—only answered by the Owl's fat chuckle. The door remained locked till Squiff & Co. arrived.

Squiff rattled the handle.

"Open the door, Bunter; we're all here!"

"You'll keep that Hun villain off?" asked Bunter anxiously.

"Yes, yes, yes!"

"What's Rattenstein done?" asked Nugent.

"You'll soon see."

Click! The door was thrown open. Rattenstein made a spring, shoved himself through the juniors, and rushed at the open box. Squiff had him by the collar in a twinkling, dragging him back.

"No, you don't!" he said grimly.

Rattenstein, desperate, almost beside himself, turned like a tiger on the Australian junior. Squiff's jaw squared; and as the German junior's hands clawed savagely at him, he hit out straight from the shoulder. His fist crashed on Rattenstein's jaw, and hurled him into the corner of the study.

"Lie there a bit, you German hound!" said Squiff.

"Look! Are these the papers, Bunter? My only hat! Look at them, you fellows!"

The juniors were already looking.

They turned over the sheets, examining them, with blank amazement at first, and then with comprehension.

"Good heavens!" said Nugent, at last. "The awful villain! Rattenstein wrote that letter, you fellows; wrote it, and planted it on Wharton!"

"Here's a dozen copies of it," said Bob Cherry; "and see how some of them are half in the cad's own fist!"

"It's the same letter," said Nugent. "I read it in the Head's study, and I remember it word for word. And here's Wharton's impot—the one he missed!"

"Used for a copy to work from!" said Squiff.

The juniors looked at the German, crouching in the corner, panting, with eyes glittering like a wild animal's.

"Get up, you Hun beast!" said Bob Cherry hoarsely. "You forging villain, get up, so that I can smash you!"

"Begad!" said Lord Mauleverer. "You can leave the smashin' till afterwards, dear boy. Suppose you take those papers to Quelch first."

"Good egg!"

"Keep off!" screamed Rattenstein, as some of the juniors moved towards him.

Johnny Bull and Squiff grasped him by the arms and dragged him up. Bob Cherry took up the heavy box of papers.

"I—I say, you fellows, what are you going to the Head for?" asked Billy Bunter.

"Fathead! Wharton's accused of writing to Banks—a letter with the same wording as this scrawl here," said Nugent.

"Oh, dear! What an awful rotter!" Bunter gasped. "I—I bowled him out, didn't I? You chaps will have to admit that I bowled him out!"

"But how did you know what was in the box?" asked Lord Mauleverer.

"Spying, as usual!" snorted Johnny Bull. "Fat rotter!"

"Oh, really, Bull! As—as a matter of fact, I—I suspected it all along, you know. I knew Wharton was innocent, and so I—"

"Why, you fat spoofer, you didn't know till this minute what Wharton was accused of."

"Ahem! I—I meantersay—"

"Come on," said Bob Cherry. "You'd better come, too, Bunter, as you found the papers. Bring that Hun-beast along!"

Bob Cherry led the way with the box, and Johnny Bull and Squiff followed with the shivering German, and the rest of the party brought up the rear. The curious procession to the Head's study attracted attention on all sides, and there was a buzz of inquiries—and a louder buzz when it was learned what was toward. Billy Bunter strutted along with an air of great importance. Bunter was almost convinced by this time that, actuated by a firm belief in the innocence of his old pal Wharton, he had investigated the mysterious box for the sole purpose of proving Harry's innocence—and had done it! Billy Bunter swelled and swelled and swelled till his waistcoat-buttons seemed in danger.

Tap!

"Come in!" said the Head's deep voice.

Mr. Quelch was with the Head. The two masters were looking very sombre—shocked and pained by the supposed discovery of the duplicity of a lad they had both respected and trusted. They looked amazed as Bob Cherry marched in, with the box on his shoulder, and the chums of the Remove followed with Rattenstein held fast in their grip.

"What does this mean?" said the Head sternly.

"We've made a discovery, sir—"

"I've made a discovery, sir," said Bunter, blinking indignantly at Bob. "You shut up, Cherry! You know jolly well I found it out!"

"Silence, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, sir, but I found out that Rattenstein was a forger, sir!"

"What!" ejaculated the Head.

"Look at these papers, sir," said Bob Cherry.

He dumped down the box on the Head's desk.

Dr. Locke and the Remove-master looked at the papers.

"Where were these papers found?" asked the Head very quietly.

"Bunter found them, sir."

"Kindly explain, Bunter, and be brief."

"Certainly, sir!" Bunter swelled with renewed importance. "I suspected that Hun all along, sir. I knew he was up to some tricks, locking his study door, and keeping old Mauly out, and burning papers, and all that. I kept an eye on him, sir; and I decided to investigate that box—"

"Is this box Rattenstein's?"

"Yes, sir," said Bob.

"And I opened it, sir, to see what trick he was playing," said Bunter. "You see, sir, old Wharton's really my best pal—"

"You had no right to open Rattenstein's box," said the

Head. "In the circumstances, however, I shall not refer to that further. Rattenstein, these are your papers?"

Rattenstein did not speak; his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth.

"I observe," went on the Head, "that the letter here, supposed to have been written by Wharton, appears in many copies on these sheets. Some of them are like your own hand; others approximate more to Wharton's, and some are quite like Wharton's. It is evident, Rattenstein, that you have been practising Wharton's handwriting for the purpose of writing that letter."

"I—I—I—" Rattenstein groaned.

"Have you anything to say?"

Rattenstein licked his dry lips.

"The hand, where it is natural, is certainly Rattenstein's," said Mr. Quelch; "and it is easy to trace the transition to Wharton's. The wretched boy has some skill, and he had evidently used it unscrupulously to ruin an innocent lad. I recall now that Wharton was struggling with Rattenstein on the spot where I picked up the letter. I concluded that it had been dropped by Wharton, as it was in his hand. I can see now—"

"That's why Rattenstein picked that row with Wharton outside your door, sir," said Johnny Bull.

"I am afraid it is only too clear."

The Head looked fixedly at Rattenstein.

"What was your reason, Rattenstein, for committing this terrible and infamous action?" he asked quietly. "Are you aware that you might be sent to prison for what you have done?"

"I—I—I—I hated him!" mumbled Rattenstein. "I hate them all! I don't want to stay at Greyfriars, either!"

"You certainly will not stay at Greyfriars," said the Head drily. "You have very nearly caused an act of terrible injustice. Fortunately, you have been exposed in time. Tomorrow morning, Rattenstein, you will be flogged in public, and expelled from Greyfriars. Mr. Quelch, kindly keep that wretched boy in charge. I will myself go to Wharton."

A few minutes later the key turned in the door of the punishment-room. Harry Wharton, restlessly pacing the narrow limits of his prison, with haggard face, swung round towards the door as it opened. He started as he saw the Head.

"Wharton!" Dr. Locke's tone was very gentle. "My dear boy, a terrible mistake has been made—or, rather, an infamous act has nearly succeeded. My dear lad, I know now that you are innocent, and I ask your pardon."

Wharton panted.

"Oh, sir!"

"It's all serene!" shouted Bob Cherry. "Rattenstein did it, and we've bowled him out. All serene, old scout!"

"Oh, really, Cherry, I bowled him out!"

"You are free, Wharton! You will return to your Form. The guilty boy leaves Greyfriars to-morrow."

Dr. Locke shook hands with the captain of the Remove. Wharton almost staggered from the punishment-room. His brain was in a whirl.

In the passage he was caught up by a cheering crowd.

"Shoulder high!" roared Bob Cherry.

"The shoulderfulness is terrific!"

"Hurrah!"

With a roar of cheering, the Removites marched off with Harry Wharton; and the key of the punishment-room turned upon Prince Rupprecht von Rattenstein. And the German was glad enough to be locked in; he would scarcely have been safe with the Remove.

The next morning all Greyfriars assembled to witness a flogging and expulsion.

In disgrace and shame, followed by hisses and glances of scorn, Prince Rupprecht von Rattenstein quitted Greyfriars, with rage and malice in his heart, never to return.

The Hun of Greyfriars was gone—kicked out of Greyfriars!

Billy Bunter made a great claim upon Wharton's gratitude, and was exasperated not to find his claims recognised. Truly, his peeping and prying had served a very good turn for once—but that did not make prying any more worthy of respect—and Billy Bunter, who had fully expected to be the hero of the hour, found himself regarded as anything but a hero. But he was not quite unrewarded, for Peter Todd, after consideration, decided not to lick him with a cricket-stump for his exploit—in consideration of its happy results, and of the fact that the Hun of Greyfriars had been "Kicked Out of School."

THE END.

(Do not miss "FRANK NUGENT'S FOLLY!" next Monday's Grand Story of the Chums of Greyfriars, by FRANK RICHARDS.)

Our Magnificent Adventure Serial Story.

START TO-DAY!



: : By : :

T. C. BRIDGES.

The First Instalments Briefly Told.

DICK DAUNT and DUDLEY DREW, two chums, discover a letter in a bottle which they have extracted from the body of a shark.

They are informed by its contents that a certain MATTHEW SNELL is marooned on an unnamed island in the Keys, and he offers a substantial reward to any persons effecting his rescue.

On going to the island, however, they are unable to find Mr. Snell.

EZRA CRAY, a moonshiner, and his scoundrelly colleagues then visit the island, and, finding that it contains gold, attempts to kill the two chums.

Dick and Dudley eventually find Matthew Snell hiding in a small cave, and with his help they flood out Ezra Cray's camp, thus compelling the gang to evacuate it.

Cray and some of his colleagues escape from the island, but they leave behind them their black slaves.

The island is then swept by a tornado, which carries away a shanty containing a store of food, and scatters its contents.

After the storm the chums determine to set the niggers to work gathering up the remains of the food.

(Now read on.)

Short Rations.

The stockade was still there. The tornado had missed it. Dick wished that the contrary had been the case, and that the cabin had been left instead.

He shouted for Dan, but the thunder, the rain, and the wind drowned his voice. He had to go right into the stockade to find him. There Dan and several others of the negroes were cowering under what shelter they could find.

They were scared almost out of their wits. Even Dan Grayson, who was much superior to most of them, both in sense and pluck, was half silly with fright. Dick had to pick him up and shake him to get any sense into him.

"It's all right, Dan," he said. "The storm's over. Come on with me. The cabin's gone, and the grub with it. We've got to try and pick up what we can, or we shall all starve. Bring the other men, and come quickly!"

"Dey's only five left," whimpered Dan. "De oders was dat scared dey ran out in de woods, and I guess dey's all killed!"

"Then bring your five, and come on!" ordered Dick curtly.

The stream was rising so fast under the terrific downpour that it was all they could do to get across. Then, having at last got Dan to thoroughly understand what was wanted,

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NEXT
MONDAY—**"FRANK NUGENT'S FOLLY!"**

they all scattered in an easterly direction to see what they could find.

They were ordered to bring what they could into the shelter of a big evergreen oak which grew near the site of the cabin, and which, oddly enough, had escaped the tornado completely.

It was nearly an hour before the last returned, and the amount which they had collected between them was so small that the white men looked at one another in silent dismay.

Seven tins of meat, a tin of coffee, half a bag of more than half-melted sugar, one piece of bacon, and about ten pounds of soaked and spoiled hominy, which had been recovered from a broken bag which Dudley had found wedged under the roots of a torn-up tree. That was all.

"I guess that ain't a lot for eight grown men," remarked Snell, as he took stock of the salvage.

"It will keep us for just about two days," replied Dick.

"There's gophers," said Dudley hopefully. "And maybe we can catch a few fish."

Dick shook his head.

"We lost our lines when the cave in Crooked Cliffs blew up. Still, we must do what we can, or else we shall jolly well starve! You see, we've got no boat, so we're absolute fixtures here until some ship happens to come along!"

"And that's likely to be a mighty long time," said old Snell. "I've been here a matter of five years, and though I've seen ships pass to the southward, there's never been one within hailing distance all that time!"

"Then it seems we're in a pretty ugly fix," remarked Dick, frowning. "We can't get on without grub—that's one thing sure!"

Dudley suddenly laughed. The others stared at him in amazement.

"I'm sorry," said Dudley. "It isn't any sort of a laughing matter, but I was just thinking that it's kind of comic that we should be hung up here, with enough gold to buy out a department store, and the whole lot isn't worth a fifteen-cent can of bully beef!"

"See here, boys!" broke in Snell, in his matter-of-fact way. "You're both of you right. The gold's no use to us here, and grub's the big question. It's just possible that the niggers may be able to catch us a few fish, and, of course, there's gophers, and maybe rabbits. But whatever we kin get, it won't keep us very long. Fact is, we've got to get off the island, and do it mighty quick, too!"

"But we can't. We've got no boat," cut in Dudley.

"What's the matter with building one?" said Snell. "We've got plenty of timber, and I've got a set o' tools. We'd ought to be able to fix up something as will float!"

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

Dick and Dudley stood staring at him. Evidently this was a suggestion that had never occurred to either of them.

"It's a goodish way across to Florida," said Dick presently; "and we've nothing for sails or rigging. Do you think we could ever build a craft that would do the journey?"

"I guess we'd better try mighty hard if we don't want to sit here and starve," Snell answered uncompromisingly.

"O' course, there's one other way as we might manage."

"What's that?" demanded the other two in one breath.

"Wait here until Cray comes back with the schooner, and take it off him."

"Gee, but that's a notion!" exclaimed Dudley.

"If he does come back," put in Dick. "You forget the tornado. If that caught the schooner, he and his pack of ruffians are at present providing a fine meal for the sharks!"

"That's so," allowed Snell. "And even if it missed 'em, they ain't having exactly what you might call a pleasant voyage. It's a-blowing great guns!"

This was very true. The rain was pretty well over, but the sky was still dark as ever, and a heavy gale from almost due west was roaring across the island. It was cold, too. The temperature had dropped considerably, as it always does after one of these circular storms, and the wind whistled through their soaked clothes, chilling them to the bone.

"Wal," said Cray. "I guess we won't do no good waiting around here and getting clemmed. We'd best give these here niggers their rations, and get right along back to the cave. Ef we can't have much supper, anyways we can keep dry and warm."

The others agreed. There was, indeed, nothing else to do. They dealt out to Dan enough food for him and his four miserable-looking followers. Then, carrying the rest between them, they started back across the island in the direction of the Blowhole.

Reaching the high ground, opposite the inner end of Big Bay, they met a blast which they could hardly stagger against. Dudley pulled up and turned his back to the wind. Dick, a few paces in front, heard the other give a sudden shout, and turned quickly round.

"The schooner!" cried Dudley, pointing out to sea. "The schooner! Look at her!"

Sure enough, there was the schooner, or, at any rate, some vessel of just her size. Her topmast was gone, all her fore-sails seemed to have been blown away, and even her big main-sail was in ribbons. She appeared to be about two miles off the western end of the island, and was driving before the gale apparently out of control.

For a moment or two all three stared at her in silence. Then Snell spoke.

"She'll never make the bay," he said quietly. "She's doomed, anyway."

The Wreck.

On came the schooner. In spite of the ragged remnant of sail, which was all that was left to her, she was travelling at a tremendous speed. As she came nearer it seemed to Dick that there was just a chance of her reaching the mouth of the bay.

Suddenly he started forward.

"Come on!" he cried. "Come on, you two! There may be a chance of doing something, after all."

Neither of them quite knew what he was after, but both followed. The mouth of Big Bay opened due north, but the two points of land which marked the opening were not the same in length. That on the east ran out further than the western horn, and at the extreme end of the eastern point was a ridge of rocks running out into the sea.

Rightly or wrongly, Dick calculated that the schooner would probably weather the western point, but with her present lack of head-sail would hardly be able to come up into the wind so as to make the opening into the bay.

Failing this, she would either have to endeavour to beat out to sea again, or else she would infallibly go ashore on the eastern reef.

All this he pantingly explained to Dudley as the two ran side by side towards the eastern horn of the bay. Snell, unable to travel so fast as they, was gradually left some distance behind.

As they came near to the point the roar of the waves breaking on the reef became almost deafening. Huge rollers driven before the gale came smashing down upon the dark-coloured rocks, and leaping up again in vast columns of foam. The spindrift, carried inland by the wind, beat upon their faces.

At last they reached the outer end of the projecting point of land. It was a low bluff, no more than twenty feet high, and, but for the protection afforded by the reef, the waves would have been breaking clean over it.

The schooner was now less than a mile away. She rose and fell with tremendous plunges over the giant seas. Now she dipped into a trough so deep that all her hull was hidden, and only the top of her broken mast was visible; next moment she was hoisted like a cork on to the top of a tremendous comber, poised there as though the wind would lift her and send her hurtling through the air.

"I reckon she'll pass the island altogether," Dudley told Dick. He had to shout to make himself heard above the yell of the storm.

Dick did not answer. He was gazing at the battered craft with the most intense anxiety. It seemed indeed as if what Dudley said might be right, for the schooner was still some way out, and if she held her present course would probably pass clear of the bay and clear of the reef also.

But a minute later he turned to the other and spoke in his ear.

"No. They're trying to work in. Watch! They're getting a bit of head sail on her. It's their only chance for their lives—to get in, I mean. If she blows past she's bound to go under. She can't live another half-hour in that sea, and it's getting worse all the time. Ah, look! She's coming round!"

"Gee, but she is!" exclaimed Dudley. "I believe they'll do it now!"

A look of dismay crossed his face.

"Supposing they do make it," he said anxiously, "what are we going to do? We can't tackle the bunch of them."

"Why not? We've got our rifles."

"Ay, why not, Drew?" put in Snell, who had come up. "There ain't more'n six of 'em left, and I don't reckon they'll be so mighty full of fight after what they have been through the last few hours. Eh—what do you say, Daunt?"

"Why, I think we could handle a dozen in their fix," replied Dick.

"Watch her!" broke in Dudley. "She's coming round to it!"

"But she is making a terrible lot o' leeway," responded Snell, as he gazed keenly at the battered craft. "It's going to be nip and tuck, anyway you put it."

He was evidently right. Her crew had succeeded in getting a rag of head-sail on the schooner, thus giving her some sort of steerage way, and she was now heading in for the mouth of the bay. But, with wind and tide full on her beam, she was moving two feet to the east for every three south. In vain her helmsman tried to keep her up. She drifted sideways like a haystack.

"Jerusalem, but it's going to be a close call!" panted Dudley, almost breathless with excitement. "I believe she'll do it, though. I say, hadn't we better get down to the landing, and be ready for 'em? As soon as they're in calm water they'll have a chance to get their guns out."

"Not a bad notion, I guess, boys," said Snell. "Being only three to six, it's up to us to put it over them in a kind o' surprise-packet. You see, 'tain't the men we want; it's the schooner herself, and what's aboard her."

He was in the act of turning away when from seaward there came a crack like a gun-shot.

"What's that?" he cried.

"Her foresail—it's gone!" Dick exclaimed. "Blown clean out of the bolt-ropes!"

"Then I guess we may as well stay right here," replied Snell gravely, "for that's settled it. Any as comes ashore now won't need no rifles to finish 'em."

The boys did not answer. They were watching the schooner with horrified eyes. The loss of the head-sail, small as it was, had deprived her people of their last chance of safety. The clumsy craft had already fallen off her course, and was drifting helplessly towards the reef. They could see men running frantically up to the bows in an effort to bend another sail. It was no use. There was no time. Through the roar of the wind wild shouts came faintly to the ears of the watchers on the point.

It seemed at first as though the schooner would strike on the outer end of the reef, in which case she would no doubt drive over it, and, tearing her bottom out, sink in deep water behind. But, apparently, the tide was running very slowly into the bay, and carrying the disabled craft with it. She came nearer every moment, and the three on shore strained forward, half inclined to think, after all, that she might yet be saved.

Their anxiety was painful. Not for the rascally crew of the schooner. For Cray and his associates pity was wasted. With the possible exception of Bent, they were human beasts, who were far better under the sea than above it. No; their anxiety was for themselves.

If the schooner came ashore where they could reach or save her, she would supply them with everything which they most

(Continued on page III of cover.)

THE GOLDEN KEY.

(Continued from page 20.)

needed—food, sails and rigging for their new craft, fishing-tackle, and the like. If she were lost, their own prospects were of the blackest. It would take weeks to build a boat fit for the voyage to the mainland. How were they to live until the task was accomplished?

"She'll do it!" panted Dudley. "She's inside the reef right now!"

The others did not speak. They could hardly breathe, so intense was their anxiety.

The schooner was now but a hundred yards away. She was headed almost directly for the spot where they stood, but under the send of the great waves she was flung nearer and nearer to the reef with every sea that raised her.

So near was she that they could actually see the faces of the men on her deck. There was Cray, more like a buzzard than ever, his yellow face a mask of terror, clinging to the stays on the leeward side. Ambrose Bent was at the wheel. His huge form swayed to the pitch of the vessel, but, brute as he was, there was, at any rate, no sign of fear on his hard face. The others, flat on the deck, clung for dear life to the raffle of broken cordage. They were washed to and fro by every wave that broke aboard.

"She'll do it," said Dudley again, but there was no conviction in his tone. The best that could be hoped for now was that the schooner would escape the reef, and come ashore at the foot of the bluff inside the bay.

An enormous wave came rushing into the mouth of the bay. It seized the schooner, lifting her so high that she seemed actually above the level of the bluff upon which the three were standing. Swooping onward with the speed of an express train, it carried her forward directly towards them.

With a deafening roar the huge mass of water struck the bluff, flinging up a great curtain of foam that for a moment cut off sight of everything beyond. When it fell they stared round in blank amazement.

The schooner was gone.

Dudley rushed forward to the very edge of the bluff.

"There she is!" he cried. "There she is!"

The others, craning forward over the edge, caught sight of a dark object some few yards to their right—that is, further into the bay. It was the hull of the schooner. The remains of her mast was gone, her deck was swept clear, yet there was her hull apparently fixed and immovable.

"She's wedged," cried Dick—"wedged between two rocks; fixed there as tight as a cork in a bottle!"

"She won't stay there long," Snell answered grimly. "Won't take more'n two or three o' them big waves to bust her to matches."

Dudley gave a sudden shout.

"One of them is swimming! Say, Dick, we got to give the beggar a hand!"

He pointed as he spoke, and Dick saw a head appear amid the welter of foam under the lee of the schooner. Its owner was swimming, and swimming strongly, but it looked all odds against any chance of saving him. The bluff was between him and safety.

Dudley began to run along the edge of the bluff. Dick followed.

"What's the use? You can't do nothing!" cried Snell. But they paid no attention, and rushed on.

Dick saw what Dudley was aiming at. About fifty yards further up the shore of the bay the bluff was broken down, and a slant of rocks sloped out towards the water. This was out of the full sweep of the waves, but, all the same, it was constantly hidden by great sheets of spray.

Without the slightest hesitation Dudley clambered down, keeping as much as possible on the lee side of the rocks. Dick followed close behind.

"Can you see him?" shouted Dudley, sweeping the spray from his eyes with the back of his hand.

Dick, clinging to a rock at the end of the ledge, peered over into the boiling turmoil beneath.

"Yes, there he is! Give me a hand, Dudley."

It was Bent's head he caught a glimpse of amidst the driving spray. The man was still swimming, but only feebly. He seemed hardly able to keep himself above water.

Another wave came. Bent was lifted, and flung like a ball straight towards the rock on which Dick clung. With one arm clasped round a projecting point, Dick stretched forward, and with a desperate effort clutched one of Bent's hands.

Then the wave broke over him, wrenching and tearing at him, trying with savage fury to force him from his hold. He was blinded, suffocated. He felt as though his last ounce of strength was gone, and that he must either let go or follow Bent into the raging cauldron below.

Then he felt a grip on his collar.

"Hang on!" came Dudley's voice in his ear. "Hang on, old man!"

The wave passed, the water drained away with a sucking rush. But Dick was so nearly spent that he could not lift Bent. It was all he could do to maintain his hold.

"Wait! I'll get hold of him," said Dudley, as he wormed himself forward. Letting go of Dick, he managed to seize Bent, and between them the two dragged the man round under the lee of the rocks just in time to escape the full weight of the next wave. Here there was shelter of a sort, and Bent, recovering a little, was able, with their aid, to clamber up to safety.

He could not stand. The moment he was out of reach of the leaping waves he dropped flat upon the ground, and lay panting, his heavy face the colour of lead.

"Any more down there, Dudley?" sang out Dick.

"Can't see any. No; I don't believe there's a soul left."

"And a mighty good job, too!" said Snell, who had just come up. "One more mouth to feed, as it is. I don't see what you boys wanted with pulling that big, ugly feller out o' the sea. He'll only make trouble for us all."

"Hang it all, one can't leave a chap to drown!" Dick answered sharply. "And, anyway," he added, "he's the best of the bunch. He may be a pirate, but he did try to stop Cray from torturing us."

"Wal, let it go at that," said Snell, shrugging his shoulders. "Anyways, you better leave him where he is for the time, and see what we can salvage from the schooner. I reckon she won't last a long time in this here sea."

It certainly looked as though he were right. Each breaker made a clean sweep over the battered hull, and although the sea was not quite so heavy where she lay as it was on the reef itself, it seemed a wonder that she did not break up at once.

But she was very stoutly built, and although her deck had already been absolutely cleared, her hull itself was still whole.

A little further up the bay there was a strip of beach below the bluff, and here wreckage was already beginning to come ashore. Dick saw this, and, hurrying down, secured several lengths of rope which he coiled and brought back up the bluff.

"What are you up to?" asked Dudley, as he saw Dick hurrying back towards the place beneath which the wreck lay.

"To get aboard before she breaks up," Dick answered hastily. "You and Snell give me a hand."

"You're crazy!" retorted Dudley. "You'll be swept off by the first wave, and pounded to muck on the rocks."

"Not if I'm on a rope. You can lug me back if a big sea breaks."

Dudley would not hear of it.

"I'll be no party to your killing yourself!" he declared angrily. "Say, Mr. Snell, Dick here wants to go down the bluff on a rope. Tell him it's no use."

"It's plumb foolishness," agreed Snell. "There's no man could live half a minute on that there hulk. And, by gosh, it's getting worse every minute!"

Dick, in his turn, grew angry.

"I can do it, I tell you! What's the use of fooling round up here? The only grub between this and Florida is down in her hold. And how much is going to come ashore if she breaks up? Surely to goodness, it's better for one chap to take a bit of risk than for the whole lot to starve."

"See here," he added desperately. "If you chaps won't help me, I'll darned well get Bent to hang on to the shore end of the rope! He's pulled round, and quite able to do it!"

Dudley was almost in despair. He knew Dick so well that he realised he was in deadly earnest, and he was well aware that there was no stopping him once he had made up his mind to any particular course of action.

"For any sake, put your foot down," he whispered in Snell's ear.

Dick paid no attention. He was rapidly knotting the ropes together. Then he hurried across to where Bent, now somewhat recovered from his battering, was seated under the lee of a clump of palmetto.

"I'm going down to the wreck to try and get some of the grub out of her," he said sharply. "Are you able to help me?"

"I guess so," said Bent, rising slowly to his feet. "But I guess, too, mister, that ef yew do go daown thar, it's a-going to be the last thing yew'll ever do in yewr life!"

(The concluding instalment of this splendid serial appears in next Monday's MAGNET. To avoid disappointment, order your copy early.)

LITTLE WAYS THEY HAVE IN THE NAVY.

A Breezy Article by an A.B.

LIFE in the Navy is not all blue skies, calm seas, and adventurous voyages, as some people are inclined to believe. Jack's day is a long day, crammed full of work, with just a reasonable amount of play to keep him bright and breezy.

At four o'clock in the morning Jack is roused from his peaceful slumbers in his hammock on the mess-deck by "the Buffer"—the naval slang for a boatswain's mate—who goes round piping and shouting "Eave out, 'eave out! Show a leg, show a leg! All hands lash up and stow! 'Eave out, all hands! Now, then, pull yourselves together! Show a leg, show a leg!"

In an almost miraculously short space of time all hammocks are lashed up and stowed away, and Jack, attired in an old working suit, with the trousers rolled up above his knees, is tearing about on the upper deck bare-footed, scrubbing and washing it till it is as clean as a new pin.

By 6.30 the mess-deck, where Jack sleeps, has been transformed into a breakfast-room, with tables and forms all set out in readiness for his first meal of the day.

At eight o'clock, or "eight bells," as the time would be denoted on board ship, Jack returns to the work of cleaning. This time he will be putting every ounce of his "elbow-grease" into burnishing the guns. If these almost sacred weapons do not shine in such a way that the gunnery lieutenant or the chief gunner are able to use them as brilliant mirrors, Jack will hear of it.

But to go on with the detailed account of the day's work of a British bluejacket would take up too much space. The cleaning, polishing, and painting of a battleship are both important and costly. The Admiralty allowance of paint, soap, etc., does not nearly meet the requirements of a commanding officer who is a keen member of the "spit and polish school"—a term which is applied to those officers in the Navy who have hawk-eyes for flawless paintwork, burnished brass-work, and spotless decks. The two officers who are chiefly responsible for the smart appearance of a ship are the commander—affectionately called "The Bloke," and the first lieutenant, who is generally known as "Number One." These officers will sometimes spend as much as three or four pounds a week out of their own pockets on improving the appearance of their ship.

Every ship does not carry a "Bloke" and a "Number One" who can afford this heavy expenditure on soap and paint, etc. Years ago a clever ruse was invented by an officer, who probably had more brains than money. This was the institution of the "scran-bag," which has since been adopted throughout the whole of the Navy. Now, as then, it is considered a crime for Jack to leave anything lying about. Aboard ship there is a proper place provided for everything. If Jack should happen to feel a little lazy and leave any of his clothes or belongings in those places just where they should not be, they are promptly collared by a "Jonty"—the slang for a ship's policeman—and deposited in the scran-bag. When Jack misses his belongings he cannot complain, because he knows that he was in the wrong. However, he does not have long to wait before an opportunity is given him of recovering his lost property. On "rope-yarn Sunday"—Jack's name for Thursday afternoon, when he does his mending, or makes himself some new clothes—the scran-bag is opened, and for every article Jack claims he has to pay the fine of one penny, which is reckoned to buy one inch of soap. It is very often surprising to see the quantity of articles which will accumulate in the scran-bag during the course of one week. Should Jack fail to redeem any article of clothing within a month, it is torn up and used for cleaning and polishing purposes. Paradoxically speaking, therefore, it will be seen that the untidiest men on board ship are those who contribute most to its tidiness.

After "coaling ship" an extra clean up is always necessary. Accordingly, the "jonties" make a more thorough search for Jack's belongings. These are often found cleverly concealed in the most extraordinary places. On this occasion it costs Jack a double fine to redeem each article. This means a double supply of soap, etc., which is dearly needed.

But the revenue obtained from the scran-bag does not nearly meet the requirements of the commander and the first lieutenant. Other means have to be adopted for obtaining cleaning supplies. One method sometimes resorted to is to send "Chips"—the carpenter, with some of his assistants—commonly called "Woodspoilors"—to the dockyard. Here, by sundry bribes and tips, they are often able to obtain quite a good supply of the needful commodities. Then the job is to get them out of the dockyard without being seen by the policeman. But that important being will be engaged in "up the rigging"—as Jack calls arguing—with the officer, who has purposely started it to distract his attention, while old "Chips" and his men slip out with the goods.

Whenever Jack can get a spare moment to himself, he will

get his beloved pipe going. For nearly all sailors are confirmed smokers. There are certain times when smoking is strictly forbidden.

When one sees a sailor the worse for drink, one should never think unkindly of him. Jack is a very abstemious man afloat, and the consequence is that when he comes ashore it takes very little "to put him off his sea legs."

On one occasion a sailor, who had been drinking rather heavily, was returning to his ship on a very dirty night when he lurched into an officer.

"Now, then, what do you mean by doing that?" rapped out the officer.

Jack pulled himself together and made a gallant effort to speak clearly and apologise.

"Why," said the officer, "you're beastly drunk! A disgrace to the Service! You ought to lose your job! And do you know who I am? I'm the Admiral of the Fleet!"

"A very good jobsh, too, shir!" said Jack. "You keep shober, and then you won't loosh it!"

The admiral, like all naval officers, was a true sportsman, and dearly loved a joke. So he passed on, and left Jack to be dealt with by the officers on board his own ship.

Sailors are never allowed to take any spirits or beer aboard. Very occasionally, however, they do manage to succeed in smuggling in a little. One attempt of this sort was cleverly nipped in the bud by a cute admiral. He was being rowed back to his ship in a cutter. The men were pulling lustily enough, and yet, thought the admiral, the boat was not "making way" as fast as she should. On coming alongside, he ordered the men to keep to the boat. Meanwhile, he ordered the rest of the crew of the battleship to be lined up in full view of the cutter.

He then ordered the cutter to be hoisted up on the davits with the men aboard her. As soon as she was clear of the water the reason for these unusual orders was made apparent. A small cask of beer had been very skilfully lashed to the bottom of the boat. This had caused her to make less speed through the water than usual, which at the same time had been the men's undoing. The punishment they received was mere poetry compared to the terrible chipping they had to endure for many a day afterwards from their messmates.

Stokers—nicknamed the "Black Squad," or "Dustmen"—are some of the finest men to be found anywhere. To those who know the conditions under which they work—right down in the bowels of the ship—it is always a marvel that they keep fit for as many years as they do. At the age of fifty, when most men of the upper deck are in the prime of life, a stoker is worn out. At this age he has lost his health, and his sight and hearing are very often seriously impaired, if not gone altogether. So the nation owes a great debt to these brave fellows who so willingly risk their lives for us.

Stokers are never tired of telling ignorant landmen that it is a great shame that whenever they go out in one of the ship's boats they are made to row with shovels, whereas, the upper-deck men are allowed to use oars.

Sailors nearly always chum up into threes and fours. These tiny cliques being known as "raggies," because they share their rags for polishing work, etc. Sometimes it happens that two members of a "raggy" will quarrel, and then one will hear on all sides that "Tinribs" has parted brass-rags with old "Lobster Pot."

These are just two examples of men's nicknames. Tinribs means a very thin man. Another example of a significant sobriquet is that of the paymaster, who is always known as "Gold-dust."

If Jack once sets his mind on a thing he will never rest till he gets it. A publican in a large naval port was giving a special entertainment at which there was to be a number of free drinks for sailors. The captain of one of the ships then in at the port, was particularly anxious to put this temptation out of the way of those of his men who would be on shore-leave that night. So he gave strict orders that no one was to go beyond a certain signpost.

Imagine his wrath, then, when passing the place of entertainment that night, he saw that a number of his men were present. He demanded an explanation from them. The men said that they were not aware that they had disobeyed his orders, because they certainly had not gone past the signpost. The captain thought that perhaps he had made a mistake, and so immediately went off to prove their statement.

This did not take him very long, because he soon discovered that they had lifted the signpost bodily out of the ground and planked it down on the other side of the publican's house.

These little illustrations of Jack's life but vaguely serve to show the true nature of his spirit—his undying spirit of cheerfulness, his never-failing spirit of readiness to help anyone, and his admirable fighting spirit which refuses to admit the word "defeat." It is these which have helped to make the British bluejacket admired, loved, and feared all over the world.